

Sheets of Sobriety - November 2015

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 briaocon@gmail.com. We welcome your thoughts and thank you for your service!



Footprints of Hope

So I looked ahead, along the path marked by the footprints of hope, commitment, and action.

All around me were many happy, sober people who had walked that path. Listening intently to their stories, I heard some more horrifying than mine, others, less so.

But it was plain that all these alcoholics had *felt* the same hopelessness, fear, pain, and anger I had experienced.

It was also obvious that people with drinking problems like mine could come out of them and - unbelievable at first - laugh at them!

... They knew that it was an illness, that it could deceive its victims, that the danger lay in the first drink.

- The Best of the Grapevine [Vol. 2], p. 136

Thought to Ponder . . .

Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.

AA-related 'Alconym' . . .

A A = Always Awesome.



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Psychic Change



During early months of recovery, the obsession to drink whiskey became increasingly more powerful and tempting; although I prayed to God with desperation many times every day and attended as many AA meetings as possible, I seemed to be headed for the familiar drunk tank once again. The Big Book informed me that the physical allergy—the phenomenon of craving—was going to remain in my body as long as I live. So it would seem I was to remain in misery the rest of my life! Not only would I be a goner after the first drink, it seemed obvious that *that* dratted mental obsession would get me some day—and maybe soon! I was tip-toeing on a tightrope as each day passed. I was understandably terrified!

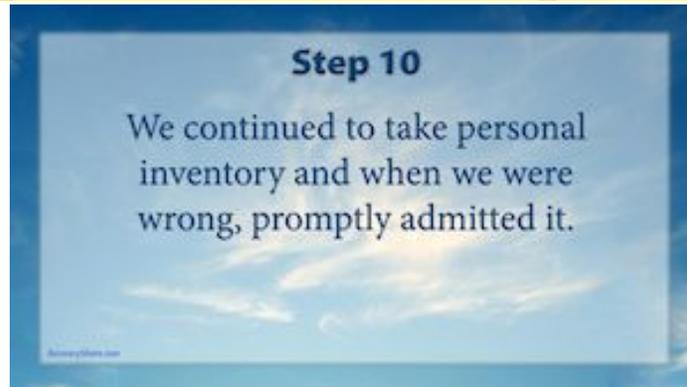
But things brightened up when I read about, Fitz M., the seemingly hopeless alcoholic on page 57: *“Save for a few brief moments of temptation the thought of drink has never returned; at such times a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemingly he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity.”*

This encouraging paragraph led me to believe that this miracle could happen for me, and indeed it has! These days, the very thought of drink produces vivid memories of the horrid hallucinations and near-DTs after my many long drunken sprees. Because of AA’s Twelve Steps, I believe that I have experienced a “reverse-Pavlov” personality change. Dr. Silkworth wrote of an *“entire psychic change”* (p. xxix) and I believe this miracle has happened for me. Thank you God!

~Bob S.~

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Step of the Month - Step 10 & 11



**To say I am wrong just never will do.
What good could this prove to me or to you?**

**But promptly I'm told, admit it and see.
Do I have the faith to really believe?**

**Continually following where others have been
I find that through failing I can finally win.**

**A day without drinking, God is it true;
A day in the present where I can feel you?**

**I swallow my pride and tell them I'm wrong.
No longer am I held by a demon so strong.**

**With time it gets easier to admit I am wrong,
And now it is I who is feeling so strong.**

**Never let me forget it is You, God not I,
For the demon of drinking will tell me this lie.**

**Promptly I thank you for all that I am,
Never to forget where I began.**

~D.B.~

**And will you succeed? Yes indeed, yes indeed! Ninety-eight
and three-quarters percent guaranteed. - Dr. Seuss**

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Sought Through Prayer and Meditation...



Looking at the 11th Step, I realize my understanding has grown over the years. Like all of our steps, the more we use them, the more we grow.

Most Alcoholics I know tend to over-complicate things. Sound familiar? When I first tried Step 11, It seemed like a cipher that was beyond my understanding. As a newcomer, eager to learn more about all our steps and traditions, I began attending a cozy step study located close to my home. My sponsor encouraged this. About 10-15 Alcoholics would regularly attend the meeting, sharing their experience, knowledge, and understanding of the 12 steps and traditions. When it came time to tackle step 11, I was ready for some answers. To put it bluntly, this step mystified me.

Step 11 clearly states: **“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”** I quickly learned from my fellow alcoholics there were two parts to the 11th step.

In part one, we seek through prayer and meditation to increase our spiritual connection with the God of our understanding. So far, so good! It was explained, I was to use prayer and meditation as a channel to reach my newly found Higher Power. Persons attending the meeting gave vivid examples of how they would accomplish this. They pointed out that prayer would be my way of communicating with God. This was perfectly clear.

