

once was the answer to all my problems (alcohol), was no longer working. I knew nothing I did could make this stop. I keep coming back to the rooms of AA for these reasons. Here I finally found the answer why I couldn't stop drinking. I had a disease and suffered from a spiritual malady. It was only by finding a Power Greater than myself and receiving direction from AA thru the 12 steps, that I can honestly stay sober today.

~ *Leeann B.*
Grand Isle Wednesday Night
Speakers Meeting

SHOWING UP IN A CRISIS

The day before Thanksgiving, just as my husband, daughter, and I had arrived at my extended-family gathering, we learned that one of my younger brothers had committed suicide. Needless to say all plans, all agendas, all thoughts and pre-conceived anxieties came to a screeching halt.

This is the third brother I have lost. But this was a first-hand experience with suicide. All I could think about was the incredible pain Joe must have been in to have taken his own life.

And then of course, being an alcoholic, my next thought was 'why hadn't I been there for him?' Why didn't I do more?'

On Thanksgiving morning, before facing the huge crowd of family I sat down to my morning meditation and read a passage from Living Sober. And as so often happens, I hit upon just the right message: "Alcoholism is an ailment characterized especially by egocentricity... Therefore trying to get into communication with and to help other people is a recovery measure for us, because it helps take us out of ourselves." In other words—"Try this. Sometimes we can heal ourselves by helping others."

And so for lack of a better plan I tried it. I used this simple suggestion and put it into practice that day, and for the next couple days while dealing with my huge, emotional, loving, exasperating clan of relatives. I don't know how much help I actually provided, but I do know that horrible, bleak confusion and panic that I had originally felt now had a focus and perhaps even a purpose. I could face a tragic situation and not drink over it.

I know it's been said probably millions of times before, but just by reading the suggestions made by other alcoholics long past and present I can approach my life in a different way.

It's that simple and that complicated.

In former years I might have been the one at that family gathering that everyone else

avoided, but now I can take on a different role for myself. I wrote my brother's obituary, helped with meals, watched the younger kids. Whatever was in front of me to do I did. Simple but not easy.

My brother's death has left a terrible silence in my life that doesn't just go away. But like every single challenge that comes up in my life, and life is full of challenges great and small, I have these tools and suggestions right in front of me. And then I can go to a meeting and talk about all of this with other people who 'get it.' People who fight the same demons I fight.

There are no answers as to why Joe chose that day to end his life. And I know that I will face other tragedies in my life just like everyone else. But with the help of the 12 steps of AA I can face them without resorting to alcohol, a solution that never worked anyway.

~ *Lee K.*
Grand Isle Wednesday Night
Speakers Meeting



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The Eye Opener



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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

MOMENT OF CLARITY

Looking back on it, I had probably gone from a heavy drinker to an alcoholic by 1990. What followed were two long periods of dry time; one of over 3 years, and another of over 10 years. In neither time did I seek help from AA, because I didn't believe I was an alcoholic. However, in both instances, when I fell off the wagon I was quickly drinking with the frequency and in the quantity that I had before I stopped.

As it turns out, I really didn't know about the obsession of the mind and the denial that comes with it. In a fairly short period of time I spent the night in jail and racked up two DUIs. At this point I decided to call myself an alcoholic and go to AA, more out of a need to punish myself than to get help. In my mind, I had been gluttonous and weak-willed; so I sentenced myself to go where other losers went! I attended a meeting a week for a while, even reading some of the Big Book, but that was as far as it went.

After a friend and I from work decided we would try a two-man relay in an upcoming marathon, I

felt the time I might have spent going to more meetings would be better used exercising. After all, I thought, losing weight and getting fit were both very life-affirming, and I eventually dropped the one meeting I had been attending. Over the course of the 15 months from my second DUI till the day of the race, I dropped 65 lbs., was able to easily run the distance, and only drank one night.

After the marathon, I felt that whatever control issues I may have had were now resolved. What I had accomplished with my physical condition, I could now apply to my drinking. I got drunk that night, and over the next 16 months I was back at it again. One night, it occurred to me that I was again drinking and driving just as before, and that I had somehow forgotten about all the problems I had had with my second DUI--the court appearances, probation, lawyer costs, loss of license, etc. A 3rd DUI would be a felony, probably cost me my job, and may result in some jail time. How had I forgotten about what happened and the consequences of another conviction?

I was surprised that I hadn't thought of this before! I tried to

take cabs to avoid arrest, but knew that I had lost all control with how much I drank, and that it was just a matter of time before I slipped up. After one last hurrah on my birthday, I decided to come back to AA--and get a sponsor. It wasn't smooth sailing, as I was naturally resistant, but eventually it took and I've managed to stay. AA is a big part of my life now. I'm grateful for the moment of grace that showed me the truth about my drinking, and got me to come back. My life is much better today, and I have God and AA to thank for it.

~ *Anonymous*
Grand Isle Wednesday Night
Speakers Meeting

POWER OF EXAMPLE

Last night the meeting was about the 12th step. The part we read in the Big Book was the early alcoholic's experience of finding alcoholics, through hospitals, police, judges and how to approach them. For older members there are memories of the process of 2 alcoholics visiting the man or woman, telling their stories, what happened to them, and offering this solution to the still suffering alcoholic.

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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

More often these days we meet alcoholics at meetings and talk to them over coffee after the meeting. Some of us go out after for “the meeting after the meeting” where the new person had a chance to be part of the group and talk freely over coffee, or some are willing to take calls on the AA phone line and share the message that way.

