

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

AA Is My Priority

From my middle child

perspective, my mother favored my older sister, and my father favored my younger sister. I felt unloved/ignored. Our family and my father's parents were getting ready to go on a road trip. I stole money from my mother's wallet (maybe I was 10). As we were getting in the car, my mother announced someone stole money from her wallet. I was found out, scolded and was not allowed to travel with them. I felt humiliated, especially in front of my grandparents.

I switched from public school to private school where I repeated the 7th grade. I felt ashamed, humiliated, and stupid. I lied about how old I was.

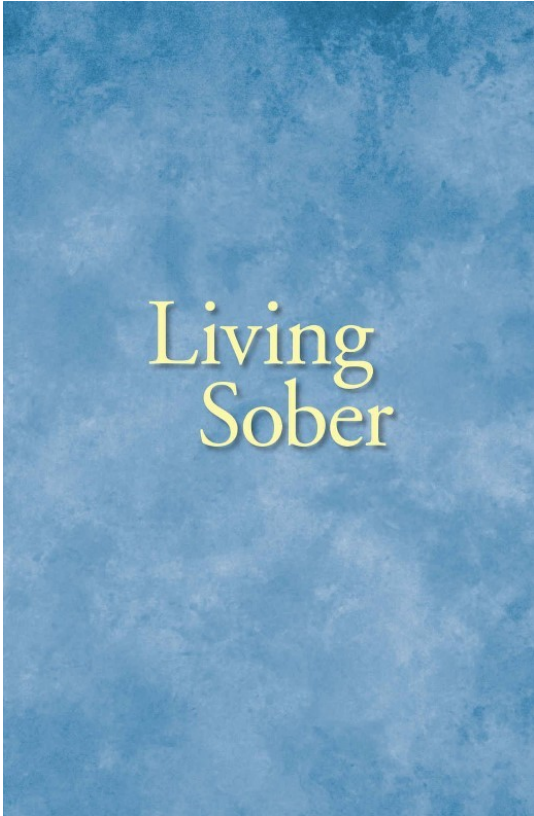
My parents divorced when I was in 10th grade. My mother, my younger sister, and I moved to Florida to get away. I began 11th grade, attended three schools that year, and my younger sister became a juvenile delinquent. My mother started exhibiting paranoid behavior by accusing me of poisoning the dinners she was preparing for us. She was never diagnosed and appeared functioning enough. Later that summer we returned to N.J. and rented a house. I started 12th

grade. On Friday afternoon, February 10, 1967, my younger sister and I returned home from school to find a note on the garage door not to go into the garage and to call our father. We went into the house which reeked of exhaust fumes, a dead dog and cat, and more notes. We called our father, and he came right away.

From then on, we lived with my father. My father told us a month after February 10, 1967, to never talk about my mother's suicide. I graduated 12th grade, went to college, found a husband, and got married in 1969. I was petrified to be alone. He was funny and made me laugh even though I was dying inside of unexpressed grief. We divorced in 1975.

After I divorced, I was living alone for the first time in my life. Alcohol was my best friend and companion. I was lonely, sad and afraid. From age 30-43 I drank, drank, drank. I had my last drink

on my 43rd birthday. I stopped drinking on my own that day. I had enough. I knew it. I have not had a desire for a drink since. I learned in AA that subconsciously I was afraid I would turn out like my mother who died at age 43. A new path began that day. (p.2)



Living
Sober

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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.

I am 31 yrs sober. AA is my priority. I learn so much in literature meetings and from you. The repetition of the words is paramount to my remembering them. After working the steps over time, they reside within me. I found a God in AA, but not right away. The act of getting on my knees, saying the slogans and BB prayers over and over allowed a connection to God appear; including emotional sobriety, the opening of my heart, humility, compassion, patience, tolerance, love, kindness, understanding, acceptance, to name a few.

I am so grateful I kept at it.

~Joya

Living Sober

Why Me? Why Not Me?

I had my first drink

at the age of 13. My older brother was home from Vietnam and bought me vodka. My sister and I were drinking in our cellar with OJ. She did not like it. I didn't either, but I loved the way it made me feel. I insisted we go for a walk, and I ended up falling down and breaking my arm. My father was furious with my brother and told me to dispose of the vodka.

I did not drink again until I turned 17. Then, one was not enough. A friend of mine got me a fake ID, and I was so excited to go to the bars. I had a car and drove my friends to and from the bars drunk. I am grateful that I did not kill anyone and am alive to write this story.

I never graduated from the bar scene. My friends were all going to college and having families. I wanted

no part of that. I had lots of part time jobs and always found people to go out with. I was a functioning alcoholic.

My drinking had consequences. I got a DUI while driving home from one of those bars. You think this would scare me. It did in the beginning. I went to one AA meeting, got my License back, still thought drinking was fun, and started up again.

