

Sheets of Sobriety - May 2015

Volume 1 - Edition 12 - An Indianapolis Intergroup Publication

~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!



"A Measure of Humility"

In every case, pain had been the price of admission into a new life. But this admission price had purchased more than we expected. It brought a measure of humility, which we soon discovered to be a healer of pain.

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 75

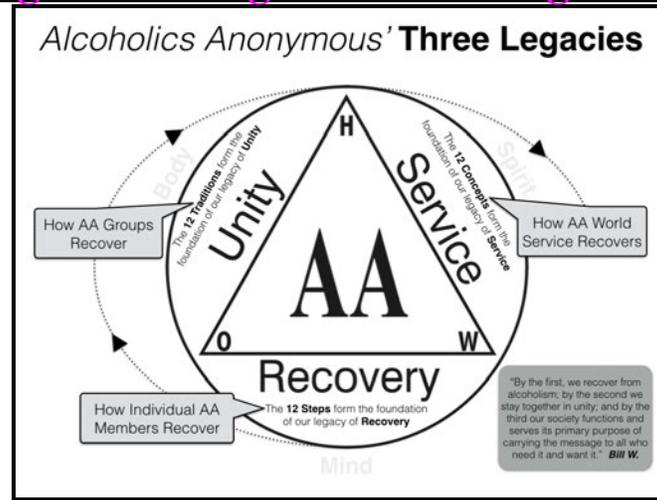
It was painful to give up trying to control my life, even though success eluded me, and when life got too rough, I drank to escape. Accepting life on life's terms will be mastered through the humility I experience when I turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand Him. With my life in God's care, fear, uncertainty, and anger are no longer my response to those portions of life that I would rather not happen to me. The pain of living through these times will be healed by the knowledge that I have received the spiritual strength to survive.

From the book Daily Reflections - © Copyright 1990 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.



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Going to Meetings Is Not Enough - Bill B.



There is more than having meetings with other alcoholics who understand the “power” of the fellowship. The common bond and common solution hold us together. We need their encouragement, and they need ours. The hope received by our experiences and strengths is rewarding also.

But we can't stay sober on meetings, important as they are. The rest of the formula is this: Studying the program in the book of alcoholics anonymous, talking to another alcoholic and prayer.

Sometimes there seems to be an epidemic of relapse in the fellowship. It saddens me when I hear the reason...” I stopped going to meetings.” The partial truth of this statement illustrates only part of the formula. Without taking the steps and prayer you may stay sober...but meetings alone won't do it.

Without the “vital” spiritual experience (profound personality change) sufficient for recovery, long term sobriety is unachievable.

A mentor of mine with long term sobriety says this, “Meeting makers only make meetings!”



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Step of the Month:



Incredible Benefits of AA's Step 5 - Bill D.

Step 5 - Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs

For many newcomers to sobriety, the steps look like a tall order. I remember, at a very young age, reading the steps where I went to church. Too young to understand their purpose, I remember thinking whoever practiced those steps must be pretty extreme. Even as an upcoming alcoholic and drug addict in grade school, I knew the steps sounded a little...well... cultish. Even the Big Book addresses the neurotic newcomer exclaiming, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Truth be told, the steps are extreme. Unfortunately addiction is, by its very nature, exceptionally extreme. And alcohol addiction is no exception. To arrest an extreme illness, a treatment that employs drastic measures must be taken.

A lot of sober newcomers bounce out of the program after the 3rd step. The ones that do make it through the 4th step hit snags on the 5th step because it demands rigorous honesty. That's rigorous, not partial honesty or mostly honest... rigorous honesty! In his book *The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions*, Bill Wilson explains the benefits of thoroughly completing a 5th step. The fifth step of the 12 step recovery program states that we, "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." This vital exercise begins to provide emotional, mental and spiritual relief. By sharing wrong with a trusted confidant, guilt and shame start to melt away. Newcomers begin to realize their troubled past isn't as unique as once thought.

Both painful and rewarding, the 5th step is essential to the fundamental change of personality required to overcome alcohol and drug addiction. In its simplest form, the fifth step is simply a confession of personal wrongdoings. Confession is a long standing practice in the Judeo/Christian tradition, and alcoholics usually store a vast collection of closet skeletons. By sharing the depths of their conscience with another person, alcoholics allow fresh air to enter their soul's closely-guarded closet of shameful skeletons. Repentance, similar to

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confession (and equally painful), is also espoused in the Buddhist verse found in Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (chapter 40):

“For all the evil deeds I have done in the past,
Created by my body, speech and mind,
From beginningless greed, hatred and delusion,
I now know shame and repent them all.”

The original architects of the 12 steps wove the powerful, spiritual tradition of confession for a reason. It is effective. It is healing. It is one of the most valuable tools to alleviate past burdens. As Bill Wilson notes:

“If we have swept the searchlight of Step Four back and forth over our careers, and it has revealed in stark relief those experiences we’d rather not remember, if we have come to know how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.” (12x12, pg.55).

