



The Sobriety Gazette

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-MISSISSIPPI INTERGROUP

Let's begin with a moment of silence for the alcoholics/addicts still suffering, followed by the Serenity Prayer... God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

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Step-Tradition Paralell

Each tradition answers the question raised by the parallel step. The second step raises the question of how I can come to believe and what is sanity. I came to believe by trusting the group conscience in A.A., and then I began to trust God and eventually the world. The experience of trusting A.A. to keep me sober is the experience that gave me confidence in God and in you. This is how the second tradition helped me to come to believe.

(Excerpts from the text above come from the Traditions Study developed by the Unity Insures Recovery Through Service A.A. Group, Los Angeles, CA.)

takethe12.org

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Responsibility Statement

I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help. I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

The Second Step Prayer...

GOD, I'm standing at the turning point right now. Give me your protection and care as I abandon myself to you and give up my old ways and my old ideas just for today. AMEN

Love Is as Love Does

By Rick R.

The longer I attend AA meetings the more aware I become of the evolution of the subject matter of meeting topics.

In my early days in the 1970s, the topic was normally about drunkalogues or whatever the leader wanted to talk about that day. Most of the meetings that I attend today are literature-based meetings and there is amplifying information in the literature that reinforces the topic.

On page 164 of the Big Book it says "We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us."

Today we have access to all that they had learned up to that point in time plus everything we have learned since then and the sharing in the meetings is so much deeper as the result of those disclosures.

I was at a meeting recently and the topic was "Love without strings" September 28 in the Daily Reflections. It was interesting to hear the differing perceptions, mainly based on the differing lengths of sobriety and how the word Love was perceived.

I looked up the word in the Thesaurus and it is all about feelings like fondness, passion, adoration, affection, and many others.

Over the years, I have heard it said that "I can love him, but I don't have to like him." Is it him I don't like or is it his behavior I don't like?

All of us come to AA with behavioral problems. It is not about him. It is about me being judgmental. There were comments about sexual attraction or "erotic love" which are common in most online definitions but that is not our purpose when dealing with the word Love.

There are many definitions of the word LOVE and for our purpose, I believe the one that Scott Peck writes about in his book "The Road Less Traveled" he defines love as "The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." He implies that it is not that version that we see on the movie screen.

To me this means that love is, caring for, and nurturing another person. I can love everyone, even if they do not love me back. It is not about them; it implies that it's about me and my actions.

As I took this approach, one by one I defused and neutralized all those mental conflicts and accepted everyone exactly as they are. No longer do they crowd my thinking.

Do those people that still have behavior problems sometimes cross my boundaries? Oh yes, they do.

Sometimes their EGO is threatened by something I shared at a meeting or in the community and they need to defend their position.

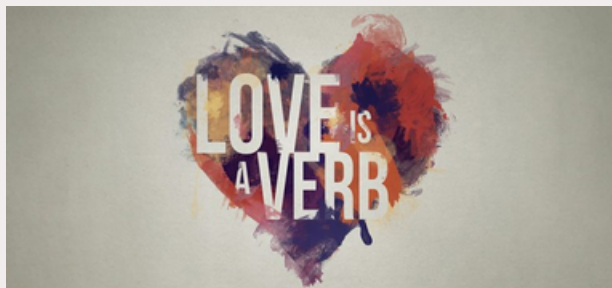
Today I recognize these symptoms in others, and I try to be understanding about what I say at a meeting as to not make him or her uncomfortable. This takes time and I never respond to innuendos when someone is trying to draw me into an argument. It takes two to tango and over a period of time he gets to know who I really am, and he is no longer threatened by the thing I share.

I try to care for and nurture everyone and at some point, in time I have run out of adversaries, that I know of. In fact, I become their best advocate.

Today, the word Love is not a noun. Love is a verb. Love is as Love does. Understand them, wish the best for them, and be willing to help them when you can.

Who could understand the behavior of an alcoholic more than another alcoholic who has experienced their own development in the program?

