



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.

Contact Information

Telephone
601-982-0081
(Answers 24 hours a day)

Address
4526 Office Park Drive

Mail Donations to:
PO Box 16228
Jackson, MS 35236

Website
www.midmissintergroup.org

E-mail
midmissintergroup@gmail.com

Why Staying Sober on St. Patrick's Day Matters

Believe it or not, St. Patrick's Day didn't start as a debauchorous drinking holiday. The mid-spring holiday has a rich history that predates the catholic celebration of St. Patrick, a former Roman slave who allegedly converted the then-pagan Ireland to Christianity. The original holiday is based on the pagan spring holiday Ostara, which celebrates the spring equinox.

St. Patrick's Day changed as it reached American shores. It began to shift from a religious holiday to a celebration of Irish culture, including four-leaf clovers, corned beef and cabbage, soda bread, and, of course, lots of Irish beer and whiskey.

What does all this have to do with staying sober for St. Patrick's Day? If you are struggling with staying sober on the holiday, try to remember that there is more to St. Patrick's Day, or any holiday, than just drinking. There are lots of different ways to celebrate St. Patrick's Day that don't include the embarrassment and hangover that comes with drinking.

Tradition Three

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

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 Third Step Prayer...

GOD, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!
GOD, Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live. AMEN

Drug Talk in AA Meetings

By Steve K.

Any surrender of personal behavior, wishes, attitudes, opinions or language by an individual in order to promote group unity, is purely a voluntary decision. The literature suggests that group members practice tolerance, acceptance, kindness and love, and therefore members ought to refrain from being critical and judgemental towards others in the Fellowship. Censorship of speech is not a principle of AA. Tradition three states that: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking". Bill Wilson is often quoted as saying that "you are a member of AA if you say you are". This tradition came about due to the experiences of the early AA groups trying to impose a multitude of qualifying rules and regulations upon their members – born of fear and prejudice.

Tradition three is an attempt to be fully inclusive to all who suffer from alcoholism, regardless of differences and the various other difficulties that alcoholics struggle with, such as co-occurring disorders and other addictions. It's unrealistic to expect AA members not to mention their various other life problems, particularly when sharing in the context of "applying these principles in all our affairs", as suggested in Step 12.

Drug addiction is also detailed in the literature of AA. In the book Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book), drug use is mentioned as part of the alcoholic's experience or illness. Examples are in the chapter 'Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict', written by member Paul O, and also in chapter two, 'There is a Solution', p.22, in relation to the description of the so called 'real alcoholic'. Bill W describes at length the alcoholic's tendency to misuse other drugs in his 1945 Grapevine article entitled 'Those Goof Balls', p.103 – 105, 'The Language Of The Heart'.

Wilson clarifies his position on drug addicts, who also have a problem with alcohol, as being welcome in the AA fellowship in his Grapevine article entitled, 'Problems Other Than Alcohol', p.222 – 225, 'The Language Of The Heart'. He also suggests that addicts who don't have problems with alcohol cannot qualify for AA membership, and would be better served by other groups (NA etc). This judgement is in line with traditions three and five.

In consideration of the common experience of overlapping alcohol and drug misuse within the Fellowship of AA, I would suggest that it is unreasonable to try and censor members from talking about drug use as part of their experience as an alcoholic (clearly not an outside issue). However, members who primarily identify themselves as drug addicts, but also accept they have problems with alcohol, should be respectful of AA's primary focus upon alcoholism and avoid excessive talk of other drug misuse and its accompanying language.

In relation to our differences we need to practice being open minded, tolerant and understanding, in particular with newer members and those attending meetings from treatment settings, who do not understand AA's traditions and practices fully yet.

The term balance is often mentioned in the Fellowship of AA, and my viewpoint is that this healthy principle should be applied to this emotive (for some people) issue. Being rigid and attempting to censor in relation to mentioning drug problems by members of AA, who also struggle with alcohol, is extreme and unhelpful to many. Unfortunately this dogmatic attitude is adopted by some literalists in AA, and for me is against the inclusive principle of tradition three, and a rather narrow and misguided interpretation of tradition's five and ten.

I feel that a middle path is best, which allows members to be true to themselves and their history, but is mindful in regard to AA's primary focus upon the illness of alcoholism – addiction to the drug, alcohol. In reality, alcoholism is a complex condition and involves strong relationships with other human difficulties that are valid to talk about in AA meetings.

Society is always evolving and in order to stay relevant so must the AA fellowship. Language and 'traditions' that were appropriate in the 1930's and 40's are not always so fitting in 2016.

In today's society attitudes are changing with the help of developments in the scientific understanding of addiction, with alcoholism and drug addiction being viewed in the same way, brought about by the same causes and conditions. Modern treatment agencies are increasingly merging their alcohol and drug services, and in terms of the various Twelve Step groups, AA, CA, NA, etc, the solution is the same – application of the Twelve Steps.

