

# The Eye pener

Vol 23 No. 6 - June 2023

Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

## In Praise of Speaker Meetings

**Some years back** I graduated from AA. I knew for certain I was going to be that envied exception, the one capable of conducting extensive and harmless research in controlled drinking. My efforts produced spectacular results: chaos, criminality, despair, isolation, and declining health. Within a few years, I was sprinting toward the grave and couldn't get there quickly enough.

I crawled back into the rooms via a wickedly early meeting dedicated to reading and discussion. I made bad coffee, set-up uncomfortable chairs, took most suggestions, listened to what I was able to hear, and was incrementally loved back into a standing position. If the joy of living was not immediately apparent, at least I was facing away from the cemetery.

After years of unrelenting craving, the impossible happened in the quietest of ways: thoughts of alcohol evaporated.

Reluctant to jinx this, I kept active and continued to



make reading and discussion meetings the mainstay of my program. I was aware that Speaker Meetings existed, but I was hazy about their purpose: Lectures? Motivational Talks? (I must have been to at least one Speaker Meeting early in my return because there's a dim recollection of being ambushed to speak. I recall nothing post-ambush.)

COVID, and the social rending that followed, prompted a tremendous shift in my calendar of meetings; the frequency dramatically increased and the modality changed. Desperate to connect, I attended hundreds of online meetings, some of which were reconstructions of previous groups but many of which were new.

I Zoomed into meetings in other cities, other states, other countries.

Willing to try anything, I even Zoomed into Speaker Meetings.

Several.

Regularly.

It didn't take me long to discover what everyone else already knows; Speaker Meetings put flesh on the texts we read and discuss.

*When the Speaker is unknown to me...*

It's extraordinary that no matter how different the details or cosmetics or trajectories of our lives are, the manifestations and tolls of this disease are (p. 2)

THE ARTICLES CONTAINED HEREIN ARE PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCES.

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

instantly recognizable. Your narrative clearly illustrates for me the hand of a Higher Power in action; a Higher Power is easier to spot in someone else's story. You also refresh my willingness to grow; if you can continue to learn and weave together a solid program after everything you've experienced, I can certainly reinvestigate and reinvigorate mine.

*When the Speaker is known to me...*

Repeatedly, I rediscover that I am surrounded by remarkable, resilient people about whom I appreciate very little. 99.9% of what goes on inside my head concerning you has nothing to do with you. Once I experience your story, I see and hear you differently, as though you have transitioned from black and white into color. You haven't changed at all. I have. You help me upgrade my eyes and ears.

*When I'm the Speaker (excluding that early ambush)...*

Speaking to a group of people who all have skin in this endeavor coaxes me to reconsider the content of my story, as well as the manner in which I share it. I unearth and excavate more and differently. It's a similar but magnified version of what happens whenever I open my mouth in AA, whether at a discussion meeting, or with a sponsor, or with a trusted friend; some other

portion of me is listened into existence.

I continue to attend and trumpet Speaker Meetings because I naturally bend toward dark thoughts and brittle moods. When you share your story, your words, images, connections, and insights give me much needed light. It's my hope that the same is true when I share mine.

~Anonymous

Living Sober

---

## Living in the Solution

---

**I am an** alcoholic, and my name is Maureen. I recently listened to a speaker share how she was living in the solution to her alcoholism. When I first came to AA I did not have any idea what that meant. I was a very sick person. I

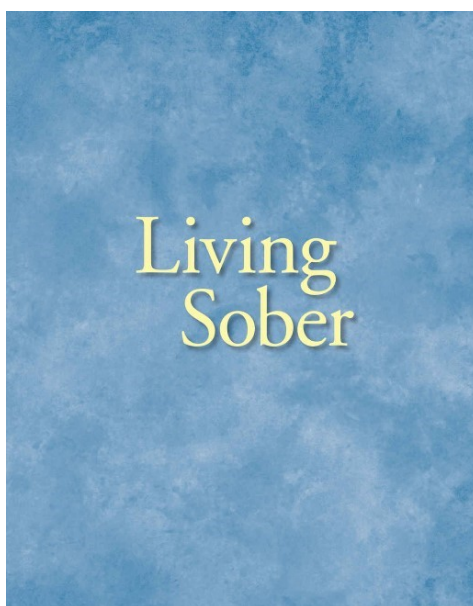
could not stop drinking and really didn't want to. AA says you need to find a power greater than yourself. I did not understand this either.

I had been to an AA meeting in my 20's after a DUI. This scared me so much that I told myself I'd never drink and drive again. That did not last long. After 6 months of not drinking I forgot how bad it was.

This is where the problem with my mind begins. I believed if I could stop drinking for any amount of time I was okay. (I now know that as an active alcoholic I cannot pick up that first drink. My mind says one is not enough and no amount I drink will ever be enough.)

