

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

JULY 2014

The 7 Gifts of AA **Sharing to Stay Sober**

By Patricia P.

An AA gift I've recently discovered is the gift of sharing. While I've long been aware of the power of sharing in and outside the rooms of AA, I just had an experience that brought home its power at an even deeper level and showed me, once again, how and why AA works, in one of its multitudes of ways.

I've heard it said so many times over the years: If we practice our spiritual program diligently, we reap the benefits; if we let up on our spiritual program, we experience the consequences. I got that lesson a couple weeks ago. I had gotten "too busy" in the morning to start my day how I normally start it, by reading four passages from the Big Book, and the daily meditation from three meditation books. I still prayed first thing, but quickly and superficially.

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Guided by Humility

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings

Step Seven occupies a single paragraph in the Big Book, consisting only of a short prayer to one's "Creator." The prayer takes the form of a request that one's "Creator" should now remove from one, *every single defect of character* that stands in the way of one's usefulness to one's Creator and hence, to others. Here, it seems, one needs to turn to the Twelve and Twelve for considerable explication of what is involved in Step Seven.

The first thing that we learn from the Twelve and Twelve is that the *whole* emphasis of Step Seven is on humility. We "humbly" asked for our defects to be removed. Extremely helpful to me in understanding Step Seven was to substitute the words "prayerfully" and/or "gratefully" wherever I saw the word "humbly." This helped me to a better experience with this Step. Try it for yourself and see what happens!

The Step Book also tells me that *fear* has been the chief activator of my defects: fear that I would lose something I already had or fail to get something I demanded. It then goes on to explain that there is a difference between a demand and a request; something that I had been entirely incapable of understanding for most of my adult life. To

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The Tradition of Self Support

An AA Remembers His First Meeting and What the 7th Tradition Was Able To Provide

Tradition Seven - Every A.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions

"We'll pass the basket." When I heard these words at my very first meeting that Monday night in January, I said to myself, "Here we go, I knew there was a catch. It's all about money."

Yep, all two bucks worth.

I was hurting that night. I was given a SJIG meeting list by my doctor, who got it from our public info volunteer. Then I went to a church basement which just managed to be open...for me? Being a cold January night, I was greeted with a few cups of coffee and some cakes to accompany them. As I took my seat I was handed a nice hardback book to join in the reading.

With some down time, I could not take my eyes off of the placards and notices and the two long window shades that had a lot of ideas laid out on them. They made these announcements about things to do and they did not cost anything. The meeting came to an end and all the books were gathered and put in a bin for another meeting. But then this group of guys got with me and each was suggesting taking for free "any of the pamphlets that were available", as well as a big blue book.

They were doing what all groups have been doing for over 75 years—helping the newcomer via the self-supporting contributions put in the

basket at meeting places, even in Audubon. For this alcoholic, a few skins in the basket are the least I can do for what was so freely given to me.

— Joe C., Last Mile Step/Tradition, Audubon

Editor's Note: I remember when I first came in and I saw the basket being circulated. I also thought, wow, we need to donate? And my sponsor said to me with a smirk, "So...how much did you spend a night on booze?" I never had that thought again.

Step Seven

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me, the two were just about equal: What I wanted, I demanded, and that was that. If the world refused to supply it, there was something wrong with the world, and I would have to drink until the world changed its mind!

The Step Book also says that before sobriety, just about my entire life was predicated on unsatisfied demands. As I journey through sobriety, I find that I must let slip away, one demand after another and change my attitude. Humility must now be my guide—in reducing my demands for things my way, and in asking my higher power to remove my defects. No peace or serenity will I find unless and until I start living this way. Half measures here avail us nothing.

As always, I recommend working with one's sponsor on this and other Steps. I also recommend going back and reviewing your Fourth Step inventory. This gave me the key to identifying those defects that I needed to present and re-present to God. The ones that I neglected to include in Step Seven were character traits that I had really not come to see as defects. These are the ones, I suppose, that are referred to in Step Seven, as things I like too much to want to give up. Indeed, it is only because I like them that I fail to see them as defects.

As time goes on however, I come to see more character traits that I once thought of as enjoyable or useful, as traits needing to be taken from me. I cannot do this alone. I need the help of my Higher Power. At no time, certainly, do I get to select the timetable for this process. I just do my best, paying attention each day to those personality traits that really cause me problems with myself and others. Little by little, these get whittled down to size before being discarded for good. Again, humility is the key to this process and a daily practice.

Have a Happy, Healthy and Fun Fourth of July with South Jersey Alcathons

What Is An Alcathon?

There's absolutely no reason why any AA cannot have a happy, healthy, and sober July Fourth this year and no reason why every AA cannot get their summer off to a good, sober start. The South Jersey area abounds with Alcathons this July Fourth, with all day food, fellowship and fun for all.

