

SEPTEMBER 2026



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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Tradition Nine

AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

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 Ninth Step Prayer...

"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."

The Sobriety Gazette is a publication of the Mid-Mississippi Intergroup. The purpose of this publication is to improve communication between local AA groups, inform and encourage participation in service opportunities and events that promote sobriety. Opinions expressed do not necessarily indicate endorsement by the central office or Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

The Unconditional Love of Tradition Nine

By Kimberly C.

“A.A., as such, ought never be organized...” begins the section on the 9th Tradition in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book. This simple phrase is exactly the reason I am in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and in fact the reason that out of all the designs for healing I have stepped my big toe in over the last thirty years, I have stayed and been able to maintain my sobriety.

In essence, the 9th Tradition reminds members that while A.A. needs some practical structure—like groups, intergroups, and committees to carry out tasks such as publishing literature or organizing meetings—its spiritual heart is a fellowship of equals, not a hierarchy. Authority remains with the group conscience, not with individuals or offices, ensuring that any service bodies exist only to support sobriety and carry out the will of the members, never to govern them.

For me, rules have always spurred a natural response toward rebellion. I got thrown out of Catholic School in the 7th grade because I was a perpetual rule breaker. We weren’t allowed to wear make-up, which Sister Rita called “war paint,” so I made sure to wear an extra coat of Wet and Wild hot pink to her religious studies class. We wore uniforms, blue and black and white plaid with quaint ankle socks that I oftentimes exchanged for rainbow hued knee highs— many bouts in detention ensued from those creative accentuations. I had a pop-up hair cutting and piercing shop in the bathrooms in the morning where I would simply poke an earring through a girl’s ear in a few seconds and spread rubbing alcohol over the newly adorned lobe. Mother and fathers would call the principal and tell on me, and I would garner more detention hours. I was thoroughly disciplined for just being myself until the school finally had enough of me and I entered the realms of public school.

What finally happened to me for the first time in my life when I entered A.A. was that I was seen for the complicated human being I was – a mixed bag of life circumstance, family of origin influence, and confusion about how to operate in the “real world” without my self-medication crutch of booze. After living a life of feeling inherently different from everyone else, I was thrown into a Petri dish of human beings (in meetings and fellowship) who were exactly like me, and That Was Suddenly Okay. I didn’t have to look a certain way, make a specific amount of money, hold a particular political belief— I could just show up and be me without worrying about being thrown out. And I have the 9th tradition to thank for this. No other human ego would rain on my parade because this tradition espoused that we were all in this together, and being all in this together meant to put my judgment, interests, inclinations, and ambitions aside to just let the chips fall where they may as long as I was doing the first step perfectly — admitting that my life had become unmanageable, that I was powerless, and being willing to never drink again. The ninth tradition exemplifies what we learn in steps two and three— to let go and let our higher power take the wheel, spending less time on how we need to manipulate, control, or strategize for outcome within the groups we choose to acquaint with and just trust in the process of using the twelve steps to lead us to a new design for living.

Another key point of the 9th tradition falls in line with this quote for the 12 and 12: “His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to spiritual principles.”

I heard in a meeting the other day that one of the greatest gifts of A.A. participation is that “We do what we need to do when we need to do it so that we can do what we want when we want to.”

This is something that I can, with ultimate personal resonance and authority, attribute to the 9th tradition as well because in the old days, for me, if I was doing something someone told me to do because it was simply a “rule,” my character would not become as enriched as when I decided to do something on my own to abide by said rule because I had seen and felt it with my own eyes through experience. In A.A.— with its absence of puritanical rules in the 9th tradition, its lack of board regulated terms, and the lightly unconventional faith that controlled chaos brings, I am made well aware that my compulsion to live better is self-motivated and that makes for grand fruition and longevity in the sober world. Making a personally empowered right choice and next action becomes my gold star and builds my character in richer ways than simply obeying or toeing the line.

I try to only speak for myself in my recovery journey, but every day I continue to encounter others who are highly intelligent, highly thoughtful, and highly sensitive who speak about their feelings of “difference” within our shared world. The fact that tradition nine cheerleads this difference and doesn’t create a code for inclusion or a checklist to follow for membership has been the redeeming quality for us alcoholics struggling to both find a community of unity while also trying to keep our rebel souls intact. The proof is in the pudding— I am still here, as are you, and the funky junk of our mixed bag of humanity continues to fuel this ever so special fire, in which we can say loudly and proud, “It works if you work it!” And We Are Worth It!