I continued to drink for 30 more years despite the trouble I was getting into and the damage I was doing to those in my path. My husband took the brunt of my alcoholism. He would not take me anywhere with him. He was embarrassed of my obnoxious, argumentative, and selfish behavior. My disease was progressing from weekend drinking, to two to three nights a week and weekends, to every day. I went from drinking beer and wine to vodka and grapefruit to just plain vodka in the end.

I had started drinking at work and that's when I hit a bottom. I was sent home from work because they smelled alcohol on my breath. The next day I told myself that (p. 3)



I needed help. I knew with all my heart that if I didn't accept help it was only a matter of time before I'd kill myself—or another person—by drinking and driving. I knew I could not live with that.

This is where I felt I had a Spiritual Experience. I was HONESTLY willing to get help. I asked a woman at one of the meetings to be my sponsor. She gave me her phone number and I called her that night. I did everything she suggested because I was ready to go to any lengths to stay sober. I did not falter on doing the 12 step work, finding a higher power and a spiritual solution to my alcoholism. I feel good about myself today. And I haven't had a drink one day at a time since.

Alcoholism is a selfish disease. As I gained sobriety I began to see where I had been selfish, dishonest, and self seeking. I also learned from my sponsor and speakers in the room to live in the solution. Living in the solution is using all the

suggestions your sponsor offers, plus working with other alcoholics and spending quiet time with your higher power. This keeps me sane, sober, and recovered.

AA is a Spiritual program. The more I stay sober and ask my higher power for help the more spiritual I become. I don't understand my higher power and I don't have to. I know he has saved my life many times. I have many wonderful friends in AA all from one sponsor and the phone call I made to her in desperation and that in itself is spiritual. I believe we are all miracles saving another Alcoholic through God's help.

Now go and Live in the Solution for a better life.

~Maureen W.

Living Sober

---

## Just Do the Dishes

---

**Ahhh,** this was so hard for me to look at when I first got sober - staying in the present. Just being present. Not the past. Not the future. Just the present. Just be here now.

Before I got sober, I always questioned what I'd done in the past. Was I good enough? Why did I do that? Why couldn't I be different? Why has life been this way? And, I feared for the future. What if I really am not good enough? What if "they" find out I'm stupid? Why can't I be perfect? I couldn't just BE. What if I made the wrong decision or said the wrong thing?

Drinking solved that, I thought. I could "chill". I could relax. I wasn't worried about the past or the future when I drank. I could fit in...be liked. I could escape the present,

(p.4)

### Living Sober Meeting (Closed)

Limited to those with a desire to stop drinking.

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88588102252?pwd=NmVOK2MzMVlKTkE4YVMvQ2ZoTllydz09>

Saturday | 8:00 a.m.

the what's-in-front-of-me stuff and be happy. Until the next day when my day and my life was in front of me again. And, there I was, with just me. Me who wasn't enough, who hadn't done enough, and could never do or be enough.

An emotional bottom brought me into AA. A friend had found AA and had a light in her eyes I had never seen before. I called her and met her at my first meeting. Talk about questioning the past and fearing the future! How could I have made such a mess of my life? How could I have become an alcoholic? How will I find the right door and room to go in for this meeting? What if someone sees me and thinks I'm an alcoholic??

I made it in the right door and into the right room for my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank God. I sat with my past and my future that day and you all told me to come back. You all told me ONE DAY AT A TIME. You all gave me a Big Book. You all shared your experience, strength, and hope. You all told me to listen and identify, not compare. You all told me to...just do the dishes. Well, hmmm, that did not make sense. Dishes were always in front of me along with the resentments I held for those who did not do the dishes! Just take the action, you all said. A

simple program for complicated people, I heard. Slowly, I learned to do what was in front of me - doing the dishes, paying the bills, brushing my teeth!

Actions, little by little, have helped me stay in the present. Going to meetings ONE DAY AT A TIME has helped me stay sober. I hear people share who feel just like me. I became part of a home group. I got a sponsor who has been my guide in AA and my life. She has "shown up" for me every step of the way with her experience, her humanity, her guidance, and her humility. And, in doing so, she has shown me how to "show up" for myself and others. I also came to believe in a higher power who accepts all of me, good and bad.

I am not perfect today but I am sober. And, today is what I have. Just today. I am at ease in the present today. I have peace in my brain today. I can make decisions today! They may be the "wrong" ones and I'll do my best to make the best decisions I can, now, in this present moment. I ask for help today with decisions. I care about myself today and feel good enough.

I am comfortable to just BE...me...here...now...in the present. Yep, I got to say it - what a gift!

~Mary G.

Living Sober



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

---

## Eye Opener Committee

*Districts 2 & 11 Vermont*

Founder	Erwin L.
Editor	Joanne B.
Art/Layout	Ali J.
Co-Chair for District 11	Joanne B.
Co-Chair for District 11	Ali J.

---