

Sheets of Sobriety - March 2015

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~Spreading the message one paper at a time~

The opinions and viewpoints expressed in these Sheets of Sobriety are not necessarily those of AA as a whole, or Indianapolis Intergroup. They are the expression of the individuals submitting content to our editor for publication to our fellowship. Please send any comments, feedback or contributions to be published to briacon@gmail.com. We welcome your thoughts and thank you for your service!



Sponsorship

Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are huge. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What a sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospect, . . . how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example -- well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death. - *The Language of the Heart*, p. 292

Thought to Ponder . . .

My sponsor offers me self-forgetfulness and kinship with another human being of my own kind.

AA-related 'Alconym' . . .

H E A R T = Healing, Enjoying, And Recovering Together.



"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." - Ralph Waldo Emerson - 1

Things My Sponsor Taught Me

By: Steve H.

I look back at that critical period when I made the transition from a drunk to a recovering alcoholic, attempting to follow the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had hit bottom and knew this was likely my last hope. The advice I would receive not only would save my life, but is still of use today.

I remember going to my first meetings, trying to make sense of what was being suggested. Thank God for the repetition we hear at meetings. I was attending several meetings a day, every day. This was possible since I had asked my Doctor, who understood alcoholism, for a leave of absence from work to try to get a handle on recovery. Something inside of me told me if I didn't get real serious, I wouldn't survive! My alcoholism had robbed me of my family, friends, job and was now taking my life.

Attending meetings was a challenge because as an alcoholic I didn't venture far from home, ever mindful of the judge who told me if he saw me again it would be most unpleasant. I was ruled by fear, drinking alone at my home from black-out to blackout. This was a huge change, venturing out of my apartment, getting in the car and using a street map and an AA schedule to find and attend meetings both near and far from home.

I realized as I branched out of my comfort zone that my world was a self constructed prison, a maximum security prison, I might add. As I apprehensively walked into new meetings, the love and comradeship present were immediately apparent. I kept hearing "Keep Coming Back", and knew the people really meant it. At long last, I found a place that I felt I belonged to, a place where I was welcome and a place where people were just like me. More importantly they had solutions for our disease. I sure didn't.

For the first time in my life I started doing as was suggested. "Get a book, find a higher power, get a sponsor and keep coming back, and oh yes, don't drink!" This formula worked well. I gave it my all.

I asked a man to sponsor me and we began working the steps immediately. As soon as we began, the message I was hearing at meetings changed. I began to hear persons who had relapsed blame their relapse on delaying their fourth step. This fueled my fears.

The 4th step became the proverbial "double edged sword", for me. Part one, was 1,000% fear (of) beginning the fourth step. It became the proverbial 900 pound gorilla. It was with me at all times, a roadblock to beginning my journey. When the pain became so intense, I reached the point

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of either marching forward or running backward. This led to part two. I realized my fears were stopping me from beginning the 4th step. My sponsor suggested I ask God for help. This I did, falling to my knees and asking my higher power to help me do what I was afraid of, and could not do on my own. It was incredible. That night my hand and pen became one, words flowed effortlessly, without stop, for the next 2-3 hours. That which I feared was swiftly overcome with God's help! The following day, with my sponsor and God's help, we worked the 5th and 6th step.

During this crucial period, I learned so many things from my sponsor. I still recall him talking about the fourth step being an honest examination of self, not a perfect examination of self, which isn't obtainable. My expectations of a "perfect" 4th step were part of my fears which prevented me from beginning the process. "Just be as honest, fearless and thorough as possible", he would remind me. This helped me move forward instead of always being stalled on beginning. I became ready to begin. He told me to think of an onion. As we began the fourth step we would slowly peel the first layer of the onion back. "In time, God will reveal more", he would chant. In time, this did happen.

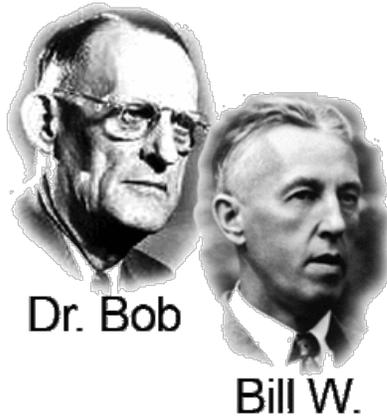
The lessons learned from the process working the fourth step were, and are, as valuable today as they were in 1985. My fears about the fourth step were totally false. These false fears almost stopped me from beginning the fourth step and yet they drove me to begin. I'll never forget when I did that fourth step with my sponsor, the love, understanding and patience that man had for me. I saw first hand that I was fear driven. I love it when I hear the slogan, FEAR is false evidence, appearing real. That's what I understood my fears to be back then, and the same holds true today.