This is precisely what the 5th Step of the 12 step process requires of those who genuinely desire sobriety - a candid discussion in light of a 4th step inventory. Although the word “required” repels many an alcoholics or drug addicts, Bill Wilson further warns that “without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober.” (12x12, pgs. 56&57). Obviously, staying sober is a prerequisite for meaningful, fulfilling recovery. But personal admission of one’s checkered past offers more than mere relief. The Big Book states that the fifth step, if conducted fearlessly and thoroughly, produces unhealthy patterns of behavior. Destructive behaviors reflect underlying character defects, the engine that drives off-the-wall actions. Before freshly sober members can begin to address these core issues, they must undertake an identification process to understand their precise nature.

Of course, personal admission of a rag-tag past is sobering in and of itself. As Wilson points out, however, meaningful insights offer the potential to initiate a purging of core issues that drive alcoholics to drink. Incredible emotional and mental relief, coupled with profound personal insight, makes the fifth step a valuable exercise for anyone. Successful completion marks a return to sanity, or a clear recognition of who and what we are. For most with a truly self-addicted mind, the 12 step recovery process provides an invaluable method to rid oneself of self pity, emotional entanglements, delusions of grandeur and ‘playing the victim.’ Step five initiates the change. But remember, there are seven to go!

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A.A. Sponsorship...Its opportunities and Responsibilities-1944 A.A. Sponsorship Pamphlet-

~This is the first pamphlet ever written concerning sponsorship. It was written by Clarence S. in early 1944. It's original title was to be "A.A. Sponsorship...Its Obligations and Its Responsibilities". It was published by the Cleveland Central Committee under the title: "A.A. Sponsorship...Its Opportunities and Its Responsibilities". ~

Preface- Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is a potential sponsor of a new member and should clearly recognize the obligations and duties of such responsibility. The acceptance of an opportunity to take the A.A. plan to a sufferer of alcoholism entails very real and critically important responsibilities. Each member, undertaking the sponsorship of a fellow alcoholic, must remember that he is offering what is frequently the last chance of rehabilitation, sanity or maybe life itself. Happiness, health, security, sanity and life of human beings are the things we hold in balance when we sponsor and alcoholic. No member among us is wise enough to develop a sponsorship program that can be successfully applied in every case. In the following pages, however, we have outlined a suggested procedure which supplemented by the members own experience, has proven successful.

Personal Gains of Being a Sponsor- No one reaps full benefit from any fellowship he is connected with unless he wholeheartedly engages in its important activities. The expression of Alcoholics Anonymous to wider fields of greater benefit to more people results directly from the addition of new, worth-while members or associates. Any A.A.'s who have not experienced the joys and satisfaction of helping another alcoholic regain his place in life has not yet fully realized the complete benefits of this fellowship. On the other hand, it must be clearly kept in mind that the only possible reason for bringing an alcoholic into A.A. is for that person's gain. Sponsorship should never be undertaken to:

1. Increase the size of the group
2. For personal satisfaction and glory
3. Because the sponsor feels it is their duty to re-make the world

Until the individual has assumed the responsibility of setting a shaking, helpless human being back on the path toward becoming a healthy ,useful, happy member of society, he has not enjoyed the complete thrill of being an A.A.

Consult Older members in A.A.- These suggestions for sponsoring a new man in A.A. teachings are by no means complete. They are intended only for a framework and general guide. Each individual case is different and should be treated as such. Additional information for sponsoring a new man can be obtained from the experience of older men in the work. A co-sponsor, with an experienced and newer member working on a prospect, has proven very satisfactory. Before undertaking the responsibility of sponsoring, a member should make certain that he is able and prepared to give the time, effort and thought such an obligation entails. It might be that he will want to select a co-sponsor to share the responsibility, or he might feel it necessary to ask another to assume the responsibility for the man he has located.

If You Are Going To Be a Sponsor...Be a Good One-Source of Names- Most people have among their own friends and acquaintances someone who would benefit from our teachings. Others have names given to them by their church, by their doctor, by their employer, or by some other

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member, who cannot make a direct contact. Because of the wide range of the A.A. activities, the names often come from unusual and unexpected places. These cases should be contacted as soon as all fact such as; marital status, domestic relations, financial status, drink habits, employment status and others readily obtainable are at hand.

Is the Prospect a Candidate?- Much time and effort can be saved by learning as soon as possible if-

1. The man really has a drinking problem?
2. Does he know he has a problem?
3. Does he want to do something about his drinking?
4. Does he want help?

Sometimes the answers to these questions cannot be made until the prospect has had some A.A. instructions, and an opportunity to think. Often we are given names, which upon investigation, show the prospect is in no sense an alcoholic, or or is satisfied with his present plan of living. We should not hesitate to drop these names from our list. Be sure, however, to let the man know where he can reach us at a later date.

