

# The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

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## WHAT DOES AN ALCOHOLIC LOOK LIKE?

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**E**motional bottom. That's what brought me to AA. Desperation. I couldn't find a way "out" of what I was "in." I called Diana who I knew was in the program - miracle! - and asked her where a "good" meeting was. I was too good for an okay ordinary meeting; I wanted something better. Ahhh, my arrogance!

I met Diana at a noon meeting, frightened. Frightened I was an alcoholic. Frightened I wouldn't know the right door to enter, what to say, or what to do. I wanted help but I didn't want to be here. I sat next to Diana in my fear and listened - a little. Surveying all you alcoholics, my eyes landed on a very nice looking woman. Nice haircut, shiny healthy hair, light in her eyes, nice teeth, well dressed. She doesn't look like an alcoholic, I thought to myself. When time came for us to introduce ourselves, I watched this woman intently. I was sure she was visiting. At her turn, she said she was an alcoholic! I was dumbfounded. How could such a lovely woman be an alcoholic?? When the meeting was over, many women came up to me. This was scary. I wanted help but I

also felt the need to get out of there as fast as I could. One woman gave me a Big Book. One gave me a meeting list with women's phone numbers. The lovely woman told me to read the chapter "More About Alcoholism." I was so grateful she gave me something to do because I didn't know what to do. I went home and read that chapter over and over.

I continued to go to meetings. At one meeting, I saw someone who was the mom of my daughter's friend. She also was a highly regarded professional. She didn't look like an alcoholic. Sure enough, at introductions, she said she was an alcoholic! After the meeting, she came over and gave me a huge hug. I remember her saying, "I'm so glad to see you! This is a good place to be. It's helped me so much!"

Another time, I saw a gentleman at a meeting that I had known through my workplace. When we had worked on a project together, he was so kind and at ease with himself and others. He had a twinkle in his eye and a great sense of humor. While I was full of fear in that workplace, he seemed comfortable in his own skin. So, there he was at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. He came over to me and we chatted. He made me feel comfortable. He shared his experience, strength, and hope. As he spoke,

something clicked for me - THIS is why he is the way he is - IT'S AA!

I don't know what I looked like when I came into AA but I know how I felt - fearful, desperate, lost, ashamed, confused, hopeless. I am in my sixties now and have been sober a while. That first lovely woman I watched in that first meeting is my sponsor. I now give my phone number to newcomers. I hug women who come into AA and let them know AA is a good place to be. I try to share my experience, strength, and hope. Maybe my hair shines. I dress well...every once in a while! I think there is a light in my eyes that was not there before. I thought I knew what an alcoholic looked like: terrible; unkempt; dull; pale. Maybe some do look this way. However, what I've found in AA is this: all I need to know is an alcoholic looks like...ME.

~ Mary G.  
Living Sober Group

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## STOP THE FIGHT

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**I**went to my first AA meeting in my 20's with a friend after I had received a DUI. She said I'll stop smoking if you stop drinking. This was a warning I did not heed.

I didn't return to AA again until 21 years later, after I moved from my home state. I was drinking a lot. I tried AA for

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6 months, going to meetings every day and not drinking. One day, I did not want to do the meetings anymore. My husband asked me

“Why aren’t you going to meetings anymore? They were helping you.”

I had no good answer. I just didn’t want to go anymore. So there I was back to drinking again. I wasn’t ready then either. I hit a lot of bottoms. I can’t believe I’m alive today to write this.

As the old-timers (wise folks) tell me, I was self will run riot. I understand that now. Drinking was all I cared about and I was heading down that path to insanity, institutions, or death. I was not eating and showing up to work drunk. I was mean to people at work, my husband, and anyone who got in the way of my drinking. People at work were telling on me (as if my boss did not know), and were afraid of me -- as they should’ve been. They never knew when I was going to snap. I put my husband mostly but also family, friends, and all who cared about me through 20 years of worry and concern that I was going to kill someone or myself.

I wasn’t always bad. When I wasn’t drinking I could be a very caring and loving person. As my drinking progressed though, my sister eventually did not want anything to do with me. She was my only family member left with whom I had kept any ties. My parents had passed a while back but my sister and I had remained close. My husband was putting up with me, but I knew my days were numbered. I was a living time bomb filled with anger, resentment, and bottled up emotions.

It wasn’t until I was beaten down by complete helplessness to stop drinking that I became able to see I could not do

this on my own, despite how much I wanted to. I was miserable.

This is when I finally opened my mind to AA and all it had to offer. Surrender was a blessing and not nearly as bad as I thought it would be. I did what was suggested by other AA members. I found a wonderful sponsor -- or I should say she approached me and offered her phone number. All I had to do was make that call and reach out. I was willing at that point to do anything.

I called her that night. She has been there for me since. She has led me through the steps of AA and helped me be the person I want to be, not the person I was before coming to AA. I am forever grateful for that day. I followed her suggestions -- praying in the morning, calling her every day, going to meetings, getting phone numbers, not sitting in the back at meetings, talking to the newcomer, and working the steps. I got a home group and did service work, which I continue to do.

She told me these things would keep me sober and get me out of my own head. I believe that if I had not done these things I would not have stayed sober and would now be the statistic you read about in the newspaper. Honesty is a very important part of this program and still keeps me sober one day at a time.

I still continue to do the same things I did when I first committed myself to AA. Thanks to AA, I try to keep my commitments and be a reliable and responsible human being. It doesn’t matter who you are or what age you are, you can become a sober human being one day at a time if you really

want it and are willing to work toward a better life.

I have many 24 hours of sobriety, thanks to my higher power, AA, the guidance of my sponsor and great AA friends and sponsees. I only have these because I asked my higher power (whom I did not know at the time) for help, though I don’t recall asking. I do remember vividly waking up one day and telling my husband I need help; I’d never done that before! Everyone was telling me I needed help. That was my Step 1 -- to surrender to AA and have the real willingness to work the program as others had done.

I have not picked up a drink since that day, one day at a time. AA and my higher power have given me hope, strength, and a reason for living: to help people as they helped me. I thank my higher power each night before I go to bed for keeping me sober one more day.

The most important thing in AA is I get to help another alcoholic as others helped me. This also helps secure my sobriety and makes me accountable and humble. It’s a special gift and it’s all I need and want. I am the real me without alcohol and that’s a feeling I’ve come to love and cherish. I Stopped the Fight.

~ *Maureen*  
Living Sober Group

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