

# The Eye pener

Vol 24 No. 8 - Fall 2024

Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word



## How Can I Be an Alcoholic?

**I am so grateful** to say that I have been a happy person for much of my life. My default answer to, "How's it going?" was always, "Good," and I meant it. I have a very loving though imperfect family, great friends, and just enough means to be comfortable but not spoiled. The list goes on. In light of all these blessings, I thought I was wholly unworthy of being an alcoholic. Even when I knew that's exactly what I was.

As my drinking progressed through college and into my 20s, I knew that I had a problem, but didn't understand why. How could someone with loving parents be an alcoholic? How could someone with good friends and a good job obsess over alcohol so much? I felt broken and that I didn't have a good enough reason to be this way. I was inexplicably restless, irritable, and discontent and I thought I needed alcohol just to get by. It was my medicine. Even though I could see it causing me great harm and it made me into someone I didn't want to be, I didn't know how to live a life without alcohol.

I knew about AA, but didn't think it would work for me, for I was special. I didn't need someone else telling me how to get sober, let alone all that God nonsense. But when the bottle had beaten me down one too many times, I finally relented and thought I'd at least give AA a try.

Maybe I could glean a helpful trick or two that I would find useful. I was shy and reluctant at first. I went to a couple meetings without getting numbers or introducing myself to anyone, and I drank again. I finally went to a meeting where I got numbers and even gave out my number to someone.

I didn't want to upset anyone so I didn't drink until the next meeting where I would see them again. I thought they would be proud of me, and they were! So I made it to the next meeting, and the next one; focusing on just not drinking in that span of time. All of a sudden I was stacking up some real sober time. I got the courage to ask someone to sponsor me and I started working the steps. I started feeling so good about this program that I went to more meetings and got more involved with a home group.

Bit by bit I felt free of this disease. Not free in that it could never hurt me again, for it certainly can, but free in that I had found a solution at last. When I was finally able to admit defeat and try this program that was working for other alcoholics, I discovered that I wasn't so unique- and that was a good thing! This program that has worked for so many could work for me too. And surely it has.

~Zack S.

Hinesburg

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## Now I Had the Willingness

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**In Spring 2016,** I was a depressed and anxious college junior teetering on the edge of insanity. I impatiently awaited the latest delivery of my mail-order drugs. “Why are you running late? I don’t want to wait, so in the meantime I’ll walk to the Kampus Kitchen to get a greasy sandwich. Oh, but what if the mail arrives while I’m gone, and my roommate grabs it first? Ok, I’ll have to wait for my drugs to arrive and then I won’t be hungry for food anymore. Why can’t USPS hurry the hell up?”

I was a well-rehearsed chameleon, trying to organize every situation around me to suit me and only me. I had to convince everyone that I was okay so

that they couldn’t keep me from getting what I wanted whenever I wanted. Once, I spent four days at a juvenile detention center for violating my conditions of release by getting expelled. I remember thinking, “I need to get better at hiding this. Why do I keep getting into trouble?”

So, I cleaned myself up enough to get admitted to a university where I would surely learn to live and party the correct, socially acceptable way. Alas, my disease progressed. I spiraled into full-blown addiction through my first three years of college while taking pre-med classes intending to become a doctor, a career I knew wouldn’t work with my way of life.

In May 2016, I had about 30 days of sobriety, a sponsor I had ceased calling, a handful of NA meetings I had stopped going to, and a meeting list on my desk with undialed phone numbers. When I was confronted by the beast, that first drink, *I had no defense at all.*

On May 12, 2016, after a weekend bender, I dropped to my knees and prayed. I cried and cried. Memories rushed over me of all my screw-ups, close calls, and the people I had hurt. That was my first action. My second action was picking up the phone and calling one of those contacts. My third action was going to a meeting.

*(Continued on p. 3.)*

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

I began working with a real sponsor who pushed me harder than anyone had in my life. Or maybe it was just that now I had the willingness. I got a job, paid back some people I owed, and went to men's intensive twelve-step retreats. I finished my college degree. I suited up and showed up to life, trudging through it one very long sober day at a time. I learned very quickly that I had to lean on my fellows in AA - *I could not do it alone.*

Now, in 2024, I wake up on a sunny morning to the sound of my cat, Murphy, purring. He is one of three cats that my partner and I adore. I exit the back screen door with a

cup of coffee in hand, eager to harvest some cherry tomatoes and prune some melon plants in our backyard garden.