In part two, it was stated, by meditating, I would be listening to God's answer. I quickly learned the answers wouldn't come directly from God, rather the answers I sought came through others, alcoholics, generally at A.A. Meetings I attended. Later in my journey, these answers would include an

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appreciation for many simple things, which increased my gratitude because my serenity was growing, little by little.

I heard from others in our fellowship about “Having an Attitude of Gratitude”. I finally understand what they were referring to. One of the items I was most grateful for was my step study meetings. I was able to hear many persons in recovery, share their understanding of our steps and traditions. These lessons were, and are invaluable to me. Simply put, I asked my higher power, who I choose to call God, to show me the way. What should I do? What would you have me do? And please give me the strength and willingness to take the actions needed in these situations.

By taking these actions I get to continue the path I have chosen, in recovery. This is no small step for a self centered, selfish, alcoholic. Our steps allow us to stay ready to continue participating in the miracle of recovery. When confronted with a choice to be of service, take the action. We get to be a part of our higher powers universe, which allows me to maintain my attitude of gratitude, something I never experienced before I entered the doors of our fellowship. For this I am eternally grateful. Thank you, A.A.
steve h

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen



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Tradition of the Month - Tradition 10 & 11



Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

“Never since it began has Alcoholics Anonymous been divided by a major public controversy... This, however, has been no earned virtue”. (12 x 12, pg 176)

We learned our lesson from the Washingtonians. This is not to say, personally (and sometimes not so privately) we all agree. Fall-outs seen by breaching in Anonymity at the level of Press, Radio and Films often end up with AA and public controversy.

For instance, a few years back, one half of a noted film critic pair wrote in his newspaper blog. The piece praised Alcoholics Anonymous, as because of AA, the critic celebrated 30 years of sobriety. Though his intentions may have been the best, this Anonymity break was followed about six months later with the critic making news again, apparently being accused of making remarks considered ‘racial’. For any following this film critic, his actions may have gotten some of the public thinking AA was racist... and what a controversy that would be for us.

I have seen this Tradition in action in a situation involving service work at a State Department of Corrections facility, wherein one AA informed the staff the other AA was no longer allowed to volunteer there (personalities overrode principles). Temptation to straighten both the member and the matter out took a back seat, as the sponsor helped the ‘wronged’ AA understand that any fight before the staff would probably lower their estimation of AA, at best. The matter resolved itself without giving AA a

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‘black eye’ with the facility, as the member creating the conflict dropped out of the service position later on that year, and the volunteer was elected to fulfill the position.

Avoiding controversy on a larger level has seen our fellowship ‘back down, too, as was the case with the discontinuation of the “*Circle and Triangle*” logo on our literature. First adopted by AA at the 1955 St. Louis Convention, the logo was discontinued at the 1994 General Conference, rather than embroil AA in legal actions for and against.

On a more personal level, attempts to get AA meetings started on a base in Iraq, for others as well as my own survival, Anonymity was broken with base medics, chaplains, combat stress teams and the Army’s Mayor Cell. (Though I explained AA Anonymity and my desire Not to be pointed out as “The AA guy”, or the base drunk, it was a chance I had to take to keep sober). But with that disclosure, came responsibility to act my best no matter where I was at the time, as anything I did unseemly or improper in my normal duties may have been construed as poor reflection on AA.

The principle is something I can make use of on a personal level, too, for when I engage in gossip about another AA, or another group, I am perpetrating controversy in private, which may seriously affect or diminish their chance for sobriety.

Rendered ‘white as snow’?... playing well with others ALL the time?... hardly.

“...most of us have really loved controversy..... That is the spiritual climate in which AA was born, and by God’s grace, has flourished nonetheless.”

“...part and parcel of learning to work and live together. Let it be noted, too, that they were almost always concerned with how to make AA more effective, how to do the most good for the most alcoholics.” (12 x 12, pg 178)

Having AA on the World Wide Web with who knows who’s watching and listening in, may be similar to being in a fishbowl in a stadium, bringing a new set of situations and circumstances for us to learn to practice AA principles. With a little luck, and a lot of common sense, we may not destroy the very thing which saved our lives, so we can continue to carry the message of Hope and Recovery to the still suffering Alcoholic, in and out of the rooms, whether face to face or through the Internet.

~Tommy S.~

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Understanding Anonymity



So many in Alcoholics Anonymous, both old-timers and newcomers alike, do not have an understanding of the 11th and 12th Traditions relating to Anonymity, and the relationship of Anonymity to the Spiritual Ideals contained in the 12 Steps of AA, the principles and ideals of TRUST, Honesty, Hope, Faith, Courage, Integrity, Willingness, Humility, Brotherly Love, Justice, Perseverance, Spirituality, and Service to One Another. To the extent that my sponsors explained it to me, and from what I have read from the history of AA, I will try to put this VITAL issue into some kind of proper perspective.