The founding principles of AA is the caring for and nurturing of another alcoholic. If that is not love, then what is? With all my love, I rest my case.



Breaking Down Step Two of Alcoholics Anonymous

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

I love all of the 12 steps of AA, but step two is the one that gives us hope. With step two we learn that we are not alone, and that something greater than ourselves can help to conquer addiction and despair. Becoming a sober person, free of your addictions means a restoration to sanity. In AA we learn that by working the 12 steps the restoration is happening in part because addiction and it's accompanying insanity are not controlling our lives anymore.

Step Two of AA: A Power Greater Than Ourselves

All of the words of the 12 steps are very specifically chosen, which is another thing I really love about working with them. The second step doesn't say “We came to believe in a power greater than ourselves” it says “We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” That's the beauty - we are invited to begin to think about what our higher power can be.

The emphasis is not on who or what the power is, but on what the power can do for us. The group of AA itself certainly qualifies as a power greater than ourselves (our fellowship is in the millions and always growing) as do the spiritual principles contained in the 12 steps.

The awareness and the understanding that we can't recover alone and that we need some kind of help is really the lesson at this point in recovery. The spiritual principles that are the foundation of this step are open mindedness, willingness, faith, trust, and humility. It really doesn't matter whether we have any idea how this power greater than ourselves is going to help, just that we came to believe it's possible.

Step Two of AA: Questions

As part of a recovery process it's really helpful to ask and answer important questions pertaining to step two: questions about insanity coming to believe, a power greater than ourselves, restoration to sanity and spiritual principles:

- Did you make insane decisions as a result of your addictions?
- Do you have any fears about coming to believe in something greater than yourself?
- What does “we came to believe” mean to you?
- What experiences have you heard other recovering addicts share about their process of coming to believe and have you tried any of them in your recovery/life?
- Do you have a problem accepting that there is a power/powers greater than yourself?
- What evidence do you have a “higher power” is working in your life?
- What are some of the things you consider good examples of sanity?
- What changes in your thinking and behavior are necessary for your restoration to sanity?
- Why is having a closed mind harmful to your personal recovery?
- How are you demonstrating open-mindedness in your life right now?
- What fears do you have that are getting in the way of your trust?
- What do you need to do to help let go of the fears?
- Are you seeking help from your sponsor, going to meetings and reaching out to other recovering addicts? If so what are the results?

Step Two of AA In Our Lives

I have come to believe that by being in the fellowship of AA, with the aid of the 12 steps, that I can walk through the painful times in recovery knowing that an end is near, this too shall pass and there is always light at the end of darkness, as I stay clean and continue to work the steps. But it's important to remember that step two, like all of them, is a process, not an event.

As a southern California native I've come to believe in all kinds of things that are energetically spiritual, where there are parallels in each to sobriety and they complement each other beautifully. Surfing and sobriety as a combination is mind blowing. It just doesn't get much better than standing on top of a wave in the vast and powerful blue water, looking out over the horizon and enjoying the ride...sober.

Life and sobriety are kind of like surfing; sometimes there are is a lull and gentle waves, other times the crashing ferocity of huge swells! Both require patience, humility, and presence, forgiveness and a faith or trust in something uncontrollable, and much bigger than me.

The Jack Alexander Article About A.A.

Why some people become alcoholics is a question on which authorities disagree. Few think that anyone is "born an alcoholic." One may be born, they say, with a hereditary predisposition to alcoholism, just as one may be born with a vulnerability to tuberculosis. The rest seems to depend upon environment and experience, although one theory has it that some people are allergic to alcohol, as hayfever sufferers are to pollens. Only one note is found to be common to all alcoholics – emotional immaturity. Closely related to this is an observation that an unusually large number of alcoholics start out in life as an only child, as a younger child, as the only boy in a family of girls or the only girl in a family of boys. Many have records of childhood precocity and were what are known as spoiled children.