I reflected later that I was “twelfth stepped” into AA, not by what someone said but how their life changed. My sister got sober in AA in desperation at the bottom of her run with alcohol. The family was glad she wasn't drinking anymore but that was it. At that time, though I didn't drink like my sister, but I was wondering about my own drinking. It seemed I could stop, but I always started again, even when I really didn't want to be drinking because of the fear of the next problem I might make for myself in my relationships.

While my wondering and rationalizing went on, I saw a miracle taking place in my sister. She had been at death's door, and now she was looking healthy. She had been miserable and angry, fearful and despairing and now she was laughing and talking about and making plans in her life. She had been a critic of my “God stuff” and now in our conversations freely referred to a spiritual life she was seeking and a “Higher Power”. She never talked about AA for me or questioned my drinking. My sister concentrated

on her own recovery. She did come to see me one April weekend and asked if I would say a prayer with her because she wanted to say it with someone who understood about God. Turns out it was the third step. We were both crying afterwards. She turned to me and cried “Now I know what you've been talking about all these years.” I was crying because I knew it was all just “talk” in my life now. My spiritual life had eroded away in my drinking.

So, In my own life, I was becoming miserable, ashamed, empty of the spiritual life I once had had, my values and actions didn't match anymore, and I couldn't stop drinking. I was moving often, changing jobs, and relationships to try to fix my insides with outside stuff.

In the summer of 1985 my sister invited the whole family to her first year AA anniversary meeting. Others declined, but I went happy to be part of her happiness.

At the meeting I got to experience the power and love of Alcoholics Anonymous. I heard stories and more stories and my own sister's story, never realizing the depth of her pain and hurt and heard that alcoholism was a disease and saw there was a solution in AA.

I finally realized I had been watching the solution in action all year. My sister that had been dead was alive, she had been lost and

now was found...all through the power in this room of alcoholics. A power greater than any one single person. A power greater than the love of our family. I am still overwhelmed after all these 24 hours later by that awakening.

It still took me time break through the denial and find the willingness to surrender, which I know now was provided by my own Higher Power, to find sobriety in the rooms of AA, but I have, and am so grateful for the daily reprieve I am blessed with as I follow the suggestions of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and my dear sister's beautiful power of example. My life today is indeed happy, joyous and free and I want to continue to pass on to the next alcoholic what my sober sister passed on to me.

~ L.

Grand Isle Wednesday Night
Speakers Meeting

THE AA TRADITIONS IN MY PROGRAM

Many AA's are not fond of the traditions. I was certainly was a skeptic when I first heard about them. I thought Bill just needed another 12 thing list of something. Fortunately, early on I belonged to a group that studied them in a 12x12 meeting. We spent a week on each tradition. Reading the historic literature such as AA comes of Age and Dr. Bob and

The Good Oldtimers also helped explain the traditions.

The traditions are designed to help the groups carry the message. But at some point in my sobriety, I realized the traditions helped my personal program.

The primary ones that became obvious for me were Traditions 7 and 3.

Tradition 7: Self-supporting: I need to be self-supporting through my own contributions.

Tradition 3: The only requirement for someone coming into AA is a desire to stay sober. I don't have to judge newcomers or others based on their drinking history. I'm a member also because of that.

Two more were less obvious but as I worked through issues in sobriety could be integrated into my sobriety, Traditions 2 and 10

Tradition 2 - Group Conscience: AA was the first organization I was ever involved in where the group could vote on something and we all went along with it, assuming the group's wisdom was better than that of any individual. Prior to this, if I differed from the group, I would let anyone know that ad infinitum. Now it's become easier to accept the group's decision and surrender my own personal opinion. I've been able to apply this to family, work, and community situations

Tradition 10 - Opinions on issues: I always had to have an opinion on everything and had to

be right, whether I was directly involved or not. I found new freedom in being able to say “I don't know” or “I don't have an opinion on that”

Several more could become part of my program as time went on: traditions, 1, 5, and 12

Tradition 1 - Unity: It is important for AA to exist for the newcomer or someone looking for a meeting. Meetings need to be open at the appointed time. If I'm responsible for opening a meeting I need to be there and extend the hand of AA to the newcomer.

Tradition 5 - Primary purpose: If the primary purpose of a group is to carry the message, then as a member of a group, I should make the newcomer feel welcome and want to come back. My natural instinct is to spend time before or after the meeting talking with the people I know or busying myself with setup/cleanup. I need to make an effort to help those who are new.

Tradition 12 - Anonymity: Anonymity is important for me and others inside and outside of AA. I also helps balance pride and ego. I don't need to include information about peoples outside lives in AA discussions. It doesn't matter what job they have or where they live. I don't get to speak for AA in public, but I should carry the message to anyone who wants to learn about it.

If I think further, I can apply another tradition to my own sobriety:

Tradition 11 - Attraction rather than promotion: At work, in the community, and within my family self-promotion will not serve me well. It works better being a worker amongst workers and part of a family.

I'm sure there is more from the traditions I can apply to my sobriety and hopefully, this will be revealed in time. Since the traditions are a spiritual basis for groups of alcoholics, it's not surprising that they can be useful to a single alcoholic in dealing with others and themselves.

~ Anonymous
Grand Isle Wednesday Night
Speakers Meeting

SOBRIETY IS A MIRACLE

On Oct. 3rd, I had been fired from the job I loved. Instead of despair and regret, there was RELIEF. The jig was up!!! On that day, a co-worker explained that she had been speaking with another employee. If I was interested in some help, give him a call. He was a member of AA. I spoke with him on October 4th, and was in my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous on Wednesday night, October 5th.

I was done drinking. It wasn't hard for me to say, “Yes, I'm done.” I had, as the Big Book says, “...been beaten by King Alcohol and under the lash of alcohol had been driven...” to seek help. What