

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Safe Harbor at Last

I was born in mid-nineteen fifties to parents – one by accounts a driven, inflexible tyrant – and the other a depressive, increasingly alcoholic victim. I was a discipline problem from the start, and it only worsened when my twin brother and sister were born three years later. Our little family moved repeatedly, putting a strain on us all. I went to more schools than years of school, which, according to the textbooks, spells doom psychologically.

I recall a home movie my dad took of me as a young kid, partaking of the drinks at one of my parents' many cocktail parties. In the flickering projector light, I was drinking, wobbling, and falling down, much to my dad's amusement despite his disdain for alcohol consumption. It had a profound effect on me, though, because I drank every chance I got for several decades, tossed on the groundswells of alcoholism.

I punctuated my drinking with various jobs, stints in treatment, occasional detainment, and 15 years of daily IV drug use. Still, I consoled myself with lively relationships, good times, and accomplishments worthy of some pride. I was not the type of person to swear off drinking or lament my suffering. I loved sitting in a dingy, dark bar or alone at home, listening to wistful tunes and moping. When it got bad, I refused to acknowledge it, even when I began to wake up in the hospital from the odd overdose or coma. If I became unemployable or incapable of maintaining a

relationship, well, who needed that stuff, anyway? I was good at this, and there was triumph in mere survival. My lifestyle inevitably led to mandated attendance at AA meetings throughout my life, enough to kindle a familiarity with the program but not enough to inspire any enthusiasm. Still, it left a lasting impression. I spent most of my life in the Philadelphia area and rarely found myself outside my comfort zone, so nothing changed. However, when I decided to try a change of address to Vermont, my whole world came crashing down around me. Upon awakening in a Burlington hospital this time, I found I had nowhere to go and no one to turn to. All I had was a ten-year-old car I drove to take up tenuous residence in a roach and mouse-infested motel outside of town. It was divine providence that I knew neither where to buy liquor nor the location of a suitable bar. (p. 2)

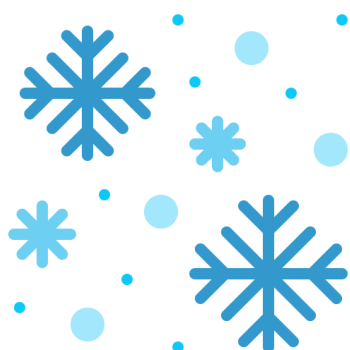


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THEY DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OR POSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EYE OPENER COMMITTEE OR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

A Higher Power determined that as I pursued treatment, I also found a plethora of Burlington AA meetings. I instinctively knew this was where I belonged and jumped in with both feet. I have been to a meeting five days a week or more for fourteen years since. There has not been a miraculous transformation, and I still live in a motel. Yet, I have found peace, purpose, and fulfillment in the berth and mooring proffered to me by the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

~Harry K.
Early Risers



A New Found Freedom

Sober and in recovery is a way of life for me today, but it didn't start that way.

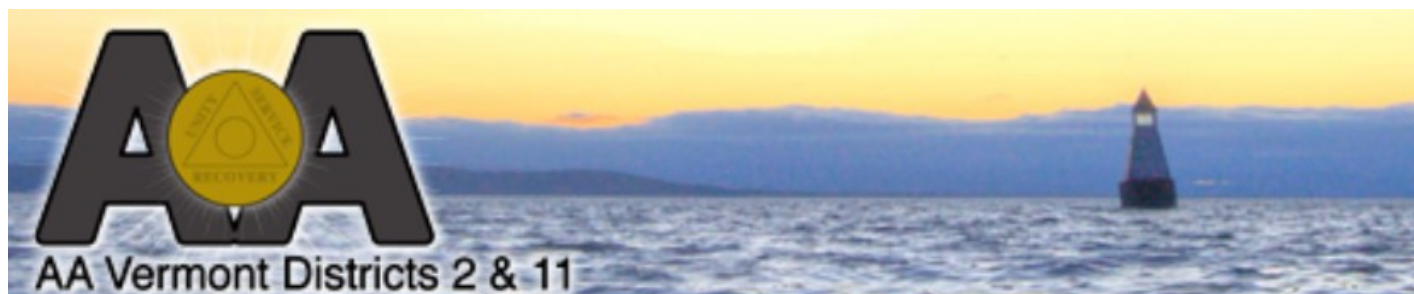
I've been in and out of the rooms for years, struggling to string together weeks or months. In those early days, if you had asked me what sponsorship, twelve step work, or the fellowship was, I would have stared at you blankly. Then in April 2019, I went to what I thought was my last-first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Afterwards, I did a 90 in 90, got a sponsor, and started working the steps.

However, I made a critical error in the very beginning that put me on the course for my eventual relapse. I never surrendered. 11½ steps just doesn't cut it in our way of life.