Frequently, the situation is complicated by an off-center home atmosphere in which one parent is unduly cruel, the other overindulgent. Any combination of these factors, plus a divorce or two, tends to produce neurotic children who are poorly equipped emotionally to face the ordinary realities of adult life. In seeking escapes, one may immerse himself in his business, working twelve to fifteen hours a day, or in sports or in some artistic sideline. Another finds what he thinks is a pleasant escape in drink. It bolsters his opinion of himself and temporarily wipes away any feeling of social inferiority which he may have. Light drinking leads to heavy drinking. Friends and family are alienated and employers become disgusted. The drinker smolders with resentment and wallows in self-pity. He indulges in childish rationalizations to justify his drinking: He has been working hard and he deserves to relax; his throat hurts from an old tonsillectomy and a drink would ease the pain; he has a headache; his wife does not understand him; his nerves are jumpy; everybody is against him; and so on and on. He unconsciously becomes a chronic excuse-maker for himself.

All the time he is drinking, he tells himself and those who butt into his affairs that he can really become a controlled drinker if he wants to. To demonstrate his strength of will, he goes for weeks without taking a drop. He makes a point of calling at his favorite bar at a certain time each day and ostentatiously sipping milk or a carbonated beverage, not realizing that he is indulging in juvenile exhibitionism. Falsely encouraged, he shifts to a routine of one beer a day, and that is the beginning of the end once more. Beer leads inevitably to more beer and then to hard liquor. Hard liquor leads to another first-rate bender. Oddly, the trigger which sets off the explosion is as apt to be a stroke of business success as it is to be a run of bad luck. An alcoholic can stand neither prosperity nor adversity.

The victim is puzzled on coming out of the alcoholic fog. Without his being aware of any change, a habit has gradually become an obsession. After a while, he no longer needs his rationalizations to justify the fatal first drink. All he knows is that he feels swamped by uneasiness or elation, and before he realizes what is happening, he is standing at a bar with an empty whiskey pony in front of him and a stimulating sensation in his throat. By some peculiar quirk of his mind, he has been able to draw a curtain over the memory of the intense pain and remorse caused by preceding stemwinders. After many experiences of this kind, the alcoholic begins to realize that he does not understand himself; he wonders whether his power of will, though strong in other fields, isn't defenseless against alcohol. He may go on trying to defeat his obsession and wind up in a sanitarium. He may give up the fight as hopeless and try to kill himself. Or he may seek outside help.

If he applies to Alcoholics Anonymous, he is first brought around to admit that alcohol has him whipped and that his life has become unmanageable. Having achieved this state of intellectual humility, he is given a dose of religion in its broadest sense. He is asked to believe in a Power that is greater than himself, or at least to keep an open mind on that subject while he goes on with the rest of the program. Any concept of the Higher Power is acceptable. A skeptic or agnostic may choose to think of his Inner Self, the miracle of growth, a tree, man's wonderment at the physical universe, the structure of the atom, or mere mathematical infinity. Whatever form is visualized, the neophyte is taught that he must rely upon it and, in his own way, to pray to the Power for strength. He next makes a sort of moral inventory of himself with the private aid of another person – one of his A.A. sponsors, a priest, a minister, a psychiatrist, or anyone else he fancies. If it gives him any relief, he may get up at a meeting and recite his misdeeds, but he is not required to do so. He restores what he may have stolen while intoxicated and arranges to pay off old debts and to make good on rubber checks; he makes amends to persons he has abused and, in general, cleans up his past as well as he is able to. It is not uncommon for his sponsors to lend him money to help out in the early stages.

This catharsis is regarded as important because of the compulsion which a feeling of guilt exerts in the alcoholic obsession. As nothing tends to push an alcoholic toward the bottle more than personal resentments, the pupil also makes out a list of his grudges and resolves not to be stirred by them. At this point, he is ready to start working on other, active alcoholics. By the process of extroversion, which the work entails, he is able to think less of his own troubles.