What Are the 9th Step Promises of AA?

The 9th Step Promises are some of the best-known promises in Alcoholics Anonymous. They appear in the Big Book after the discussion of making amends. For those of us new to AA, promises like “a new freedom and a new happiness” can sound hard to believe. After years of drinking and dealing with the consequences, it can be difficult to imagine life changing that much. The promises are not about having a perfect life. They describe some of the changes that can happen as we work the Steps, make amends, and continue practicing the principles of AA. Here is what the 9th Step Promises mean in recovery.

Where the Ninth Step Promises Come From in the Big Book

The Ninth Step Promises appear on pages 83 and 84 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, in the chapter “Into Action.” They are sometimes called the “extravagant promises.” They describe changes that can happen as we work the program and begin living differently. Although they are called the 9th Step Promises, they are not limited to making amends. They are connected to the larger process of recovery and the work of the Twelve Steps.

1. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

This promise is about seeing changes sooner than we expected. As we work the Steps and start living differently, we may begin to notice changes in our thinking, relationships, and reactions. Things that once seemed impossible can start becoming part of everyday life.

2. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

Freedom in recovery is about more than not drinking. We begin to get freedom from the obsession, fear, and chaos that came with our old way of living. Happiness does not mean every day is easy. It means we can experience life without always needing to escape from it.

3. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

Most of us in recovery have things in our past we would rather forget. The Steps give us a way to face those things honestly instead of running from them. Making amends helps us take responsibility for what we did, learn from it, and move forward without being consumed by regret.

4. We will comprehend the word Serenity, and we will know peace.

Serenity does not mean that everything in life goes the way we want. It means learning to accept what we cannot change and taking responsibility for what we can. In recovery, that can bring a kind of peace that was difficult to imagine when drinking was running our lives.

5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

The things we regret most can eventually become part of how we help another alcoholic. We know what it is like to struggle because we have been there. Sharing our experience can give someone else hope that they are not alone and that recovery is possible.

6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

Drinking can leave us feeling isolated, ashamed, and stuck in our own problems. Recovery gives us opportunities to be useful. Helping another person, showing up for a meeting, or simply being there for someone who is struggling can get us out of our own heads and give life greater purpose.

7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

As we work the program, we can become less focused on getting our own way and more interested in other people. We learn to listen, help, and consider how our actions affect others. That change does not happen overnight, but it can become a natural part of living sober.

8. Self-seeking will slip away.

Self-seeking is the constant effort to get what we want, protect ourselves, or control the outcome. Recovery teaches us to pause and consider what the right thing to do is instead. We still have selfish thoughts, but we become more willing to recognize them and act differently.

9. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change.

One of the biggest changes in recovery is learning to look at life differently. Problems that once seemed like reasons to drink become things we can deal with. We begin taking responsibility instead of blaming everyone else, and we learn that a difficult day does not have to turn into a disaster.





10. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

Fear can control our lives. We can worry about what people think, whether someone is angry with us, or whether we will have enough money. As we become more honest, make amends, and learn to deal with problems as they come, those fears can begin to lose their hold.

11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

This does not mean we suddenly know what to do in every situation. It means our responses begin to change. Instead of reacting the way we always did, we may pause, ask for guidance, admit when we are wrong, and try to make things right. With practice, those responses can become more natural.

12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

For many of us in AA, recovery becomes about more than simply staying away from alcohol. It becomes a relationship with a Higher Power and a different way of living. Over time, we may look at our lives and realize we can do things we could never do on our own.

Step 9 and the Process of Making Amends

The Ninth Step says:

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Making amends means taking responsibility for the harm we caused and doing what we can to make things right.

Sometimes that means talking directly to someone and acknowledging what we did. In other situations, a direct amend could cause more harm, so we need a different approach.

An amend is also more than simply saying “I’m sorry.” When possible, we take action to correct the damage and change the behavior that caused it.

The goal is not to make someone forgive us or to control how they respond. We are responsible for our side of the street.

Why the 8th Step Comes First

The 8th Step prepares us for the Ninth Step.

