



The Eye Opener



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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

The Gift of Desperation

My drinking life had 3 phases:

first I drank to feel a part of (everyone in my family drank), then I drank to have fun (and being drunk was a great excuse for bad behavior), finally I drank to try to make the world go away (I was depressed and thought nobody understood, respected or cared about me). For a while, alcohol did seem to help me achieve these goals, but then it stopped working. Suicide was looking like the only other option.

I suspected drinking had something to do with my unhappiness, although low self-esteem and a sense of failure were what I blamed. So I invented a notion that if I stopped drinking for 4 days, I wouldn't need to drink as much to get drunk (I'd save money!), and my drinking wouldn't cause me so much trouble (stomach pain, embarrassment, hangovers, unhealthy relationships). It wasn't until after coming to AA and learning to get honest with myself that I saw that the 4-day cure usually lasted only 2 or 3 days (I told myself that I changed my mind, but that was denial—actually, I was powerless over alcohol), and I ended up drinking MORE after these dry-out sessions (the disease progressed even when I wasn't drinking).

A couple of alcoholic friends who had been to AA but didn't go anymore (I met them in bars) planted the seed that sprouted into my awareness that I, too, am an alcoholic. One asked me if I'd ever tried not

drinking—"you might like it", he said. The other asked me if I was going to wait until my first suicide attempt before I asked for help. Then another friend asked me to support her by going to an Adult Children of Alcoholics meeting with her. My parents drank alcoholically (getting drunk & fighting every night), so maybe ACOA was the answer. I learned about alcoholism from these meetings, but found that I identified more with the participants who introduced themselves as alcoholics than with the others.

So I decided to try AA meetings. People were laughing at themselves, at the kinds of things that made me want to shoot myself—I wanted what these people had! And it was an alternative besides suicide. I had the gift of desperation, so I did what was suggested, even if it was uncomfortable. My sponsor gave me The Seven Suggestions: 1-Get a sponsor and call them daily; 2-Go to a meeting every day; 3-Join a group & get active in service; 4-Thank the chairperson & speaker; 5-Get phone numbers & call people; 6-Go to the same step meeting every week; 7-Ask God for help to stay sober every morning, and thank God at night for another day of sobriety. These gave me a New Design for Living, which built a foundation for my recovery, on which I added working the 12 steps. I now believe that life is worth living, and I am gradually learning how to be myself and love myself.

~Annie D.

District 2 & 11 Website Chair

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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.

Try Again

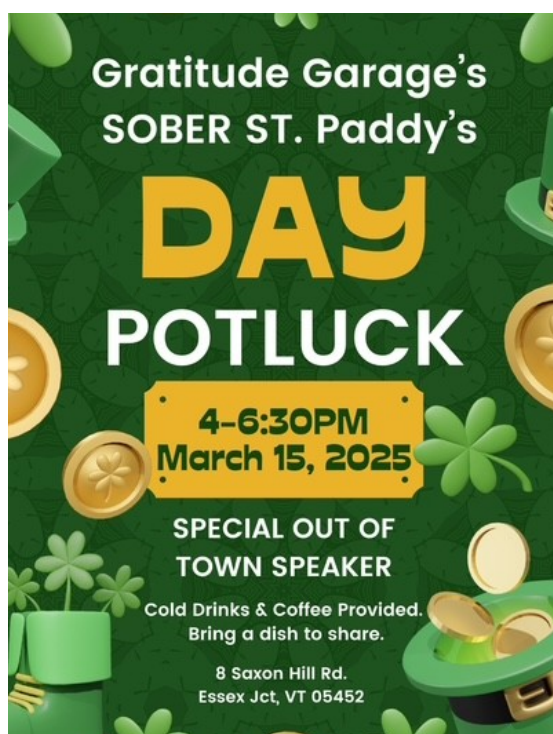
My sobriety date is November 24, 2021. This is not my original sobriety date, it is the most recent. The date that I am working on One Day at a Time to keep as my last.

I came from a family, a town, a culture of drinking. So at first, I joined the fun. As a teenager, I gladly put up with colossal hangovers thinking of them as badges of honor. They were the proof to all that I knew how to have a good time. I didn't have a problem as I was able to maintain good grades in school and never had trouble with the police. And the nights where I found myself throwing up, I told myself I was simply preventing the hangover from being really bad in the morning. I chose to barf you see. I was in control. Smart girl.

I continued to drink and saw it as sometimes way over the limit and sometimes ok. When I had my first child, I recall joking on why 5-8 p.m. was referred to as the cocktail hour. Babies demand so much at this time of day. Getting home from work and attending to their needs required a few cocktails, right? It's

how families were operating everywhere, so I thought. Of course, drinking was no longer just fun. It became something necessary to get through the stress of motherhood, workhood, wifehood, you get the gist.

My father, an untreated alcoholic, took his own life when I was 30. We



shared a birthday and were pretty close. I loved him dearly. His suicide began a 15 year drunk that no one questioned, not even me. This tragic event happened to me! And no one dared to question my need to drink. I still went through the mo-

tions of appearing ok. Kids got to school. I volunteered in my community. I did things that made me appear that I had my act, my life, together. When I drank socially, I presented as silly and fun loving. When I drank alone, I did to numb and stay away from my sorrow.

My mother, also an alcoholic, was six years sober when diagnosed with esophageal cancer. She died when I was 45. My sister and I cared for her in her last days. The hospice nurse asked that I not tend to her at night due to my drinking. Fine. I had the day shift. My sister, being a lifelong enabler covered for me by stating I was drinking so much due to the anxiety of my mother passing. And I let my sister's explanation ride. Good. Everyone is still feeling my pain. I get to drink with impunity.