I only drank when I went out (and of course the few at home before going to the bars). I was 27 when I landed a job at the Post Office. I was still living at home. God bless my parents. My father died of a massive heart attack, and my mother was dying of cancer. My siblings were still living at home and battling their own demons. My alcoholism was progressing.

My husband and I met at work, dated for two years, and moved into an apartment. He knew I was a drinker but still stayed with me. He had always wanted to move to Vermont, and I jumped at the geographical change. (p. 3)



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

It was not my wisest decision. I was miserable. I did not know anyone. I had to work crazy hours, and there were no bars or liquor stores nearby. I was angry at my husband all the time. It was untreated alcoholism.

I was drinking more and more and calling out sick a lot. I would stop for a while then start again. It started getting bad when I started drinking in the morning before work. I would try to hide it from my husband, but he knew. He stopped taking me out to places because I was too drunk and would cause a scene.

One day when I went to work, they smelled liquor on my breath and sent me home. I was a mess. I woke up the next morning and knew I had to do something. I finally realized I needed help. No human power could have helped me.

I wanted AA this time. I asked my husband to take me to AA. I went willingly but was scared to death. I was so sick and lost. I was willing to

find out how AA could help me. I wanted to stop the insane things alcohol was doing to me: forgetting the night before, yelling, denting my car, hiding liquor all over, burning my arm. The list goes on.

At one meeting, a kind woman gave me her phone number. She told me to call her that night. She became my sponsor. I took all her suggestions because it meant life or death. I called her every day. I prayed in the morning and thanked my higher power every night for my sobriety. I got a home group and a service position. I went to 90 meetings in 90 days. I went through Big Book and AA 12 steps with her. I got a list of people to call. I did not take half measures this time. That was 14 years ago and it was the best phone call I ever made.

I still have many challenges in my life. I can't change the things I've done, but I can show people I care by not taking that first drink. I am grateful I remember what I did the night before and during the day as

well.

Every day I wake up with untreated alcoholism, but now I am able to treat it with the tools and the steps I have been given in AA.

I am not the angry person I used to be. I have a sponsor that guides me through rational decisions instead of emotional ones. I'm blessed to have a solid relationship with family, friends, and co-workers. I thank my higher power every day for my sobriety from the bottom of my heart and AA for finding that power.

One AA member said, "I may not always be happy sober, but I am happy to be sober."

I came into AA thinking, "Why me?" I now know, "Why not me?"

~Maureen W.

Living Sober

Living Sober Group

Saturdays | 8:00 a.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, 1250 Spear St., South Burlington

Living Sober

Wheelchair Accessible | Closed: Limited to those with a desire to stop drinking.

Lawn Mowing and One Day at a Time

The author skipped the earbuds and tried to figure out how the unwelcome task of mowing his lawn related to living sober.

I was mowing grass, and really, leaves, but the grass was long and holding its own; it was also damp. The front wheels were on the B setting, two below what we normally use for mid-summer. The back wheels were on C which is maybe a three inch cut, tidy but against the prevailing sentiments for lawncare. I think I'm in the tidy-is-overrated camp, besides it's transient, gone in a day or two. Adjusting mower height is easy even while keeping it running where one hand has to clamp the throttle bar and reaching the deck to adjust wheel height is awkward, but I was gambling that it was the last cut of the season and that Providence in some guise had set the deck on B.

Because the grass was long and also damp and the leaves were sometimes quite thick, though they were very dry in a season of no rain, and because the deck was on B, it was slow going at times. I got the knack of avoiding stalling by giving it time to do its mower work though it sometimes irked me that I would spend all afternoon at it. Part of the technique was to sacrifice the already narrow 21 inch cutting path to a mere 15 or 16 inch path with a greater overlap with the already shorn leaves and grass so as not to choke the mower.

~Josh S.

Living Sober



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

It was a deliberate afternoon, but the job shrunk row after row, smaller with each circumferential trip. Truth be told it was meditative and like refocusing on my breathing as my mind meandered, the B setting, long damp grass and thick leaves disciplined me into being present and applying the skills to keep the enterprise moving ahead without stalling. Patience, living with the choices I made, putting one foot after another, acceptance and time were the ingredients which took me through the last mow of the season and dealt a masterful blow to the accumulated leaves of Fall.

I know that years of AA has given me the perspective to understand mowing my lawn as the entire universe of things subtle, profound and ordinary. I could have spent much less time at it and avoided testing my resolve and patience and enjoyed an audio book or some music. Some days that's the better course but self-care sometimes remains a challenge. Both skill sets are important.

You have all meant so much to me, taught me along the way and offered examples that we can practice these principles on all our affairs, even yard work.

Eye Opener Committee

Districts 2 & 11 Vermont

Founder	Erwin L.
Editor	Ali J.
Chair for District 11	Ali J.