Step 8 asks us to list the people we have harmed and become willing to make amends.

That list comes from the honest work we have already done in the program. By the time we reach Step 9, we have started taking a hard look at our behavior and the harm we caused.

Step 8 gives us the willingness. Step 9 puts that willingness into action.

In Conclusion

The 9th Step Promises describe some of the changes that can happen when we work the Twelve Steps and continue practicing the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We may experience a new freedom and happiness. We may find more peace, become less controlled by fear and self-centeredness, and learn how to handle situations that once seemed impossible.

Life does not become perfect because we get sober.

But we can learn to live it differently.

For many people, that is when the 9th Step Promises stop sounding like promises and start becoming our experience.

By: Shannon M.

Cracked Doors

By: John Lawless

It offered solace
an escape from life’s torment,
false comfort – oblivion’s
denial of the truth,
the lie of living’s afterlife.

Trembling hands reached out
in search of hope’s lost promise,
a door ajar, a welcome,
open invitation
to shed death’s robe, to live again.

Tradition 9: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Principle Behind Tradition Nine

Equality: the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities. "AA as an organization is ultimately guided by the model of a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience ."

Connecting with the Big Book

We had to unify our Fellowship or pass off the scene. As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the A.A. groups and A.A. as a whole could survive and function effectively... that our leaders might serve but not govern; There was to be the least possible organization, even in our service centers. BB pg. XIX

What is behind Tradition 9? The answer is far simpler than you might think.

The 12&12 notes that the Ninth Tradition appears to contradict itself. However, the book points out that AA does not conform to usual protocol regarding most organizations which give authority to certain individuals. As per the Second Tradition, we view ourselves as “trusted servants” rather than authority figures. In this manner, our groups do not resemble organizations as we generally define them. When considering AA’s primary purpose, this is important to remember. Alcoholics Anonymous isn’t a traditional group in any sense of the word. This is why AA considers themselves to be a program of suggestion. The Twelve Traditions provide an important foundation. But at the end of the day, these principles can be suggested only, but they cannot be prescribed. AA groups are not in the business of issuing orders. As group members we might accept healthy recommendations, but we do not tolerate mandates. Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, or most of us will die alone and as a fellowship fade from the scene. This extends not only to members, but to all levels of service as well. AA is animated only by the spirit of service—a true fellowship.

johnstownaa.com/notes/twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions/Tradition-9

Tradition Nine Checklist

- 1. Do I try to “boss” things in AA?**
- 2. Do I ever resist formal aspects of AA because I see them as authoritative?**
- 3. Do I try to understand and use all elements of the AA program—even if no one makes me do so—with a sense of personal responsibility?**
- 4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?**
- 5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?**
- 6. Why doesn’t every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?**
- 7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?**
- 8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?**

Announcements

Want to be updated about AA Announcements, Events, and the Sobriety Gazette?

Contact midmissintergroup@gmail.com to get involved!

You can also contact the editor at nntillingane@gmail.com for comments or questions!

Your Trusted Servants

Chair -	Sam C.
Treasurer -	Karen M.
Secretary -	Kurt J.
Corrections -	Daryl R.
Treatment -	Sarah S.
Intergroup Liaison -	Carrie T.
IT/WEB -	Bruce M.
Newsletter Editor -	Natalie F.

Community Resources

NA -	mrscna.net
Al-Anon -	msafg.org
SLAA -	www.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.
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.	Susan L.	Henry A.
Al & Donna H.	Chris B.	Kurt J.
Jeff W.	Hugh B.	Ed C.
Bruce M.	John R.	Andy D.
Will W.	Mary Jane B.	Stacey K.
Mike W.	Frank P.	Joe C.
	Rusty M.	Sam C.

**Recognition of \$1.00
per year for sobriety
birthdays welcomed!**

Birthday Contributions:

**Duan - 39 years
Norma - 30 years**

EXAMPLES OF GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS TO A.A. SERVICE ENTITIES

- Distribution of funds from groups that support service entities:



**10% To District
10% To Area Committee
30% To G.S.O.
50% To Central Office/Intergroup**

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 _____

**Shout out to these AA groups
for contributions to our Book
Fund over the last two years!**

Unlimited	Southgate Serenity
Traditions	Quest
Primary Purpose	Way Out
Serenity of	
Purpose	

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**