I am a second year medical student, researching addiction during break. I am gratefully committed to a life of service, both within and outside the walls of AA. I have a home group I attend weekly. I sponsor other alcoholics. I take that first action of praying every day, whether it's at bedside or in a hospital bathroom.

Today, I understand my disease well enough to know that every thought and action I have must first be submitted

to my higher power for a reality check. Am I being truly honest with myself and those around me? Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired? Which tools in my toolbox should be used to amend my spiritual condition? Whatever curveball life throws my way, the solution luckily always stays the same for me – listen to and follow my AA fellows one day at a time.

~Cliff B.

Hinesburg

## **Hinesburg Group**

**Open ~ All Are Welcome**

**Tuesdays @ 7:00 p.m.**

Community Alliance Church

190 Pond Road, Hinesburg

Wheelchair Accessible

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



## One is None



**As I sat down** to write my story for you - how it was, what changed, how it is today, in 500 words or less, including my name & home group - my first thought was, "HUM, which Home Group should I list? I am a one is none kinda gal. All or nothing. Do I list my Heinsberg Women's meeting, Good Morning meeting on Zoom, or Saturday in-person meeting at Oakledge?" If that's not an indication of an alcoholic, "One is None" or "One is Never Enough," then I'm not sure what is.

I wasn't always like that with alcohol. I was in my late 30s when I realized the "magical" power alcohol possessed. That when put alcohol in my body, I could escape the chaos that was my life. I could disassociate from life. Of course, my being a perfectionist. Since I'd learned to drink so late. I was

off to the races. I had to catch up to you all. One was none! I found myself running a thriving business, married, with a family. My life was pretty amazing. I lived in the Bahamas. And thought I was living my best life. Until I allowed alcohol to take control of my life. Alcohol became my best friend. There was no "let's have one." I was sneaking and hiding drinks, drinking as much as I could. I remember hearing someone say to me, "We never know *when* Krista will show up or *what* Krista will show up: kind, funny, generous & nice, or mean, insulting, combative & nasty."

In 2007, I got my first DUI. Went on to lose numerous jobs, a marriage, my family & friends. To this day, I'm still not sure what happened. My life spiraled downward so fast. Then, sitting on my bed, in re-

bab, ready to be discharged and having nowhere to go, I was gifted with that moment of clarity.

I believed in something other than myself or my ego. I found a power greater than myself. The Universe has gifted me with a tribe of sober friends and a family that now wants me to be a part of their lives. I work in the recovery field; I live & teach recovery yoga, and I am a recovery coach. And I once again own my own business. I have a sponsor, I have sponsees, and I am active in service.

I absolutely believe that if I don't give it away, I will not receive it. I have a life today that I NEVER dreamed of.

~Krista M.

Heinsberg Women's  
Good Morning/Zoom

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## Learning to Feel the Feels

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### I'm considering

changing my status from “alcoholic” to “addict.” I’ve discovered that I can use many things “alcoholically” other than just alcohol. Sugar, caffeine, exercise, work... a friend says it’s my alcoholism leaking out another hole! I’ve learned that when I catch myself in one of these addictive cycles of using something, I

am trying to avoid my feelings, resist reality and quiet my thoughts. Thank goodness I know now to pause, reach out to my sponsor or another AA friend, read the literature or get to a meeting. All these things help me do an honest and thorough spot check inventory, identify my pattern and get myself back on the beam.

I came in the back door through Al Anon, concerned about other people in my life and their drinking. I grew up partying with my four siblings, so it all seemed normal (didn’t all people black out and throw up?). I did most of my drinking and drugging in high school and college, got a DUI when I was 30, and “stopped” drinking. (p. 6)

### Good Morning Meeting

Open ~ All Are Welcome

8:00 a.m. | format varies

**Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294699785?pwd=Sk5EdFNzdW1sR1pYMzI6MXZwTUVTUT09>

or call: (929) 205-6099 Meeting ID: 852 9469 9785 Passcode: 196 058

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

We have a family history of alcoholism – my uncle died at age 40 of this disease - so I guess I should not have been surprised when my abstinence efforts would fail from time to time. I became a highly controlled, “functional” alcoholic (is there really such a thing?). Until I wasn’t. When the stars and moon aligned just so, if I had a babysitter and could walk home, if there was a special occasion, then I would tell myself that I could have “one or two.” But that doesn’t always work for us alcoholics. Occasionally I could keep it to a few, but the disease was always ready to take me to the next level – usually a blowout,

sick all the next day. Ugh. Again?

