

# The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

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## Healing and Helping in AA

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**I came to** my first AA meeting at the age of 43 just a shell of a person. I began burying my heart and soul intensely with alcohol the day after my divorce at age 27, the first time I had ever been alone. Unbeknownst to me, for the next 16 years, my drinking drowned emotional pain and grief.

I was in therapy on and off for those 16 years. The last year of my drinking, I was so sad, depressed, miserable and lonely. I felt unlovable and a nothing of a person. During the year before my 43rd birthday, while in therapy, I tried to access my emotions of anger and grief. I could not cry, nor could I get angry. I had a thought I might have a drinking problem. I would go home after work, pour myself a glass of wine and immediately feel relief. Finally, I realized my drinking was getting in the way of expressing my emotions. I was stuck. I had to do something.

I reached out to a friend who got me in touch with a woman who took me to my first meeting. For the first year or so, I was clueless and found the literature so foreign and difficult to comprehend. I started a 90

and 90 and ended up continuing for a year. Since then, I have never stopped coming.

Having a sponsor (I have had a few over the years) has been instrumental in my growth. I have had a weekly step meeting since the beginning. Step meetings are proving to be so valuable in my spiritual and emotional growth. I continue to be amazed - there is something to take away from every meeting and every reading.



I have learned so much about the person I was when I was drinking. Most importantly, I have compassion today for who I was then. My mother took her own life at age 43 when I was 18. I was so angry for many years. My father instructed myself and two sisters to never talk about this again. Today, through sobriety, AA, the Steps, the help of my sponsor and fellow AAs, I have forgiven my mother. I have compassion for her. I can separate her mental illness from her role as a mother. I also know with all my heart that she loved me very much. (p. 2)

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I used to think I had nothing to offer anyone. My opinion of myself was low. Coming to AA has turned that around. The first time I spoke to tell my story I was in my first year. I was at the podium in front of a microphone and my knees literally shook. I had to keep alternating from one leg to the next to stop the shaking. Everyone in the audience was staring at me with interest at what I had to say. I had never felt that before. We AAs care deeply for each other.

As I trudge along this AA journey, I learn more about myself and build up my confidence. Being able to sponsor someone helps me to know that I DO have something to offer others. We learn so much from each other. We in AA are equals. We help each other stay sober. Today I can say I am in love with AA. The best relationship I have ever been in (so far).

I am open and willing in AA,

*~Joya*

Living Sober

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## Beginning Again: An AA Story

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### I first got sober

in 1987 in San Francisco. I had been going to Adult Children of Alcoholics meetings and had started look-

ing at my pattern of drinking, so I went to AA meetings too.

I did the least that was expected of me, and that seemed to be enough. I stayed in AA for the next five years, through becoming a mother, moving from San Francisco to New Jersey and then from New Jersey to Burlington, Vermont. At that time I thought, "I've got this. I don't need meetings anymore," and I never joined Burlington AA.

I stayed dry for the next five years,

was hiding my excessive drinking. I lied about my drinking to everyone: my family, my friends and my healthcare providers.

I couldn't hide it from my body, mind and spirit, though. I became severely depressed and my physical health was suffering. I was suffering. Like a lot of suffering alcoholics, I made my family miserable, alienating my friends and coworkers with my verbal abuse and bad attitude.



but because I was not treating my alcoholism, I thought that I was cured. I thought that I could drink like a normal person. "I can have a glass of wine with dinner," my diseased mind told me. So I did. Nothing happened at first, so I continued, gradually increasing the amount I drank until I was drinking every day, hiding bottles around the house and deluding myself that I

My last big bout of drinking was during the holiday season of 2007. My husband and daughter decided to go spend the holidays with Grandma in New Jersey, leaving me at home because I was so awful to be around. I drank around the clock for a week, trying to decide between suicide and going back to AA. (p. 3)



That's when my Higher Power stepped in: a thought came into my mind that killing myself would be very bad for my daughter, who I love deeply. I decided not to do that to her and went back to AA.

It was the best decision of my life. My new sobriety date is January 7,

2008, and I intend to keep it. This time, I have plunged into the middle of AA. I have followed all the suggestions to the best of my ability, attending lots of meetings, getting a sponsor, working the steps and doing service work. I enjoy the Fellowship very much and I have great AA friends. My life and

attitude are very different than before. At last, I feel "happily and usefully whole."

*~Christine D.*

Monday Night Beginners

### **AA Announcements**

AA Event on Christmas Day, Dec 25: Unitarian Universalist Society, 153 Pearl St., Burlington.

New Year's Eve Alcothon, Dec 31: Unitarian Universalist Society, 153 Pearl St., Burlington.

Please visit the AA Vermont District [News & Events](#) page for more information.

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## Show Up and Make the Coffee

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**The turmoil** of early sobriety was the first lesson in one day at a time shrunk down to one breath at a time. I can remember learning to dissolve panic attacks by learning to be present for them. I eventually learned the most counterintuitive skill sets had incredible application to all that fear, despair and resistance.

I would wake and bake and, if stoned enough, the urgency of life-needs-a-solution was kicked down the road. Then drinks and the evening's plan would take shape and all that angst would dissolve and I'd wonder what the fuss had been. There were plenty of high-stakes, how-did-I-survive-that jackpots but the real thing was erosion of the will to carry on. Later on I found the description of my "bottom" when I came across the 12x12 description in the Third Step: "The philosophy of self-sufficiency is not paying off. Plainly enough, it is a bone-crushing juggernaut whose final achievement is ruin."

I stumbled from miracle to miracle in early sobriety, staying sober but also facing crisis after crisis. Over time, things straightened out, because I continued to



Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more local stories and meeting information.

do the less sexy stuff day to day or week to week and that intuitive knowledge grew and grew. For example, in early sobriety there was always a parking space right out front. (God doing for me. . . ) Later, I started leaving on time. My home group made coffee in 50 cup urns, one regular, one decaf. Meeting set up took at least an hour. With so much small talk and intimacy and time spent sober with drunks, I learned to fit in, be of service, and take some responsibility for my sobriety. There were fewer miracles but more belonging and security and my place in my higher power's plan was more certain even if the details were not always clear to me.

I still gravitate to fanfare and dramatic and permanent gestures even though the test of time has shown that the solution is something else. Working the Program and talking with alcoholics, sometimes about nothing, has taught me the solution. Bill W. wrote: "Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men."

Sure, it's not always rainbows, kittens and unicorns. There is still work but it's simple, humble work and I can do it. So, I do it and it works. This holiday season, don't be alone. Pick up the phone, go to a meeting and take care.

*~Anonymous*  
Living Sober

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## Eye Opener Committee

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