The more drinkers he succeeds in swinging into Alcoholics Anonymous, the greater his responsibility to the group becomes. He can't get drunk now without injuring the people who have proved themselves his best friends. He is beginning to grow up emotionally and to quit being a leaner. If raised in an orthodox church, he usually, but not always, becomes a regular communicant again.

Rehab or AA: What's the best way to get and stay sober?

Rehab or AA: The Latter

For many individuals considering whether to go to rehab or AA, their decisions often hinge on the effectiveness of one vs. the other. Again, it's important to note that it doesn't have to be an either/or scenario, and the fact is that the best chance of sobriety and quality-of-life improvement occurs when both are utilized.

In fact, according to a report on the website Healthline, "it can be hard to measure the effectiveness of a recovery program. 'Anything in the addiction space is hard to measure,' says Eric Patterson, LPC, a contributing writer to Choosing Therapy. 'How are we measuring it? A week of sobriety? A year? A lifetime?' "But a 2020 review of research on recovery options sheds some light on AA's effectiveness. Researchers analyzed 27 studies involving 10,565 participants, finding that AA attendance leads to longer lengths of sobriety than other treatments, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)."

However, the article goes on to point out: "that doesn't mean it's always going to work, or that other options aren't viable." However, for years, the 12 Step model, established in the 1930s by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith – considered the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous – have served as the backbone for professional drug and alcohol treatment for decades, becoming "one of the most popular ways to treat addiction in professional settings, with federal surveys showing that more than 70 percent of addiction treatment facilities in the US deploy it 'sometimes' or 'always or often,'" according to German Lopez, writing for the online publication Vox. "Years of evidence show that the 12 steps, on average, really can help treat alcohol addiction."

Scientific studies concur: Dr. John F. Kelly, writing for the journal Addiction, concludes that "Alcoholics Anonymous appears to be an effective clinical and public health ally that aids addiction recovery through its ability to mobilize therapeutic mechanisms similar to those mobilized in formal treatment, but is able to do this for free over the long-term in the communities in which people live." For those with limited financial means or no health insurance, that's good.

But even those limitations should be a matter of forcing someone to choose between rehab or AA. There are mechanisms through which the former can be obtained, and in some cases may be necessary, especially for those who will experience excruciating withdrawal symptoms when they attempt to quit alcohol or drugs on their own.

Why Not Both?

Alcoholism treatment and 12 Step meetings aren't mutually exclusive. It doesn't have to be rehab or AA, not when the use of both is the best course of action, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): "Self-help groups can complement and extend the effects of professional treatment ... most drug addiction treatment programs encourage patients to participate in self-help group therapy during and after formal treatment. These groups can be particularly helpful during recovery, offering an added layer of community-level social support to help people achieve and maintain abstinence and other healthy lifestyle behaviors over the course of a lifetime."

Nowhere was this more illuminated than in the March 2020 announcement by the Cochrane Group, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to organize medical research findings. In 2006, a study by the Cochrane Group found that "no experimental studies unequivocally demonstrated the effectiveness of AA or TSF [Twelve Step Facilitation] approaches for reducing alcohol dependence or problems."

However, an updated review of 27 studies and more than 10,500 participants came to a vastly different conclusion when examining 12 Step facilitation as part of a drug and alcohol treatment program: "The authors found high certainty evidence that clinically delivered and manualized TSF programs designed to increase AA participation can lead to higher rates of continuous abstinence over months and years, when compared to other active treatment approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy. The evidence suggests that 42 % of participants participating in AA would remain completely abstinent one year later, compared to 35% of participants receiving other treatments including CBT. This effect is achieved largely by fostering increased AA participation beyond the end of the TSF program."

In other words: 12 Step facilitation works. Rehab works. And when combined, an individual with a drug and/or alcohol problem gets the best of both worlds: Effective, evidence-based psychotherapy; medical and psychiatric care in a hospital setting that can help individuals safely detox from drugs and alcohol under medical supervision as well as allow them to address co-occurring mental health disorders like depression; and a support network that can be utilized after treatment is complete.