Breaking Down Step Three of Alcoholics Anonymous

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him”

Step Three of AA: Turn It Over

When we've taken steps one and two we have learned and accepted that our lives are unmanageable, we are alcoholics and a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

What if we were to surrender the manageability part? We can surrender a lifetime of self-will run amok by making the decision to turn it all over to a Higher Power and allow someone and something to care for us. We can stop wearing ourselves out trying to make and force everything to happen as if we were in charge of everything in the world.

Recovery is a spiritual process and step three is when the doors of hope, faith and trust are opened allowing us to once again take a deep breath and feel the serenity: a gift of sobriety. The essence of step three is turning over your will, getting out of the way, and being restored to reality, honesty, balance and peace of mind.

Step Three of AA: Seeking Knowledge

When working on step three we take a look at how acting on self-will means behaving with the exclusion of any consideration for others, focusing only on what we want and ignoring the needs and feelings of others. While we were busy pursuing these impulses, we mostly left a path of destruction behind us, and we definitely lost touch with our conscience and a Higher Power.

However, while working the third step we begin to focus our attention on seeking knowledge of a Higher Power's will for us. Making a decision to turn our lives and will over can't do anything unless we take the actions necessary to turn it over. Simply making a decision without following it up with action is meaningless. For example, you can make a decision to go to a meeting, but if you don't leave your home for the rest of the day, it won't happen, will it?

In AA there are many helpful recovery tools that have worked many times over at maintaining sobriety and a connection with a Higher Power. There's actually a very effective and simple prayer adapted from a prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr and known as the “Serenity Prayer,” which can help you as you are seeking knowledge and make your decision to turn it over on a daily basis:

“God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

With the “Serenity Prayer” you can learn to accept with serenity the current reality of your condition and that although you cannot control the choices and actions of others, you can decide how you will act in each situation. You may not be able to change some things in your life, but you can make a decision to change your willingness to surrender, trust and seek knowledge.

The Scary Three-Letter Word: God

For some people a three-letter word can be even worse than a four-letter word. Time and time again, the word “God” being used in AA literature and meetings will freak out newcomers. Upon closer inspection however, and much to all of our relief, you don't have to consider anyone else's conception of “God” but instead can rely on and create your own idea of who God is for yourself.

In fact, about half the original members of AA considered themselves atheists or agnostics before they began the Twelve Step program of AA. In AA we have the freedom to choose our own concept, lay aside any prejudice and have the willingness to seek a “Power greater than ourselves.” You can call that Higher Power God, Creative Force, a Oneness in the Universe, whatever you want.

There's even an acronym that some like to use to remind themselves that a room full of other recovering addicts is their Higher Power:

G: Group

O: Of

D: Drunks

When practicing the third step we discover the spaciousness for a variety of positive and useful beliefs about a Higher Power. We make a decision to admit the possible existence of an underlying force behind the totality of things, and that the realm of the spirit is pretty darn big, roomy and all-inclusive.

Continued on next page 



Breaking Down Step Three of Alcoholics Anonymous Continued

Step Three of AA Questions

As part of your recovery process it's helpful to take the time to ask and then answer important questions pertaining to step three. Here is a starting point for some review questions:

- How has acting on my own self-will affected my life? How has it affected others?
- How can I take action to turn it over?
- What is the difference between my will and God's will?
- How is my Higher Power working in my life?
- Is my current concept of a Higher Power working my need to change?
- What does "to the care of" mean to me?
- How might my life be changed if I make the decision to "turn it over?"
- Am I unwilling to do things in my recovery that are being suggested? If so, why?
- How does surrender in the first step relate to or help the third step?

jasonwhaler.com/12-steps-of-aa

Like the two previous steps, AA's Step 3 is meant to help alcoholics realize they don't have control over their drinking. What makes Step 3 unique, though, is it requires a decisive commitment, rather than just acceptance. Step 1 asks you to admit your powerlessness over alcohol, and Step 2 introduces a belief in a higher power that can help you. Both of these steps are reflective; they ask you to observe and accept them to be true.

Step 3 is the first one that asks you to actively decide to trust that higher power and let go of things beyond your control, including your addiction. AA calls this step "the key of willingness," which then opens the door to recovery. It helps you begin the process of de-centering your ego, which repeatedly tells you that you can—and must—maintain your independence at all costs. Instead, your decision to surrender means that you're ready and willing to accept outside guidance and help.

sober.com

Common Myths of AA Step 3

Myth 1: You Must Believe in "God"

Perhaps the biggest misconception of Step 3 is that you must believe in a Christian God to practice it. Step 3 does refer to "God," but that doesn't mean all members must be of a particular faith or religion to complete the step or even to join Alcoholics Anonymous.