Who Should Become Members?- A.A. is a fellowship of men and women bound together by their inability to use alcohol in any form sensibly, or with profit or pleasure. Obviously, any new members introduced should be the same kind of people, suffering from the same disease. Most people can drink reasonably, but we are only interested in those who cannot. Party drinkers, social drinkers, celebrates and others who continue to have more pleasure than pain from their drinking, are of no interest to us. In some instances an individual might believe himself to be a social drinker when he definately is an alcoholic. In many such cases more time must pass before that person is ready to accept our program. Rushing such a man before he is ready might ruin his chances of ever becoming a successful A.A. Do not every deny future help by pushing too hard in the beginning. Some people, although definitely alcoholic, have no desire or ambition to better their way of living, and until they do...A.A. has nothing to offer them. Experience has shown that age, intelligence, education, background, or the amount of liquor drunk, has little, if any, bearing on whether or not the person is an alcoholic.

Presenting the Plan- In many cases a man's physical condition is such that he should be placed in a hospital, if at all possible. Many A.A. members believe hospitalization, with ample time for the prospect to think and plan his future, free from domestic and business worries, offers distinct advantage. In many cases the hospitalization period marks the beginning of a new life. Other members are equally confident that any member who desires to learn the A.A. plan for living can do it in his own home or while engaged in normal occupation. Thousands of cases are treated in each manner and proved satisfactory.

Suggested Steps*- The following paragraphs outline a suggested procedure for presenting the A.A. plan to the prospect, at home or in the hospital.

Qualify as an Alcoholic*- 1. In calling upon a new prospect, it has been found best to qualify oneself as an ordinary person who has found happiness, contentment, and peace of mind through A.A. Immediately make it clear to the prospect that you are a person engaged in the routine business of earning a living . Tell him your only reason for believing yourself able to help him is because you yourself are an alcoholic and have had experiences and problems that might be similar to his.

Tell Your Story*- 2. Many members have found it desirable to launch immediately into their personal drinking story, as a means of getting the confidence and whole-hearted co-operation of

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the prospect. It is important in telling the story of your drinking life to tell it in a manner that will describe an alcoholic, rather than a series of humorous drunken parties. This will enable the man to get a clear picture of an alcoholic which should help him to more definitely decide whether he is an alcoholic.

Inspire Confidence In A.A.*- 3. In many instances the prospect will have tried various means of controlling his drinking, including hobbies, church, changes in residence, change of associations, and various control plans. These will, of course, have been unsuccessful efforts to control drinking...their absolute fruitless results and yet that you were able to stop drinking through application of A.A. principals. This will encourage the prospect to look forward with confidence to sobriety in A.A. in spite of the many past failures he might of had with other plans.

Talk About "Plus" Values*- 4. Tell the prospect frankly that he cannot quickly understand all the benefits that are coming to him through A.A. Tell him of the happiness, peace of mind, health, and in many cases, material benefits which are possible through understanding and application of the A.A. way of life.

Show Importance of Reading Book*- 5. Explain the necessity of reading and re-reading the A.A. book. Point out that this book gives a detailed description of the A.A. tools and the suggested methods of application of these tools to build a foundation of rehabilitation for living. This is a good time to emphasize the importance of the twelve steps and the four absolutes.

Qualities Required for Success in A.A.*- 6. Convey to the prospect that the objectives of A.A. are to provide the ways and means for an alcoholic to regain his normal place in life. Desire, patience, faith, study and application are most important in determining each individual's plan of action in gaining full benefits of A.A.

Introduce Faith*- 7. Since a belief of a Power greater than oneself is the heart of the A.A. plan, and since this idea is very often difficult for a new man, the sponsor should attempt to introduce the beginnings of an understanding of this all-important feature. Frequently this can be done by the sponsor relating his own difficulty in grasping a spiritual understanding and the methods he used to overcome his difficulties.

Listen to His Story*- 8. While talking to the newcomer, take the time to listen and study his reactions in order that you can present your information in a more effective manner. Let him talk too. Remember...Easy Does It.

Take to Several Meetings*- 9. To give the new member a broad and complete picture of A.A., the sponsor should take him to various meetings within convenient distance of his home. Attending several meetings gives a new man a chance to select a group in which he will be most happy and comfortable, and it is extremely important to let the prospect make his own decision as to which group he will join. Impress upon him that he is always welcome at any meeting and can change his home group if he so wishes.

Explain A.A. to Prospect's Family*- 10. A successful sponsor takes pains and makes any required effort to make certain that those people closest and with the greatest interest in their prospect (mother, father, wife, ect..) are fully informed A.A., it's principals and it's objectives. The sponsor sees that these people are invited to meetings, and keeps them in touch with the current situation regarding the prospect at all times.

Help Prospect Anticipate Hospital Experience*- 11. A prospect will gain more benefit from a hospitalization period if the sponsor describes the experience and helps him anticipate it, paving the way for those members who will call on him.

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