

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

SERVICE IN CORRECTIONS

I've heard people in AA say "the secret is to find someone who has what you want, stick close to them and do what they do."

So, when I was about 4 years sober, a woman I admired made an announcement to see if anyone wanted to join her at the South Burlington jail to bring an AA meeting in. I put my hand up and because if she was going, I thought I should go too.

I'd been sober for about 6 years when my sponsor and I were sitting at a meeting together and someone announced they'd be holding elections at the next District meeting and they were looking for people to chair various committees. My sponsor looked at me and said "You should go to that meeting and volunteer."

So I went. And when I got there, I felt a little bit like I did when I first started going to AA meetings. Unsure, but willing to give it a try.

I did what I did in the beginning of my AA journey: I listened, I asked questions. At the

next monthly meeting, I volunteered to be the Corrections Chair, since I had been going to jail meetings for a while and knew about them. Turns out it was like a lot of AA things - it helped me as much as it helped the group. I realized that as Corrections Chair, I had the chance to tell group representatives (GSRs) about our need for more women to join us and that actually they could help me get the word out.

That's what District meetings are for. And I learned how stuff happens, district-wide, state-wide and even nationally. I never gave it any thought before, really. Things like holiday "Alcathons" just happened. But of course they don't just happen. Someone volunteers to help out at an event, or chair a committee. It's been really rewarding, and I've learned a lot. And it feels good to make things happen and be of service to others.

Which reminds me to make a plug for the cause: if you'd like to join me at a jail meeting, email corrections@burlingtonaa.org and I'll send you more information about how YOU can get involved. And if you have old issues of the Grapevine magazine, let me know

and I'll be happy to bring them in. The female inmates in South Burlington and the male inmates in St. Albans really appreciate what we do. So get involved -- you'll be glad you did!

~Anne E

Corrections Chair for District 2

AA ALWAYS BEATS MODERATING

What I wanted was to be able to go out to happy hour with friends on a Wednesday night, have 2 drinks, get to bed at a reasonable hour, and wake up refreshed for work the next day. What always seemed to happen is that I would have the 2 drinks, then a third, and a fourth, and continue drinking until the bar closed.

I tried different methods over the years to limit myself. I tried only bringing a small amount of cash to the bar, figuring that once it was gone I would have to stop. I tried drinking 2 glasses of red wine every night because they said it was healthy for my heart. For a while I kept a spreadsheet of the number of grams of alcohol I was drinking. I swore I'd quit drinking when I was by myself, and only

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drink socially. Nothing worked consistently, and I never really knew when an evening of drinking would result in an early bedtime, throwing up the next morning, or driving drunk and getting arrested.

My drinking eventually got me in trouble with my job. They gave me 2 options: either go to rehab, or not have a job any more. I grudgingly went to rehab and out of boredom I started reading the Big Book. In "More About Alcoholism", the book lists "some of the methods" the authors tried "to drink like other people", including "limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning" and so on. I realized that I had tried to control my drinking in exactly the same ways.

I thought if this group of alcoholics, writing this in the 1930s, did all the same things I had done, then maybe I was an alcoholic too. That then meant maybe AA's program of recovery could help where all my attempts had failed.

After rehab, I started going to AA meetings, got a sponsor, and worked the 12 steps. My life gradually started to get better. Now, I no longer suffer from hangovers, I don't crave alcohol, and I don't have to struggle any more to control it. I'm grateful for AA's solution, and I'm grateful that I was open to hearing the message.

~ *Anonymous*
Monday Night Beginners

HOW TO LOSE SOMEONE

My last year of drinking was my worst, as it often is. It was also the year my drinking went from occasional to daily. It took only 14 months for the disease to threaten to make my life unmanageable.

As my drinking went from infrequent to noticeable, my best friend Tai began to take notice. Tai was a beautiful soul, a grimy, clairvoyant, and street-smart person. They had an eye for souls and could see a person's character more clearly than most anyone else I've seen. We had bonded over shared hardships and a love of each other that straddled somewhere above friendship, but only just. Despite this, I hardly listened to their warnings about my habit.

In August of that year, just before I left for school, they gave me a copy of Living Sober. I didn't open it. In November of that year, as many aspects of their life and mental health collapsed, Tai took their own life.

Their death broke something in me. It was an almost deafening presence; a weight on my soul from within. A hollow hole blown out of me with a cannonball, filled in with frost and ash. I desperately searched for answers and relief. But when answers came up wanting and relief required healing, I turned to the seemingly obvious thing: the bottle.

Over the next nine months, I watched myself draw line after line in the sand, only to step over each line and sweep it away behind me as if I never cared. I went from "only on weekends" to "only on non-school nights" to "only one or two on school nights" to "who cares". I began to experience daily hangovers. My grades slipped. Today I have no doubt that had I had another 9 months of drinking, I would have become immeasurably worse.

But once again, someone stepped up. My then partner compelled me to go to an AA meeting, and from there I began the road of recovery. 12 steps and 2 years later, I now see Tai's death in a totally new way. Where before I responded to grief with self-medication, I now honor their last wishes for me with recovery. I realize how it must have hurt them to see me drink over them, and now I only hope they can see how far I've come.

~ *Artemis*
Proud & Sober



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