One year after my mother died, I had my first moment of clarity which started my journey to recovery. I had begun to fear I would go through what my mother did as it was assumed her drinking was the major cause of her cancer.

After adding water to a bottle so my family wouldn't know how much I drank one night, I went to (p. 3)

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

bed and told my husband I thought I needed help. He took me to the hospital the very next day, and I started an outpatient recovery program. I was a stellar student. It was not an AA based recovery program. It did a fine job educating me on the science of alcoholism. I am a science and logic sort of person, so I assumed I had been educated, and that was all that I needed. I did not drink for four years. I proudly let everyone know that I was in control. I became the designated driver. I made sure alcohol was available for anyone who wanted it at my house. I did not have a problem anymore. I had found the cure. I did not need any more help. What a mighty girl.

Alcohol came to get me quietly and completely one particularly bad night. Life had happened again, and I took one shot of vodka. I dismissed this from my thoughts almost immediately with my alcoholic brain stepping in to excuse it as a one-time, really crappy knee jerk drink. Not another drink for

months after. But my alcoholic mind was still in the driver seat and with stealthy patience convinced me that a few drinks now and again would be fine.

Within a year, I was hiding booze around my house and yard. In less than five years, my world was falling apart. My family was pulling away, and I no longer found pleasure in any social gatherings. I hated what I saw in the mirror. Alcohol had brought me to such deep shame and sorrow that I was trying to figure out how I could take my own life. But it had to look like an accident as I could not put my own kids through what I went through. I see this as my moment of Grace. That singular thought of causing that sort of pain to my loved ones got me out of my tailspin long enough to take action. And into a rehab based on the principles of AA. Once out of rehab, I wasted no time in finding an AA home group, sponsor and multiple meetings, both in person and on line.

The singular most important aspect

of this sobriety journey is finally accepting that I am not - and will never be - in control of my disease. AA has given me the freedom from the burden of self will. It is in accepting that I am not in control, that I am free. I am not going to be able to stay sober on my own. If I fail to keep this first and foremost in my thoughts, my disease will take over, again. If I continue to follow the steps of AA, if I have the support and fellowship of others with this disease, if I keep an open mind about a higher power existing and operating, and if I share my story with rigorous honesty and humility, to another who might be suffering with this disease, I stand a chance.

I wake up every morning say this to myself: "Good morning, beautiful. You are still an alcoholic."

May Thy will, not my will, guide me through the day.

~Kim S.

Grand Isle Group

Grand Isle Group

Wednesdays | 7:00 p.m.

St. Joseph's Church | 185 US Route 2 | Grand Isle

Speaker Meeting

Open—All are welcome

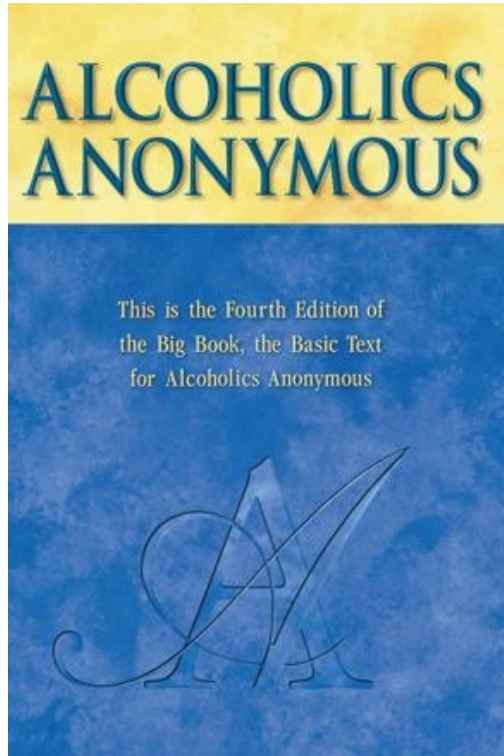
Exploring the Big Book

I've been attending a Saturday night Big

Book meeting for several years. We read the first 164 pages detailing how Alcoholics Anonymous works, as well as the personal stories that follow. I always enjoy it when people at the meeting share some of the history of AA, how the fellowship came to be, or a little background information on the authors of the stories.

At one meeting when I was about two years sober, we were reading "Our Southern Friend" (chapter 4, page 208). The name John Barleycorn is mentioned in the story. I assumed that he must be someone involved in the early for-

mation of the AA program, like Bill W., Dr. Bob, Ebby T., and Dr. Silkworth. I asked who John Barleycorn



was. We all had a chuckle when I learned that John Barleycorn was the personification of alcohol. I later discovered that name used in other literature and song.

This is how I now spend my Saturday evenings, instead of alone and drinking. I enjoy the company, good humor, and exploring the Big Book with other sober alcoholics. I am forever grateful for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

~Julie H.

Grand Isle Group

Wicked Early Breakfast Fest 2025
Gratitude, Fellowship, and Feasting



Come feast with us for our 15th birthday!

When?	Friday March 7, 2025. Breakfast served at 6:00 AM , Speaker meeting following at 6:30 AM
Where?	Faith United Methodist Church, 899 Dorset Street , South Burlington
What else?	Meeting is in the hall at the end of the building. Please park in the upper lot.



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

Eye Opener Committee

Districts 2 & 11 Vermont

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