Another lesson learned from my sponsor was indelibly etched into my conscientiousness. "Different actions will get you different thoughts". Thus began a new premise of living. What this meant was to take actions that are alien and foreign to a selfish person like myself. Reach out a hand to a newcomer, be of service, call someone, help others, become a part of, instead of apart from. Give instead of taking! For me it was awkward at first, but this becomes easier the more I take these actions.

Slowly, yet surely, I began liking the person I was becoming. No more self loathing and hatred for me. Thanks to AA, the 12 steps, finding a higher power I choose to call God, and what my sponsor taught me, I can honestly say I love my life today, and live my life I love. Thanks AA!

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Tradition of the Month:



On Tradition Two

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”

Editorial by Bill W.

A.A. Grapevine, January 1948

Sooner or later, every AA comes to depend upon a Power greater than himself. He finds that the God of his understanding is not only a source of strength, but also a source of positive direction. Realizing that some fraction of that infinite resource is now available, his life takes on an entirely different complexion. He experiences a new inner security together with such a sense of destiny and purpose as he has never known before. As each day passes, our AA reviews his mistakes and vicissitudes. He learns from daily experience what his remaining character defects are and becomes ever more willing that they be removed. In this fashion he improves his conscious contact with God.

Every AA group follows this same cycle of development. We are coming to realize that each group, as well as each individual, is a special entity, not quite like any other. Though AA groups are basically the same, each group does have its own special atmosphere, its own peculiar state of development. We believe that every AA group has a conscience. It is the collective conscience of its own membership. Daily experience informs and instructs his conscience. The group begins to recognize its own defects of character and, one by one, these are removed or lessened. As this process continues, the group becomes better able to receive right direction for its

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own affairs. Trial and error produces group experience and out of corrected experience comes custom. When a customary way of doing things is definitely proved to be best, then that custom forms into AA Tradition. The Greater Power is then working through a clear group conscience. We humbly hope and believe that our growing AA Tradition will prove to be the will of God for us.

Many people are coming to think that Alcoholics Anonymous is, to some extent, a new form of human society. In our discussion of the First Tradition, it was emphasized that we have, in AA, no coercive human authority. Because each AA, of necessity, has a sensitive and responsive conscience, and because alcohol will discipline him severely if he backslides, we are finding we have little need for man made rules or regulations. Despite the fact that we do veer off at times on tangents, we are becoming more able to depend absolutely on the long-term stability of the AA group itself. With respect to its own affairs, the collective conscience of the group will, given time, almost surely demonstrate its perfect dependability. The group conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member, however good or wise he may be. This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous. Hence we can safely dispense with those exhortations and punishments seemingly so necessary to other societies. And we need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere. In this respect, we may be, to a large degree, unique.

Therefore we of Alcoholics Anonymous are certain that there is but one ultimate authority, "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."



[Michael S.-12 years](#) [Katherine M.-32 years](#) [Bob W.-31 years](#)
[Jim H.-13 years](#) [Angie A.-6 years](#) [Tom G.-16 years](#) [Theresa W.-34 years](#)
[Mike B.-36 years](#) [Jane M.-35 years](#) [Konny H.-30 years](#)
[Thomas M.-25 years](#)



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Due to editor error the answer to February's Puzzle will be listed in the April Issue. Also, the site used to create the puzzle page of this paper is down for maintenance. Sincere apologies for both inconveniences.



~You might be an alcoholic if:

1. The vodka you're drinking reminds you of the taste of a fine aftershave.
2. You're lying in your waterbed all warm and comfy when you remember you don't have a waterbed.

~A husband and wife were sitting in their living room. The wife said, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug." Her husband got up, unplugged the TV, and threw out all of her beer.

~A man sat in front of his home, contemplating his future. He had just gotten a divorce, lost his children, been fired from his job, and now faced eviction. He noticed a case of beer bottles in his trash and walked up to it. He took out an empty bottle and smashed it, swearing, "You are why I don't have a wife!" He threw a second bottle. "you are why I don't have my children!" And a third: "You are why I lost my job!" But then he discovered a fourth bottle, still sealed and full of beer. He took it, tucked it into his pocket, and said, "Stand aside, my friend - I know you were not involved."

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