I had a career, a husband, a beautiful son, a house, car, family, friends. I was competent, confident, and capable in many ways. But not when it came to alcohol. The phenomenon of craving really started to bother me – why did I always want or need more? Why couldn’t I control this urge, this compulsion? Why did I think I had to hide it and sneak it? Normal drinkers don’t spend so much time planning, worrying and hiding their drinking. It’s what eventually broke through my denial and

brought me into the rooms of AA.

My sobriety date is 10/8/11 so I’m coming up on lucky number 13 years sober. I have a sponsor and sponsees. I have a morning prayer practice, read daily reflections and do a formal step 10 at night. I still attend meetings almost daily. All this helps to keep me relatively sane, humble and content. I have grown and learned so much over my years in AA and I am very, very grateful. I am full of love for and inspired by all the amazing alcoholics in my life today!

*~Suzie M.*

Good Morning

### **Milton At Last**

#### **Anniversary Celebration**

Wednesday, October 16, 7:30 pm

United Church of Milton

51 Main St, Milton, VT

### **13th Annual Pie Fest**

Sunday, October 27

Congregational Church

20 Church St, Richmond, VT

6-8 pm

Meeting at 7 pm

Bring ANY type of pie to share!

Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more

**local stories and meeting information.**

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## In a Twist

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**I'm in my** 40th year of recovery in AA, and I can still get all twisted up! Recently, I was on vacation in the Adirondacks with no internet or cell service and many miles from an in-person meeting. I was there as the matriarch on vacation with my extended family, just as my mother and grandmother had been before me. Despite a week of no meetings or AA contacts, everything seemed fine: no dust ups with the family; no restless, irritable, and discontent feelings; certainly no urges to drink.

On the drive home, I found myself reflecting on my role in the family, and on my aging. In the quiet of the drive and the end of all the activity and togetherness, reflection quickly turned to projection and then rumination. I am getting old, soon I will be more dependent and my kids will get tired of me and I will have to hire help and probably run out of money and my friends will be dying and I will be so sad and lonely and bored and oh my God, isolated, because I won't be able to drive anymore and yes, probably depressed and I

have to figure out what to do right now because I will also be losing my mind and won't be able to think clearly and none of the old age places will have any room then because all the other baby boomers like me will have taken up all the spaces!

I know everyone in the world can get all up in their heads, but I've heard, for us alcoholics, "When you're in your head, you're behind enemy lines." And it's true. (p. 8)



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I have learned that these uncomfortable habits of mind are one of the ways alcoholism shows up in me, and that if left untreated, they will lead me to drink.

Once again, as they always do, my higher power and Alcoholics Anonymous met me at the level of my needs. After arriving home, I went to the Good Morning Meeting, which is my home group. The reading on that Sunday morning was "On Awakening." Just listening to those words, my shoulders dropped. I could breathe more

slowly and mindfully; I could feel the heaviness and discomfort lift. "We ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives." I had needed help to get out of my mind trap and the help wasn't going to come from me. "A prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems." I am never going it alone in my recovery. I have the collective wisdom of all my

fellow AA members and I have the infinite love that comes from my higher power. I can trust the process and know that I will be cared for, I will be shown the way. I can't say that I was all untwisted by the time the meeting ended, but I was feeling more peaceful, grateful, and connected, and I knew I would be okay.

*~Meg T.*

Good Morning



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## Cunning, Baffling and Powerful



**My story is** one of relapse after long-term sobriety, what happened, and what it's like now.

Like many of us, I came from a family with a lot of drinkers, including my mother. I was born on her birthday. She was 20 years old and so healthy - she rode her bike to her OB appointments, which delighted her obstetrician! Over the years, her drinking became heavier. When I was in my early 20's, she was admitted to the hospital with cirrhosis. Through the grace of God, she surrendered to AA. I would visit NJ and go to her anniversary meetings. I remember thinking two things: (1) the people were so nice, AA was a good place; and (2) THANK GOD I will never have to go there myself, which would mean quitting drinking!!

In my early 30's, my life had imploded. I moved out west, and after a disastrous year of hitting bottom, I too, surrendered to AA. My mother did not know what was really going on drinking-wise. When I came back east, I asked her if I could be an alcoholic. She said, "Well, Honey, it's more important what you think, but if you're asking me, yes, I do think you could be." She was so important to me, and as I rebuilt my life sober and moved back to VT, I really clung to her words and her kindness. She was truly my first sponsor. She died in 1992.