While AA is a spiritually based organization, any person can practice the 12 Steps, whether they have a deep-seated religious faith or none at all. In fact, Step 2 uses the word "Power" instead of "God," and Step 3 goes on to say, ". . . it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God—or if you like, a Higher Power—into our lives."

The phrase "as we understood him" in Step 3 is key—each person may understand the concept of God to be whatever they need it to be. Your higher power might be an overall sense of spirituality, or your family, or a set of close friends you love and trust. You can even choose your fellow AA group members as the power greater than yourself—any collective entity to which you are willing to turn for accountability and support.

If you strongly identify with Jesus Christ as your higher power, you may find Celebrate Recovery meetings meaningful.

Myth 2: You Lose Your Independence

Another myth of Step 3 is that it strips you of all autonomy. But the truth is quite the opposite. You don't have to change all of your behaviors to be completely passive immediately. Consider that by joining Alcoholics Anonymous, you have already put trust in a collective group to support you and see you through your recovery—a decision that you continue to exercise each time you attend a meeting. If you have an AA sponsor, you've already turned to another for guidance rather than continuing to make all of the decisions for and by yourself.

Step 3 asks you to turn your life over to "the care of" a higher power. When someone or something cares for you, they don't automatically dictate your entire life for you. Surrendering to another's care allows you to trust that loving hands guide you toward a sober life. In fact, this decision is maybe the most independent expression of free will you've made throughout your struggle with alcohol. Instead of the addiction making your decisions for you, you are choosing this path for yourself.

sober.com

Addiction and Suicide: What's the Link?

Suicide and addiction. Too often, we hear these words in the same breath.

At face value, the connection feels logical. Think of celebrities who die by suicide—often there's the implication, if not outright fact, of a struggle with substance misuse.

At the most basic level, "what suicidality and addiction share is the desire to escape from pain and distress," says Michael Groat, Ph.D., director of psychology at Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, CT. It's pain that often draws from a shared landscape of suffering that includes childhood trauma and abuse, economic hardship, chronic physical pain, and mental health issues such as bipolar disorder and depression.

But what exactly is the link? And can suicidality or addiction actually lead to the other?

Not everyone with addiction issues contemplates suicide. And not everyone who contemplates or attempts suicide struggles with addiction. Often, however, the paths converge and feed a loop of misery.

"Someone may turn to an addictive substance or behavior as a way to cope with pain in their life. But addiction then creates its own negative cascade," says Groat.

Hard Facts About Substance Use Disorder and Suicide

Under the distorting and disinhibiting influence of addictive substances, people in their most desperate hours may then be more likely to take impulsive action. Indeed, acute alcohol intoxication is present in 30% to 40% of suicide attempts, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and opioids are present in about 20% of people who die by suicide.

Next to depression and other mood disorders, substance use disorder is the top risk factor for suicide, according to SAMHSA. People who abuse alcohol and/or drugs attempt suicide six times more often than those in the general population.

While all substance use disorders are associated with heightened suicide risk, alcohol and opioid abuse are clear standouts, increasing a person's likelihood of dying by suicide by 10 and 14 times, respectively, per a 2018 study published in *American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' Journal*. Male deaths by suicide outnumber female by almost four to one generally, says SAMHSA.

Gambling, Sex Compulsion, and Suicide Risk

It's not just addiction to substances that's at issue. Addictive behaviors are strongly associated with suicide, too.

"A lot of people don't think of problem gambling as an addiction because a person isn't using a substance. But the effects of gambling addiction can be devastating," says Shane W. Kraus, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Among those who seek treatment for problem gaming, as much as 30% report having made suicide attempts.

Even stronger links have been found between suicide and compulsive shopping and compulsive sexual behavior. Problem gaming, such as playing video games online, is a likely cause of suicidality as well, but more research is needed to be certain.

"People often drink excessively or use drugs to escape their problems. Addictive behaviors also provide a kind of distraction," says Groat. "When you win while gambling or buy something new, it delivers that excitement, that needed hit of dopamine. In the short term, you don't have to think about your issues. You don't have to deal with your unhappiness. But over time, behavioral addictions make problems worse."

Addiction, Mental Illness and Suicide

People have increasingly accepted evidence showing that mental illness is a disorder of the brain, not a personal frailty.

Addiction—specifically substance use disorder—falls under the umbrella of mental illness. As with other psychiatric disorders, a person's risk of developing an addiction can be influenced by their genes, their own physical makeup, and their environment.

"Unfortunately, some people still believe addiction has to do with people's moral failings. That's why there's still so much stigma around it and why a lot of people don't seek help," says Kraus.

