

# The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

## From Isolation to Socializing

### I came to my first AA meeting

just by chance, but when I kept coming back, I found it to be a home and a safe place, and a refuge from the world and all my troubles.

The longer I stayed, the more the AA message seemed to apply to me. I gained the courage, support, and momentum to stop smoking (marijuana and cigarettes), and drinking alcohol. More than anything else, it was the common bond of the fellow travelers whom I met and got to know at meetings who gave me the strength and the belief in myself that I could put down the substances. As time went on, I came to believe that I could do the impossible, things I thought I would never be able to do, like being a functioning and useful member of society.

I have a diagnosis of mental illness that made me think that I could not be around other people because my mind was too "dangerous". The solution came when I identified my illness with the others at

meetings. They too were dealing with a mental illness. With this "they are just like me" attitude, I lost my aloneness and uniqueness. I warmed up to the presence of other people. I began to enjoy myself and most significantly made friends. And these friendships have not gone away and have lasted three decades.

Socializing and regular attendance at meetings has become a way of life. I even now facilitate meetings designed especially for those dealing with mental illness. AA gave me a way to end "self-centeredness". That, I think, was the cause of all my troubles. At meetings now, I think of you and not me. Doing years of service work for AA and doing a number of volunteer jobs around the local area, I developed a new personal posture in life: instead of a "What can you do for me?" person, I became a "What can I do for you?" person. Today, I consider myself a full time worker/volunteer for AA and for sober life. It is the job of a lifetime which I love completely. I serve other people wherever I go just by my presence, as I'm always ready to help anyone. I live to serve and love other people, and by doing so I serve and love myself. Of course, I could not do this without a higher power. By myself, I am powerless, but with my higher power, I can do anything. The strength is in numbers. Alone I could do nothing. Thank God I am no longer alone.

I have come to believe that AA can serve any person on the planet, by giving them hope, (p. 2)



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and is capable of solving any problem at all, alcoholic or otherwise. It is truly an oasis in the desert of the world. There is an endless supply of wisdom on how to live life well to be found in AA. It is wisdom that is priceless in quality and very hard to find. The fellowship that comes with AA is the best that a person can find. It turns strangers into friends, and friends into family. We come to live together as human beings on the same planet. We treat each other as human beings. It becomes wonderful to be a human being. And we all find our home in AA. Thank you Bob and Bill for starting something that saves lives, puts us all together, and gives endless hope for the future.

~David T.

Over the Hump

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## Alcohol, More Important Than Oxygen

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### My childhood

was better than most. But I was clear on a few things. I wasn't particularly good at anything. I was a big disappointment. I was lazy. I was undisciplined. I wasn't living up to my potential. If I would just apply myself....

I discovered alcohol in 9th grade at Edmunds Jr. High School. It was THE ANSWER! I loved it SO much! For the first time I felt good about myself! Comfortable. And cool! I vowed to try to get myself some alcohol every day for the rest of my life. I actually had that conscious thought! Early on I learned that wine was easier to control than liquor. With daily practice I got good at hitting that perfect .16 BAC and staying there. It didn't take me too many hangovers to discover the

perfect cure – more alcohol. So, I got comfortable with the joys of morning drinking.

I married a wonderful man who drank just like I did. We lived and loved until the consequences of alcoholism started to happen. DUI'S, health problems. It became clear that we needed to stop drinking. So we tried. And failed. And tried. And failed. One of us would start sneaking drinks until the other one would find out, get all resentful, and we'd be drinking again. He got sicker and sicker, and we kept trying to not drink and failing....until he died.

My beloved husband had just died of alcoholism and the only thing I knew how to do was drink. I gave myself a year to drink enough to kill the pain. Which was a lot. A year came and went, and I dragged along the bottom for yet another 5 years of heavy drinking.

I had become pathetic. I was so lonely. A former drinking buddy had been extolling the joys of sobriety. I didn't believe him for a second.

(p. 3)



How could I possibly survive without alcohol? It was all that was keeping me together. But if I could just stop for a while, maybe then I could get this monster under control.

I still wasn't defeated. I messed around my first few months until I relapsed in a ferocious bout of drinking. I was finally defeated. I got Step One to my very core. If I can't drink the way I want, all day, every day, it's pointless to even go there.

My sponsor gently led me through the Steps. Step 3 was a Spiritual Experience for me. God was in charge, not me. I remind myself of that on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. In Steps 4 and 5 I learned that my character defects (early survival skills) didn't have to be. And I was just like everyone else. What a relief!

My relationship with God has brought me the self-acceptance I drank for. In AA I have found the tribe that I was looking for. And I am no longer alone.

~Deb

Over the Hump



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## Free to Obey

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## “Give yourself

*completely* to this simple program,” they say. I learned the hard way what “completely” has to mean for me. I thought I could nev-

er get sober. There were the detoxes, the rehabs, the endless ambulance rides. There was the DUI. There was the 10-day coma. There was talk therapy, the medication, and the years of grazing on the message and practices of Alcoholics Anonymous, hoping to absorb it passively as if by osmosis or to take it in piece-by-piece. “Take what you want and leave the rest” proved to be nearly fatal – *for me* – because I did not adhere to one simple, fundamental maxim: stay away from that first drink.

I did everything else *almost* to the best of my ability. I had a Higher Power (one even higher than alcohol, which itself was more powerful than I was). I had a wonderful, nurturing sponsor to whom I told *nearly* the whole truth, holding back on the most salient details of my life and my lifestyle.

(p.4)

## Over the Hump (Open)

First United Methodist Church | 21 Buell Street, Burlington

Speaker Meeting

Wednesdays | 5:30 p.m.

I had a strong sober support network, though one that I allowed to atrophy as I increasingly failed to pick up the telephone. My world became very small as I invariably wound up doing what I do best. I isolated, got away from people, neglected relationships with the Fellowship, family, friends, God, and especially myself. For years I lived in an alcoholic fog, not quite wanting to die but certainly not wanting to be alive. There were the shakes, the bleeding, the bruising, the hallucinations. There was the trail of damage that my drinking left in its wake and then there was the downward spiral of drinking alone to avoid doing further damage followed by increased drinking as my isolation became more total and my tolerance became sky-high. An old-timer said something at a meeting that reverberated through my life: "This disease wants you dead; it will settle for you drunk; but, first, it has to get you alone."

Give myself *completely* to this simple program? That had to mean engaging with others. That had to mean practicing absolutely rigorous honesty. That had to mean summoning the will to want to want to be sober more than I craved being numbed by ethanol, even when the alcohol abuse had all but zapped my willpower. And finally, it had to mean resisting that

first drink, after which I was completely powerless.

When I finally got sick and tired of being excruciatingly sick and overwhelmingly tired, I put down the bottle on February 2, 2021. I started to use the tools that the program, counselors, therapists, and a slew of other professionals had put in my tool belt over the years. I began the lifelong process of accepting myself for who I *am*, and I let go of my extreme perfectionisms and fatalisms. I learned to live one day at a time. And day-by-day I am giving myself *completely* to Alcoholics Anonymous. I have never known such serenity as I do these days. Today, I do the next right thing. I extend compassion, rather than pity, to myself. I have a wonderful new sponsor whose relationship with me is based upon grace, encouragement, and truth-telling. I attend 1-2 meetings per day, not because I feel obligated to but because I want to, because they make me feel safe, heard, and alive. I no longer see AA as a sentence never to drink again; I now see it as the ticket to freedom: I do not *have* to drink *today*. Today I am at peace, and all because of the physical and emotional sobriety that I have developed in Alcoholics Anonymous.

~Tasi P..

Over the Hump



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

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