Over the next 25 years, I was active in AA and loving being sober. Then, like it says in the Big Book, life handed me some big lumps as it does to all of us. I had advanced in my career, taken on a new job working many hours a week, and gotten married. Things

looked good on the outside, but on the inside I was struggling. My marriage was not working out. My work was time-consuming, and I started skipping meetings. I was going to AA only on weekends and not paying much attention to my program. After all, I was 25 years sober, I got this!

Divorce was very difficult. That summer, I moved to a condo complex, and soon, I was meeting some very friendly ladies at the pool. One of them asked me to go out to burger and beer night. I was thrilled; they were all so nice to me, something I desperately needed. On the way, I told my new friend that I would have a beer with my burger. "I thought you didn't drink," she said. "Oh, it's OK, I'll just have one." And I had one.

*(Continued on p. 10.)*

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When I told my therapist I had had a beer, he looked at me and said, "Tell me when you've had two." I was indignant and explained that I was not the same person as I was 25 years before; I had a good career and it would be OK! I drank for the next few years. I knew it wasn't smart to start up again, but I also felt great relief. Alcohol works, until it doesn't... my neighbor friend and I would constantly talk about 'keeping it in check' as we poured our wine. I struggled and struggled to quit. I really didn't want to come back to AA. I felt a lot of shame. My therapist said, "I don't think you can do this on your own." And, thankfully, I believed him.

One Saturday morning, I drove to Middlebury for an 8 am meeting, thinking no one would know me. But I did know some of the people, oh no! I choked back tears, but I got it out - I was coming back. It felt so shameful. People were nice to me, which felt horrible. It was hard facing my old AA friends, but slowly things got better. I found a home group. I got a sponsor. I was humbled, truly humbled. In December by the grace of God I will have 5 years.

Alcohol was cunning, baffling, and yes, very, very powerful. I am shocked at how my thinking started to slowly change when I cut back then stopped

going to meetings. In my early sobriety, I remember hearing speakers who 'went out' and thinking I would never go out myself. Ever.

Today, my program is the center of my life, and I love my meetings. I am truly grateful, and I share my story to help others who are coming back. And you know that friend who I drank with, my neighbor? We go to AA together. That's how it works!

*~Janet M.*

Wicked Early

## **Wicked Early Group**

**Open ~ All Are Welcome**

**Monday, Wednesday, Friday @ 6:30 a.m.**

Faith United Methodist, 899 Dorset St., South Burlington

Wheelchair Accessible

Conference Call Line: (425) 436-6386 code: 572822

**Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more**

**local stories and meeting information.**



## The Death of St. Chaos



**I just moved** to Nashua, NH. We're very close to Boston now, which is where I grew up. Last week I was driving home from a doctor's appointment, and I stopped to let someone cross the street. Halfway across, I shouted to my good friend, Mike F. I used to drink with him. We were hooligans, we spent time in jail together, and we were no good for each other. But here we are.

He hasn't drunk in over 15 years. He said he was just getting pot from his car and he was going to smoke it with his friends. I told him he should come over later and see the new place. He doesn't drink anymore, but he still smokes pot. I was doing the same, but I always felt so ashamed about it, so I stopped that, too.

He came over at around 6 PM. I introduced him to Michelle. Showed him the house.

Outside by the pool, we were smoking cigarettes and listening to our music. He turns to me and says, "Did you ever imagine that this is how you'd end up? Living the happy married life, with a house in the suburbs?"



I nodded. "No, there was no way I could have predicted this." "It's like," he said. "It's like the death of St. Chaos." He didn't mean this as an insult—in fact, he was quite

proud of how my life turned out.

I had expected I would die by 30. My best friend was buried at 35. I'm 37 now, and life is only getting better. My life turned out better than anyone could have ever expected. I married a smart, kind, beautiful woman, and she takes care of me, as I do her.

It was a huge struggle, getting to where I am today. I never wanted to get married or to own a house. Never cared where I went. I had no goals, just floated with the wind.

It was a struggle. I still struggle. Every day seems to be a struggle to keep what I have. But struggling is better than suffering because struggling means I'm keeping at it, as opposed to allowing the pain to set in and take over—and therefore, I would be suffering. (p.12)

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## Running on Empty

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I surrendered, that was the trick. I stopped fighting my nature, and went with the wind, until the wind brought me to a better place. Surrendering to my alcoholic nature, becoming rigorously honest—and I mean rigorously!—then whatever happens after that, well it's all okay, because I've have been saved for some reason. I keep going to meetings because they keep me in check. They make me remember—that I am an alcoholic, that I am a sick person, and by acknowledging that, I become less of what I became and more of what I always was....

