

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

SLOW YOUR ROLL

From the very first meeting I attended, I felt better among other alcoholics. The easy camaraderie, the tragicomic stories, those feelings of loss and redemption—there was a quality to AA that I could feel, even if I did not know exactly what it was. Even though I did not get sober after my first meeting, I realized that people had something that I wanted. The problem was that I did not want to do what they did.

Out of desperation and fear of potential consequences, I finally came to AA for what I hope is my last first time. I noticed how I still felt better after attending a meeting. Even if it was someone I had heard twenty times before, I found some nugget of wisdom that gave me a sense of relief.

Then I went to my first District meeting. I had gone to my group's business meetings, but District meeting was another matter entirely. Every issue that came up seemed to spark endless discussion. I got frustrated with what I thought was a lack of progress. A

GSR from another town approached me after a meeting and asked me what my hurry was. He explained to me that District meetings promote another purpose beyond getting something done; we also learn how actions serve the mission of carrying the message to other alcoholics. He helped me to understand that nearly every person in AA can reflect upon how efforts of people in service helped introduce them to AA. The meeting in prison; the telephone hotline; the meeting list in the doctor's office—all were products of someone's service. When viewed from that perspective, I understood the importance of what we do in service.

Unlike regular AA meetings, I have to say that I don't always feel better immediately after an AA business meeting. The rewards of service are not always immediate, but they come when I need them most. In a business meeting, I can refrain from speaking on outside issues that do not involve me. With my family, I can remember that our common welfare should come first.

How many important relationships in my life have survived because I have learned to place principles over personalities? Today I am grateful that I learned those principles through AA service.

~ *Anonymous*
— Young, Sober and Free

GETTING TO KNOW MYSELF AND OTHERS THROUGH DISTRICT SERVICE

I came into A.A. and proceeded to stop the marijuana, cigarettes, and alcohol one day at a time. I was living on disability, had a diagnosis of mental illness, and had not worked a job in 10 years or so. I was used to just using and doing nothing to get through the day.

But after getting a sponsor, I became aware of how important (essential) service work was in recovery. It was one of the three sides of the A.A. triangle.

I joined a home group and went to work for the group. I found it was fun to take responsibility for the running of

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the group, and from there my life of service I took off. I spoke at meetings, I set up for meetings, I made coffee, I became the group's G.S.R. Later, I eventually served as District Two secretary and treasurer.

My attitude when I walked into a meeting began to change from "what can you all do for me?" to "what can I do for all of you?". I began to leave my selfish self behind and think a lot more of other people, especially in meetings. When I wasn't thinking of myself, I felt freer and lighter in meetings and enjoyed myself more. Finding that I "actually" enjoyed myself while at meetings gradually became a real "turning point" for me. I developed social skills and have become dependably sociable, and enjoy being together with other people.

A.A. service work led me to become a "volunteer" in a number of jobs out in the world. I sang in my church's choir for 23 years, volunteered at the UVM Medical Center Center for 24 years, volunteered at the Burlington Health & Rehabilitation Center for 23 years, at J.U.M.P. for 6 years, as well as facilitate a mental health/illness support group for 10 years. As you can see, I took "service" work "to heart"!

Service work is the way to go. Helping others is the way to help yourself. By serving others, you actually serve yourself. Most

importantly, by serving others you serve and honor your Higher Power.

~ David T
— GSR for Over The Hump

CONNECTED AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

I remember the Group Conscience when I was asked to be the GSR for my Proud and Sober home group. It's a meeting where many of the members have well over a decade of sobriety, so it was no surprise that they looked towards me, the almost 2-year-sober-"whipper-snapper", and my friend, to take up service positions. My friend became the Treasurer and I stepped into the GSR role.

I recognized some of the faces at the first District meeting I went to in the Green Steeple Church, located by a very tasty-smelling Chinese restaurant on St. Paul street, but there were many people I didn't know. I also remember saying I was the GSM (a common acronym at my job) instead of GSR and feeling so, so incredibly embarrassed, silly, and dumb; District was and still is a good place to see where my character defects and low self-esteem pop up!

Thankfully, I quickly got over that "hurdle", got more comfortable with people, and even looked forward to this meeting every month where I've gotten to

learn about contributions, what is and isn't aligned with AA principles, and the struggles and how we're working to overcome them. I even raised my hand to step into the Eye Opener chair that hadn't been filled in months. Quite a change from the person who grudgingly trudged to their first District meeting and couldn't believe they "had" to give up 60-75 minutes ONCE a month -- oh the humanity. How nice too now think that I "get" to go!

Even though my terms for GSR and the Eye Opener Chair are coming to a close soon, I'm already starting to look for ways to stay connected at the District level. I once heard someone share that there had been times in their life where they may not have made it to a lot of weekly meetings, but being in service kept them connected to the program and the people. I liked that. And besides, there's always a few laughs and rarely a dull moment at our meetings.

~ Jocelyn H
— GSR Proud & Sober
& District 2 Eye Opener Chair

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