These selections from A.A. literature clarify the 11th Tradition and its intent:

In some sections of A.A., anonymity is carried to the point of real absurdity.

Members are on such a poor basis of communication that they don't even know each other's last names or where each lives. - *As Bill Sees it, page 241*

Dr. Bob said there were two ways to break the Anonymity Tradition: (1) by giving your name at the public level of press or radio; (2) by being so anonymous that you can't be reached by other drunks. - *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers, page 264*

The 11th Tradition states, in the short form, "Eleven - Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films." (And we might also add TV at this level for further restriction.)

The 12th Tradition states, in the short form, "Twelve - Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." (Even before my own personality.)

Dr. Bob stated that within the group, every member should know the first name, last name, address and phone number of all the members in the group. If these are not known, then we as a group are operating ABOVE the level of anonymity intended. We are not able to be of Service to One Another in Time of Need.

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Did you ever try to look up someone in the phonebook (like your sponsor, or someone you related to, when your head was putting it on you??) without knowing their last name? Or go into a hospital or jail to try to visit or carry a meeting into a sick or incarcerated member, and stand there with your mouth hanging open, when asked, "What is their name?" No Name, No Visit, No Meeting."Sorry about that but we have our policies and procedures, sorry we can't help you."

Let us see what the long form of the 11th and 12th Traditions can give us in understanding Anonymity and the Principles we ought live by.

11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A. A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

Ahh yes, we are to be anonymous relative to the "General Public", as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. We ought not be publicly identified as members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the press, on the radio or in films, videos and TV media, which is disseminated to the General Public. It is a HUMILITY thing, we have no need to say "How great we are!". We think that in this respect the HUMILITY of A.A. will attract more suffering alcoholics to the program than any amount of advertising or promotion. It is a matter of TRUST.

Dr. Bob's comment -

"Since our Tradition of anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English language that to maintain anonymity at any other level is definitely a violation of this Tradition. The AA who hides his identity from his fellow AA by using only a given name violates the Tradition just as much as the AA who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matters pertaining to AA. The former is maintaining his anonymity ABOVE the level of press, radio, and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity BELOW the level of press, radio, and films - whereas the Tradition states that we should maintain our anonymity AT the level of press, radio, and films."

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What Dr. Bob said was that if we are out there promoting and breaking our anonymity at the level of press, radio and film, we are operating **WAY BELOW** the level of anonymity that is intended, our egos are trying to get attention. We have lost our humility, and we are spoiling the great blessing we have been given. The truth is that any one of us may fail to stay sober as a result of our ego, and failure to practice the steps in all our affairs. We should be ever mindful that **NOTHING** we do as individual members should affect **A.A.** as a whole. Our very lives depend upon this. Without **A.A.**, all we have left is drunkenness and oblivion.

The principle of **TRUST** is first and foremost, the foundation of all spiritual principles and ideals, that we should never break another member's anonymity to **ANYONE** outside the **A.A.** group. To do so would break **TRUST**, and without **TRUST**, all the other principles are **IMPOSSIBLE**. Has any alcoholic ever been able to be **Honest**, or practice any other of the principles and ideals, with something or someone he didn't trust? Of course not. We may break our own anonymity in the process of trying to help another, but we must **NEVER** break the anonymity of another.

When **TRUST** is broached, resentments raise their ugly heads, and all the other principles are out the window, and often times **SOBRIETY**. That is why it is so important that no member should ever broach another member's confidence, and especially any broach of confidence between a sponsor and sponsee. This applies as well to any and all gossiping between members about what another member did or said.

I well remember what my sponsors burnt into my mind, "That I should never take any action that would endanger another member's sobriety, because in so doing I endanger my own" And that included hitting on members of the opposite sex, especially newcomers. Probably more members lose their sobriety for this single reason, than all others combined, as a result of the resentments and gossip that rear their ugly heads.

Newcomers are so very vulnerable, so naive, so confused, so fearful, and looking for anything that will fill that god-awful hole in the gut, for any little bit of acceptance, that any broaching of **TRUST** can send them into a resentment that could mean their **SOBRIETY** and their **LIFE**. Their **Anonymity, Sobriety, Well-Being** and **TRUST** must be protected. They are the **Lifblood of Alcoholics Anonymous**. We protect these things by keeping our own yaps shut - **To Protect Our Own Sobriety.**

~Anonymous~

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S.O.S. IS DESPERATELY SEEKING ARTICLES -
Anything recovery bases is welcome- Experience, steps,
traditions, fellowship, sponsorship, etc...Please send
submissions to briaocon@gmail.com

Sheets of Sobriety offers a sincere apology for the absent October issue and the late november issue. Please help us out with articles so that we can continue to publish the paper monthly. Thank you for your service!