~Jeremy S.  
Wicked Early

### I started drinking

and using at the age of twelve. I grew up with a controlling mother and a pretty laid back father who drank a lot. I was an insecure kid and never felt real comfortable around others. I suppose I thought getting intoxicated and stoned was normal because everyone I knew did it in one shape or form. In the beginning, I really enjoyed the benefits I received from alcohol and drugs. It gave me the sense of belonging. I really thought I have found my place and could not imagine life without it.

Seems like I was always in trouble for something, and I barely made it through school. I spent a lot of time in detention and suspension. One thing I was always good at was going to work, as I needed money to party the way I liked to. I spent many

work days hungover, but because I always showed up, I thought there was no problem. My idea of an alcoholic was one of those brown bag types who was broke all the time, dirty, and most likely homeless. I certainly wasn't any of those.

Along the way came some DWI's, a few bar fights, broken relationships, and resentments. I just blew those off as wrong place wrong time, a few bad judgments, so oh well. Certainly doesn't make me an alcoholic, right? So I kept doing the same thing expecting a different result. Then came the blackout drinking, which scared the hell out of me (but not enough to quit). I then got together with my high school sweetheart and adopted a child. I continued to drink until she gave me an ultimatum. I chose the quit drinking option. (p. 13)

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local stories and meeting information.

I thought I was strong, had never asked for help before, so I got this, right? In fact, I was miserable. As much as I loved my wife and child, life was just empty and depressing. I lasted a few years until I tried drinking again just slowly and in control. That lasted about a week, then I was off and running. Running right into a brick wall. I ended up in a motel with a choice to make. It wasn't easy. It took a strong

desire to change and willingness to act on that.

I found the Wicked Early meeting, a sponsor, a higher power, a new beginning. Now I live a life of honesty, great fullness, wisdom, and plenty of memories of how lucky I am. I am truly grateful. Although life has thrown me some steep challenges, I can deal with them head on since I am not alone. I get to go to bed every night with a clear

conscience. Thanks to the power of AA, I am growing into a better person these past 10 years and running.

*~Alan C.*

Wicked Early



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# Sponsorship Works

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**I'm an alcoholic.** When I was a kid, I liked taking a sip of my dad's beer. One day I asked if I could have a sip. He said there were too many people around. Later the kids went for a ride and I said didn't want to go. After they were gone, my dad and our neighbor were chatting. I asked my dad for a sip. He had already told the neighbor I was going to ask. He had me pegged.

My friends and I were out drinking, and the bar was closing. We didn't want to stop. Someone said the bars in Canada were open until 3 AM, so we headed north. We made it most of the way. To make a long story short, I ended up upside down in the ditch. We walked back to the border. Then I had to call my parents (not my best moment). People at work heard about the crash, and a few days later a friend there asked me if I wanted to go to a meeting with her. I thought she liked me, so I said yes. She was just being a good friend. I went to meetings for a while. I didn't get a sponsor, I didn't share, I was just dry. It's not surprising I went back to using.

Then I met a girl. She liked me! We dated for a while, then she got pregnant. So I asked her to marry me. Shortly after, she fell down a flight of stairs and lost the baby. We got married anyway. For a while, I stopped drinking and using drugs on my own. I was crazy and very self-centered and my behavior landed me on the psych ward, again. My wife stayed with me for quite a while, until she had enough and we divorced. I still used for a little bit.

Finally, I started going to meetings. I asked someone to be my sponsor and we worked the 12 steps. Eight years into sobriety I was having trouble sleeping. It had been a couple of days, so I called my sponsor and

told him I was going to take a pill to sleep. He said, "If you do, come to the meeting tomorrow and change your sobriety date." So I did. After the meeting he was very emotional. I told him I did not want him as a sponsor anymore. Later I asked someone else to be my sponsor. He said, "It's not very sober to go days without sleep when you can just take a pill."

When I got some sobriety time, I was willing to be a sponsor. It was a wonderful experience. My sponsor helped me throughout the whole experience. I'm grateful for the fellowship I feel. I recently had to find a new sponsor. I was able to find someone I like and respect. I'm hopeful we'll be working together for a long time.

My sobriety has increased my willingness to ask for help. It's helped me to recognize self-pity more quickly, and taught me that feelings aren't facts. I still beat myself up on occasion, but I can talk to my AA friends who tell me to be good to myself and that it's ok to make mistakes. I'm grateful to have the connection of the fellowship and to have a heart full of love.



~Anonymous  
Wicked Early

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## Eye Opener Committee

*Districts 2 & 11 Vermont*

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