

Sheets of Sobriety - February 2015

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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!**



Freedom

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.
- *Alcoholics Anonymous*, pp. 83-84

Thought to Ponder . . .

Serenity isn't freedom from the storm; it is peace within the storm.

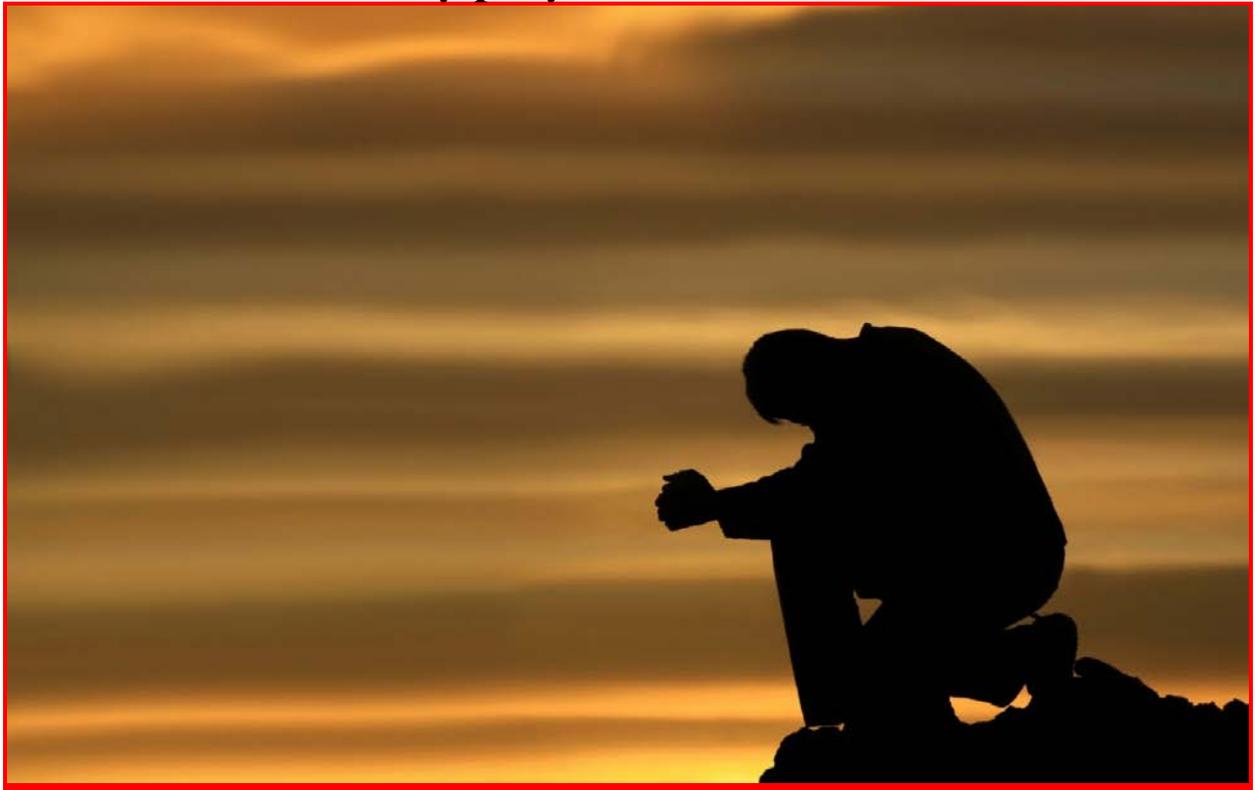
AA-related 'Alconym' . . .

H J F = Happy, Joyous, Free.



"If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it." Pg. 1

My prayer to the Lord



**Almighty Universal Master,
I praise the heavens and Your greatness.
Let Thy spirit come down to me, so that I may follow Your will in all my
affairs.
Help me to spread peace and hope to all.
Thank You for taking away my desire to drink today and for providing for
all my true needs.
Forgive me, Lord for mistakes I might make, and help me to be kind to all.
Your people light up my path so that I clearly see Your purpose for me when
I stray.
Pull me gently back into the fold.
Allow me to be a servant in Your realm.
Help people see that it is Your power behind any good that I may do.
Let these things always be so.**



"If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it." Pg. 2

Step of the Month:



Importance of Step 1 in Alcoholics Anonymous

Making a First Step into Recovery

No journey in life can begin without first making a first step. It is this that puts things into motion. In the case of addiction recovery the first step is always going to be admitting that there is a problem. This is because it is denial of the situation that keeps people trapped indefinitely. Even those individuals who do not subscribe to the Alcoholics Anonymous philosophy will still need to take this important first step. While people are trapped in denial they will not be able to develop the motivation to stop their behavior. This first step of admitting that there is a problem is only the beginning for alcoholics. It is not enough alone to ensure that the individual will escape their misery. It could actually make things much worse because the individual sees the desperation of their situation but feels unable (or unwilling) to do anything about it. There are plenty of alcoholics who admit that their alcohol intake is out of control but feel unable to stop. The individual has to also become willing to make some changes to their life if they are to escape.