Phil W. - 10 years Judy C. - 9 years Steve F. - 27 years
John S. - 31 years Bill C. - 11 years Matthew V. - 7 years
Judy S. - 30 years Kathy W. - 22 years Ruth G. - 25 years
Gary T. - 7 years Tom K. - 27 years Trudy S. - 8 years
Mitch V. - 18 years Gretchen E. - 9 years Jill G. - 12 years
Donald H. - 46 years Neil M. - 23 years Susan H. - 3 years
Steve H. - 30 years Jane C. - 27 years

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September Cryptoquin - God give me the strength and direction to do the right thing no matter what the consequences may be. Help me to consider others and not harm them in any way. Help me to consult with others before I take any actions that would cause me to be sorry. Help me to not repeat such behaviors. Show me the way of Patience Tolerance Kindliness and Love and help me live the spiritual life. Amen

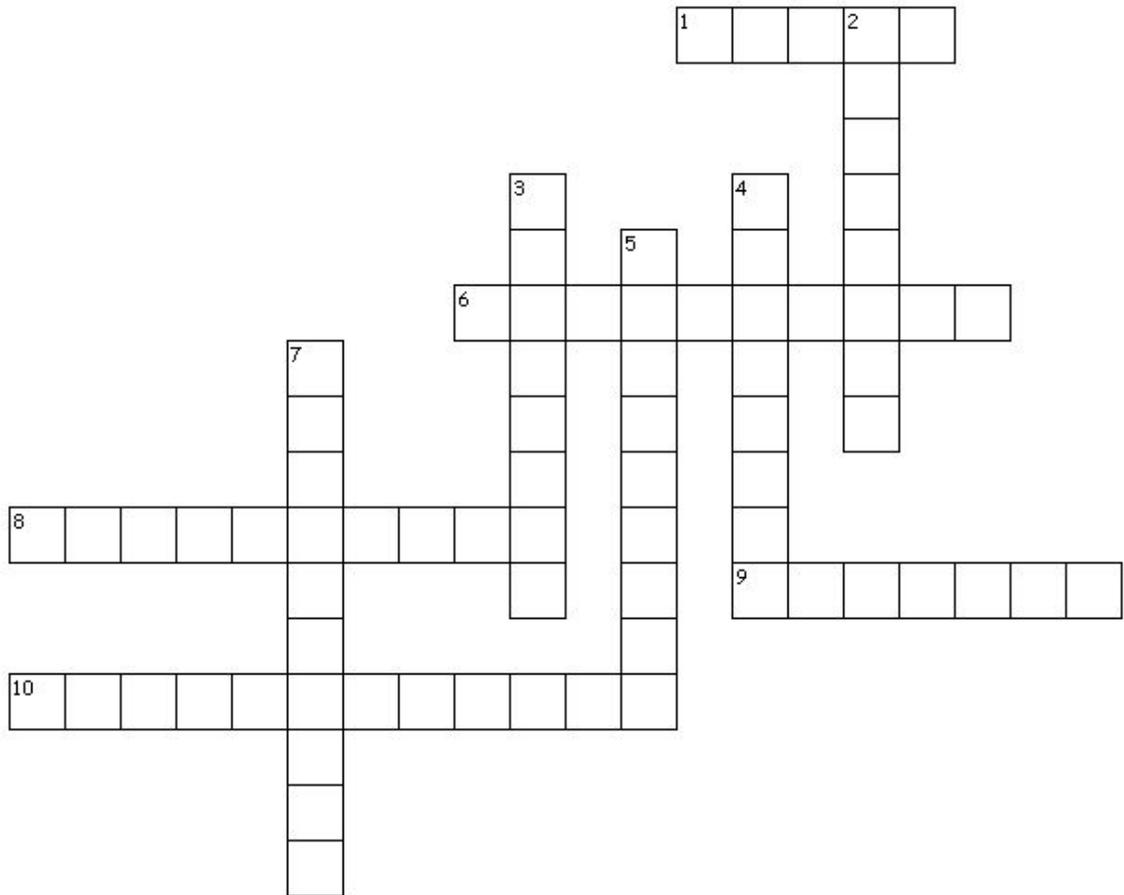
September Double Puzzle - 1. Made direct amends 2. Make it right 3. Love Tolerance and Acceptance 3. God is in charge 4. Service Work 5. Trusted Servants 6. Least possible organization 7. Fear is the thief of dreams 8. Trust Clean Help 9. AA will always be there
~When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer the problem went away~



"Brother, can you spare a dime for a candy bar--to alleviate my craving for alcohol?"

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November Crossword Puzzle



Across

1. belief in the ability or strength of
6. underlying basis or principle
8. a fundamental basis of something
9. thinking of oneself excessively
10. sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves

Down

2. calm peaceful untroubled
3. forward movement toward a destination
4. application of an idea, belief or method
5. obscurity nameless
7. to engage in contemplation or reflection

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