Those considering rehab or AA for a drug or drinking problem shouldn't feel that they're painted into a corner, forced to choose one or the other. The best choice is both – because science and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that's the best form of treatment for a medical condition like alcoholism or addiction.

Tradition Two

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

This tradition has been misquoted many times as ‘we have no leaders.’ But it clearly states that each group does have its leaders, they just have no authority over the rest of the group. Whether they be the group’s representative to the area or district, or the secretary or treasurer, they have been entrusted with the responsibility to serve the group, not make decisions for it.

Groups clearly have other ‘leaders’ also. There are those, who, by sharing their wisdom and strength in the meetings, who are quietly recognized by the group as ‘spiritual leaders.’ There are those members who are so well-founded in the principles and traditions of the program that the group turns to when questions arise involving possible violations of those principles and traditions. These, too, are leaders, but they do not govern either.

verywellmind.com

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1983, I wondered, sometimes aloud, why didn’t someone “take over.” The process of group conscience seemed ponderous and some members seemed not astute enough to make the “right” decisions. I was told by my sponsor that in the group conscience our ultimate authority, God, speaks and that we trust that that loving God’s Will takes us in the right direction. Needless to say, I was sure she didn’t mean what she said. I was sure that secretly the “wise” and “educated” members met and took the group where it needed to go. I was wrong.

In group conscience we listen to the least educated with as much attention as we do to the most educated. We weigh the opinion of the youngest member with as much regard as we do the longest sober member.

We consider the opinion of the minority view and many times we change the direction of the group because we had never considered the merits of the obscure view having been expressed by the only “nay” when given the opportunity to tell us why she voted “nay.”

Tradition Two leads me to “trust God” in all things undertaken by the Fellowship. Many times over the past twenty-eight years, I’ve questioned “group conscience” only to find that in the end the decision made was the best direction for all. That is the beauty of “group conscience,” it is God’s voice telling us what is best for all of us, not just some of us. Each group is a fellowship of equals. No matter what an individual member’s background, education or professional expertise, no member has authority over the group. In this way, the Fellowship reaches out to all who would seek its comfort and provides the atmosphere of a sense of belonging to all members.

I am constantly amazed that the lessons of early sobriety and the direction of a sponsor who did not seem wise at the time, still serve as the basis of a happy, joyous and free sober life.

By Betty H.

saltlakeaa.org

Tradition Two Checklist

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibilities?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs, praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I often feel the need to “save face” in group discussions, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn with AA chores?
6. Do I complain about the decisions that my group makes, even though I do not attend the business meetings where these decisions are made?

aagrapevine.org

Announcements

Want to be more included about Announcements and Events from the Mid-Mississippi Intergroup?

Sign up here at: midmissintergroup.org to receive emails related to events and service opportunities!



Your Trusted Servants

Chair -	Open
Treasurer -	Karen M.
Corrections -	Daryl R.
Treatment -	Sandy S.
Intergroup Liaison -	Kurt J.
IT/WEB -	Bruce M.
Newsletter Editor -	Natalie

Intergroup meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm.
650 East South St.
Jackson, Mississippi

Yes! I Want to Be a Faithful Fiver

Date _____
Here is my contribution of \$ _____ for _____ Months
Name _____
Address _____
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Got any ideas for the next Sobriety Gazette?
Contact nnfillingane@gmail.com with topics, graphics, stories, tips, etc.

Faithful Fivers

Faithful Fivers are AA members who pledge at least five dollars each month to support their Central Office. This idea is catching on around the country. The plan came about when we remembered that many of us had spent far more than \$5.00 a month on alcohol during our drinking days.

As a Faithful Fiver, you support the effects of Mis-Mississippi Intergroup: to carry the message of hope to still-suffering alcoholics.

To become a Faithful Fiver simply send monthly contributions to
Central Office
Post Office Box 16228
Jackson, Mississippi 39236