Now consider these realities about the dangerous and common collision of addiction with other mental health disorders:

- 90% of people who die by suicide have one or more psychiatric disorders. Risk is highest among patients with mood disorders like bipolar, depression, schizophrenia, and substance use disorders.
- People with psychiatric disorders are also at much higher risk of addiction. Among people with a mood disorder, 32% are found to also have a substance use disorder. In the absence of effective treatment or before an illness is even identified, many self-medicate, "often turning to substances or engaging in activities like gambling as a way to find relief from their negative feelings," says Groat.
- When mood disorder and substance use disorder coexist (called "comorbidity"), the risk for suicide escalates considerably. For instance, men with both depression and alcohol use disorder have the highest long-term risk of suicide of all groups, around 16%.

Tradition Three

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

The Third Tradition is a sweeping statement indeed; it takes in a lot of territory. Some people might think it too idealistic to be practical. It tells every alcoholic in the world that he may become, and remain, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous so long as he says so. In short, Alcoholics Anonymous has no membership rule. Why is this so? Our answer is simple and practical. Even in self-protection, we do not wish to erect the slightest barrier between ourselves and the fellow alcoholic who still suffers. We know that society has been demanding that he conform to its laws and conventions. But the essence of his alcoholic malady is the fact that he has been unable or unwilling to conform either to the laws of man or God. If he is anything, the sick alcoholic is a rebellious nonconformist. How well we understand that; every member of Alcoholics Anonymous was once a rebel himself. Hence we cannot offer to meet him at any halfway mark. We must enter the dark cave where he is and show him that we understand. We realize that he is altogether too weak and confused to jump hurdles. If we raise obstacles, he might stay away and perish. He might be denied his priceless opportunity. So when he asks, "Are there any conditions?" we joyfully reply, "No, not a one." When skeptically he comes back saying, "But certainly there must be things that I have to do and believe," we quickly answer, "In Alcoholics Anonymous there are no musts." Cynically, perhaps, he then inquires, "What is this all going to cost me?" We are able to laugh and say, "Nothing at all, there are no fees and dues." Thus, in a brief hour, is our friend disarmed of his suspicion and rebellion. His eyes begin to open on a new world of friendship and understanding. Bankrupt idealist that he has been, his ideal is no longer a dream. After years of lonely search it now stands revealed. The reality of Alcoholics Anonymous bursts upon him. For Alcoholics Anonymous is saying, "We have something priceless to give, if only you will receive." That is all. But to our new friend, it is everything. Without more ado, he becomes one of us.

Our membership Tradition does contain, however, one vitally important qualification. That qualification relates to the use of our name, Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. Here our purpose is clear and unequivocal. For obvious reasons we wish the name Alcoholics Anonymous to be used only in connection with straight AA activities. One can think of no AA member who would like, for example, to see the formation of "dry" AA groups, "wet" AA groups, communist AA groups. Few, if any, would wish our groups to be designated by religious denominations. We cannot lend the AA name, even indirectly, to other activities, however worthy. If we do so we shall become hopelessly compromised and divided. We think that AA should offer its experience to the whole world for whatever use can be made of it. But not its name. Nothing could be more certain.

Let us of AA therefore resolve that we shall always be inclusive and never exclusive, offering all we have to all, save our title. May all barriers be thus leveled, may our unity thus be preserved. And may God grant us a long life – and a useful one!

silkworth.net

Tradition Three Checklist

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as those who likely will not make it?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately or publicly do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or not?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, sexual identity or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity, a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what they do for a living? Where they live? What their domestic arrangements are? Whether they have been to AA before? What their other problems are?

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 F.

Community Resources

NA -	mrscna.net
Al-Anon -	msafg.org
SLAA -	wsw.slaa@gmail.com
Ms. Dept. of Mental Health -	dmh.ms.gov

Feel free to contact Mid Mississippi Intergroup if you have any questions!

Intergroup meets on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm.
NEW LOCATION
6481 Old Canton Rd.
Jackson, Mississippi
39211

The Intergroup Central Office wants to extend a deep thanks to some of our long standing contributors and our excited welcome to others!

James S.	Kurt J.	Duan J.
Al & Donna H.	Karen M.	Hugh O.
David Mc.	Keith F.	Chris G.
Preston P.	Jimmy M.	Jason S.
Jeff W.	Andy D.	
Bruce M.	Barry B.	

Quote of the Month

"Unfortunately some people were not put here to evolve. They are here to remind you what it looks like if you don't."

- Multiple Sources

Yes! I Want to Be a Faithful Fiver

Date _____
Here is my contribution of \$ _____ for _____ Months
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Group _____
Sobriety Date: Month _____ Date _____ Year _____

Got any ideas for the next Sobriety Gazette? Any questions for the editor?
Contact:
nntfillingane@gmail.com

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