Step One in Alcoholics Anonymous

The first step in Alcoholics Anonymous involves more than just admitting that there is a problem. It means breaking through the denial that has kept the person locked in their misery. The individual has to accept that they have been beaten by their addiction. The exact wording of this step is: *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.* This is considered the most vital step in Alcoholics Anonymous, and it is also the only step that members must work completely. If the individual does not accept this first step it will not be possible for them to benefit from the rest of the program. This is because it is only the feelings of *powerlessness* and *unmanageability* that motivates members to make radical changes to their life. The importance of step 1 in Alcoholics Anonymous is emphasized by the fact that the first quarter of the Big Book is focused on this first action.

Powerless Over Alcohol Explained

By admitting that they are *powerless over alcohol* the individual is saying that they are unable to control their intake. This means that they now accept that they have lost their battle against alcohol and no longer believe that they will ever be able to drink safely. If the individual continues to hold onto the idea that they may be able to drink again normally at a later date it means they have not fully accepted their powerlessness. They may be able to stop drinking, but their ambivalent attitude is likely to leave them susceptible to relapse. It is only by fully accepting powerlessness that the individual can move forward effectively.

Alcohol Causes Life to Become Unmanageable

For many people admitting powerlessness is easier than accepting that their lives have become unmanageable. Nobody wants to believe that their way of dealing with life is wrong. Humans tend to be proud of their ability to manage their own affairs – particular in

"If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it." Pg. 3

the modern world. It takes a degree of humility for anyone to accept that they have messed up and they need help. The problem is that if the individual continues to use their existing coping strategies for dealing with their alcoholism they may not get very far in recovery. In order to follow the 12 Steps the individual must be willing to give up their old ineffective coping strategies and develop new more effective ones. In AA meetings members will frequently acknowledge this fact by saying *my best thinking got me drunk*.

Accepting Powerlessness over Alcohol and Unmanageability

It usually takes a great deal of suffering before an alcoholic is willing to accept step 1. The willingness to accept the first step usually arises because:

- * The individual has spent some time trying to control their alcohol intake but keeps on failing. They may be able to drink within their limits for a few days but eventually they slip back into destructive habits.
- * They have tried to give up alcohol without help but keep on failing.
- * The individual has hit rock bottom and can now see how much their drinking is destroying their life.
- * Once they start drinking they feel unable to stop. For example, they go out with the intention of only drinking a couple of beers, but end up getting drunk.
- * The individual has acted so appallingly while drunk that they are forced to face their problems. An example of this would be domestic violence or a car crash while under the influence.
- * Some people are able to accept their powerlessness just by hearing recovering alcoholics talking about their own experiences with addiction. The individual who is still trapped in their alcoholism can recognize that they are experiencing many of the same things.

Unmanageability and Humility

In order to take the first step in recovery it is necessary for the individual to be humble enough to admit that they need help. Some people view humility as a type of weakness, but this could not be further from the truth. It just means that the individual owns up to the reality that they do not have all the answers. Humility also means that the individual becomes willing to accept help for their problem. The benefits of adopting this type of attitude is not only necessary for the first step but for all the steps. The advantages of a humble attitude in recovery include:

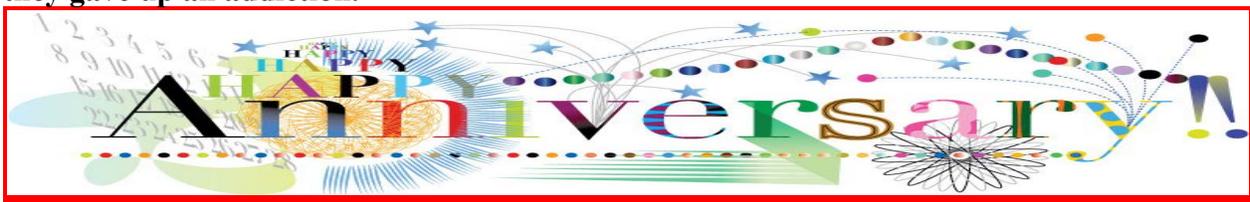
- * It makes it easier for people to pick up new information. Those who already feel they have all the answers have no desire to listen to anyone.
- * Humility means that people are not afraid to ask questions. When people are arrogant they don't like to ask questions in case it makes them appear stupid.
- * A humble attitude means that the individual will not become overconfident in their recovery. This is important because it is usually when people become complacent that they are most likely to relapse.
- * Humility is a vital component of any type of spiritual path – not only the 12 Steps.
- * It is easier for people who are humble to make new friends. Arrogance is an unattractive personality trait that repels other people.
- * Humility means that people experience less stress in their life. They do not put pressure on themselves to have all the answers and have no fear about asking for help when they need it.