"...Alcohol, my life is unmanageable," is good and fine for a while, but there is no admission, no honesty, and no "we" in the second half of Step 1. Soon enough *I knew* exactly how to keep myself sober. Using gifts awarded to me by continued sobriety, *I decided* that exercise, yoga, healthy eating, etc. were just what *I needed* for serenity.

"Hey, I'm not drinking, so everything must be fine."

Over the course of the next three years, meetings left my schedule, I stopped calling my sponsor, and the program left my life. Slowly but surely, my ego was in charge and my character defects made all the decisions; eventually I went back out. If you had hooked me up to a lie detector and asked me if I was sober, I would have passed. (p. 3)



Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more
local stories and meeting information.

Denial [I'm told] is an acronym for **Don't Even Notice I Am Lying**, and I was fully I was suicidal, miserable, and completely alone.

One particularly dark morning, in a moment of desperation and powerlessness, I hit my knees for the first time. It wasn't poetic or clean, but I was 100% honest.

"God, take this, take all of it, I just can't, please help me."

At that moment God turned to me, having always been there patiently waiting for me to ask for help. After lifting off my knees, I finally knew what they meant by "a new found freedom:" true conscious contact.

Today my daily practice includes morning prayer, a gratitude list, the daily reflection, a meeting, step work/big book study, fellowship-ping, calling three other alcoholics, calling my sponsor, and taking inventory. All of this while taking the time to pause and make conscious contact.

I cannot do this alone, but with the help of the program, the fellowship, and my higher power, I'll never have to again.

~Anonymous

Early Risers



Work It Group
Valentine's Day Party
Wednesday, February 14
Williston Federated Church
44 N Williston Rd
Join us at 6pm for a fellowship
pot luck
Bring your most loved dish to share
Meeting starts at 7:30pm

Please visit the AA Vermont Districts 2 & 11 [News & Events](#) page for more information.

Early Risers

Open ~ All Are Welcome

Monday through Friday | 8:00 a.m. | format varies

First United Methodist Church, 21 Buell Street, Burlington

Download or print the AA Vermont Districts 2
& 11 [meeting list](#).

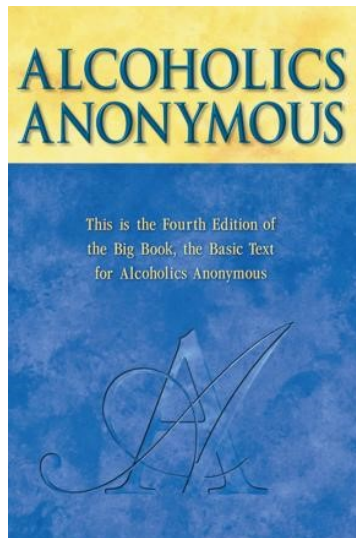
My Daily Routine

I've been committed to my sobriety since July 9, 2010, thanks to my active involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). My journey includes having a sponsor, being part of a home group, and holding a service position. I've worked through the steps with my sponsor, as the Big Book suggests, leading to a spiritual awakening as described in Step 12. Now, I guide my sponsees through these steps, enriching my life.

Each morning starts with reading pages 86 and 87 of the Big Book, particularly focusing on the "Upon awakening" paragraph. This passage reminds me of the importance of maintaining my spiritual condition, which hinges on surrendering my will and life to the care of God as I understand Him. This daily reading is a cornerstone of my routine.

For my morning meditation, I randomly select a spiritual virtue using an app. I spend 10 minutes contemplating how to embody this virtue throughout the day. I also share the chosen virtue with my sober friends via text, followed by a brief session of recovery-oriented reading.

During the day, Step 10 is my guide, alerting me to signs of selfishness, self-seeking, and dishonesty. When I encounter these, I follow the Big Book's "3-legged stool" approach: praying to God to remove these shortcomings, admitting them to someone affected, usually the person I've wronged, and then finding someone I can help.



My daily routine also involves activities directly related to recovery. This includes attending a meeting, listening to a speaker tape, or working with another alcoholic as a sponsor. Each day, I ensure to engage in at least one of these activities. Additionally, I strive to perform at least one estimable action daily, as I believe self-esteem grows from such actions.

At night, I revisit pages 86 and 87 of the Big Book, focusing on the paragraph about retiring at night, which contains 12 introspective questions. These questions help me assess how well I've maintained my spiritual condition during the day.

Some days, I answer these questions positively, while other days, they offer a chance to reflect on my challenges and plan for improvement. This routine has been transformative, propelling me into a higher dimension of existence. Sharing my experience,

strength, and hope is a privilege, and I wish all the best to those on a similar journey, hoping to offer insight into a fulfilling, sober life.

~NB

Early Risers

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