Step 1 and Surrender

"If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it." Pg. 4

Step 1 is often described as a type of surrender. In order to accept the need for change the individual needs to first concede that they are beaten. People can view this type of surrender as a show of weakness, but it is actually going to empower them to escape their addiction. It was the fact that they continued to fight their alcohol problem that was causing them so many problems. For the alcoholic surrender means:

- * No longer trying to limit the amount they drink.
- * An end to the misery of *dry days* where the individual stops temporarily in order to prove they have some control.
- * No more need to make drinking rules that later get broken – for example, promising not to drink until after 6pm.
- * An end to self disgust and disappointed because of breaking a drinking rule.
- * No longer needing to use willpower to stop drinking when the individual just wants to keep on going.
- * No more waiting for the *good days* of drinking to return. The individual is never going to recapture those fun early days of drinking.
- * Surrender means giving up on a life of delusion and lies and embracing a new way of living.
- * It means getting a second chance in life. No matter how much of a mess the individual has made of their life it will usually be possible for them to recovery once they surrender.
- * The stressful feeling of having to fight alcoholism disappears. Once the individual becomes settled in their sobriety they will not feel like their life is one constant battle between them and alcohol.
- *No more having to say sorry for things they did while drunk.
- * Surrender means living a life that has real purpose and feels satisfying.
- * It means an end to self-hate and guilt.
- * It means being able to look other people straight in the eye and not feeling less than them.
- * Surrender means that the individual is not only able to escape their misery, but they can also benefit from their experience. Addiction is a cruel teacher, but if people can learn from these lessons it will greatly benefit their life going forward.
- * It means walking in the footsteps of many other people who found success in life once they gave up an addiction.



[*William T. T.-5yrs.*William D. T.-5yrs.*Sherry E-8yrs.*Bill B.-5yrs.*Tim H.-12yrs.*John L.-9yrs*Clara C.-37yrs*Laura C.-42yrs*Sally H.-21 yrs*Bill K.-7yrs*Dennis M.-7yrs*Carol M-29yrs*Carol B.-30yrs*Keli M-26yrs*Larry N-23yrs*Terri M-13yrs*Kathy M-10yrs* Grant P-7yrs*Carilon&Glenn M.-41yrs*Howard S.-39yrs*Kaye P.-20yrs*Pat C.-9yrs*Bernie B-43yrs*Susan Y.-19yrs*Kathy W.-6yrs*Nicol B.-3yrs*Toni B.-3yrs*Debbi G.-7yrs*Jo G-22yrs*Alic U.-25yrs*](#)

- I bent every effort toward increasing my defects of character—and did a little drinking besides.
- I continued my obnoxious arrogant air of asking no one for anything—my Big Eye was for telling, not asking.
- I kept a complete list of all persons who had harmed me, either real or imaginary, and swore to get even and did a little drinking besides.
 - I got even where possible, except when to do so might injure me.
 - I continued to bitch about everything to everyone and, when I was right, was prompt to admit it and had a little drink.
 - I sought through scheming and conniving to materially improve myself—at the expense of my fellow man. Nor did I ever hesitate, when the opportunity presented itself, to bring disaster and misery to anyone who happened to cross my path.
- Having had a complete moral, physical, financial and spiritual breakdown, all of my remaining effort was directed toward dragging those near me and dear to me down to these same depths of despair; And I did a little drinking too.

You might have a drinking problem if... (top 20)

20. You have awakened with an overwhelming feeling that you should go back and apologize... but you don't remember where.
19. The Topsy Taxi service has banned you from all its vehicles.
18. You refer to your favorite song only by its jukebox selection numbers, G-12.
17. People consider your spouse a Saint for reasons that totally escape you.
16. Your least favorite song: "Goodnight, Sweetheart."
15. The last time you had a legal driver's license, so did Ted Kennedy.
14. You bought your current pick-up truck because it has a cool place to hide a six pack.
13. Your last public sing-along experience included the entire Changes in Latitudes album.
12. "But Officer, it's been a long time since I tried to say my ABC's!"
11. You have considered starting a local chapter of DAMM, Drunks Against Mad Mothers.
10. All of your old friends are now members of 12-step groups.
9. The 911 dispatcher no longer has to ask your wife for the address.
8. You think the nutritional information on the back of a beer can is proof that you should be able to buy it with food stamps.
7. The only hymn to which you remember all the words was written by Hank Williams, Sr.
6. "Screw dinner!"
5. You know for certain that putting your foot on the floor does not stop the room from spinning.
4. Your insurance agent drops by and mentions your policy does cover treatment centers.
3. You know the punch line to "Why does an Al-Anon close her eyes to make love?"
2. The producers of the television program COPS send you "Thank You" cards.
And the Number One way you can tell if you have a drinking problem...
1. Two words: Commode Huggin'.

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-Free of charge

-Recovery in print

-Email addresses are between you and myself.All emails are sent blind.

-Send me your email address at [-briaocon@gmail.com](mailto:briaocon@gmail.com)

or fill out your email on this form and return it to your intergroup rep

If you are interested in contributing an article to Sheets of Sobriety, here are some topics to think about for each month:

January- New Life in Sobriety

February- The Love of the Program

March- One Day at a Time

April- Relying on a Higher Power

May- Springing into Action

June- Service Work

July- Living These Principles in all our Affairs

August- Sponsorship

September- The Fellowship

October- Giving Back

November- Gratitude

December- Gifts of Sobriety

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