What is an Alcathon? An Alcathon is an extended period of time, anywhere from 12 to 24 hours, during which AA meetings take place every hour, on the hour. Organizers and hosts prepare well in advance to make sure each meeting has a chairperson and that no meeting goes uncovered. Coffee and refreshments are usually available throughout the day



or night and at many locations, food and desserts are served.

Organizers of Alcathons know that quite often, on holidays (like July 4th, Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, Memorial Day)

many AAs feel alone and old feelings can come back and haunt them. Besides, these are days when many of us had extended bouts of drinking and for many, these holidays can signal that it is time to drink again. Harder still, is the thought that many of our friends and family members are "partying" and we are not. As a precaution and an extra layer of "armor" for our sobriety, attending Alcathons can be a great way to get through these holidays in a sober and happy way.

This July Fourth, make it a point to try to attend at least one of the Alcathons in our area.

Masonville Marty

Alcathons in South Jersey For a Sober Celebration on July 4th

Burlington City

The Burlington Big Book Meeting
St. Barnabas Church, 309 East Broad Street,
Burlington, NJ
Alcathon from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm
(food will be available)

Pennsauken

482 Social Hall
7550 N. Crescent Blvd., Pennsauken, NJ
Alcathon from 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm
(food will be available)
Call 856-356-2852 for more information

Runnemede

New Beginnings Club
101C Rose Avenue, Runnemede, NJ
Alcathon from 9:00 am to 1:00 am
(Barbeque at Noon)
Call 856-718-7446 for more information

Vineland

The Vineland Nooners Group
Trinity Episcopal Church
8th and Wood Streets, Vineland, NJ
Alcathon from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm

Sharing

(From page 1)

After a week of this "coasting", I woke up one Monday morning, went downstairs, made my coffee—and suddenly, out of the blue, had the thought of taking a drink. And not only did I think this thought, I actually contemplated it for a moment—a long moment. I thought about how I could start out with just a drink—just a glass of wine—and I cold-bloodedly visualized how I would be throwing away my years of sobriety, my spiritual program, and all the good things that have happened and would continue to happen as the result of AA. And for that brief moment—it all flashed before my eyes that quickly—I DIDN'T CARE. That's how "cunning, baffling, and powerful" this disease is.

Fortunately, in the next moment, good sense kicked in. Good AA sense. I realized what I was doing and stopped. I stopped thinking the insanity of this disease—that I could drink again and it wouldn't matter. Of course it would matter. I would



lose everything I had worked so hard to build up over the years with God and AA. I would throw it away in a matter of days, weeks, months. And I would have no one to hold accountable for this but myself.

So I stopped the insanity in my head, and continued about my day. And here's where the sharing comes in. I was really surprised--amazed, actually—I had had this thought, let alone contemplated it, and then I remembered a man in my home group, a man with decades of sobriety who worked a solid program, who has been sharing over the past few months that he has had the thought

and the desire to drink. And because of his sharing, I realized I needed to share, too. So I called a woman I trust in the program and told her. She immediately invited me over to her house to read the first step together—talk about sharing! I gratefully declined, saying I was okay now, just needed to share that experience with someone in the program, and thanked her. She said the offer

stood anytime I needed it. And then—coincidentally (I've heard it said God works through coincidences) a sponsee of mine called to "catch up," so I shared again with her.

About the Seven Gifts of AA

Recently, I was asked to speak at a meeting. I came up with the idea of talking about what it's like now in terms of the gifts I've received from AA. Seven gifts came to mind. Last month I wrote about gratitude. This month, I write about the gift of sharing.

Patricia P.



Sober Meetings by Phone

There's a new meeting in town and it's no place and every place! It's called "Sober Voices" and it takes place entirely on the telephone. The meeting is listed with the General Service Office and you can take part. For more information, call Tim at **702-767-8291** or visit their website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/aatelephonemeetings/home>.

Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

Around the Rooms

By Riss

"Relationships in Recovery"

The one thing everyone in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous used to tell me when I first walked through the doors was "don't make



any big decisions your first year". Along with that sentence came, "Don't get in a relationship your first year of sobriety." Granted these suggestions all hold considerable merit, but nowhere in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous does it say not to date your first year of recovery. One of my closest friends in AA got in a relationship early in her sobriety and is still with that person today- working a strong program. Now, is that the rule, or the exception?

For me personally, not dating the first year was crucial in gaining a foundation in my recovery. As a young woman coming into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, taking the easy way out and retreating to old behaviors looked very appealing to me at times. My most glaring old behavior was seeking validation from men to avoid the work I needed to do on myself.

I knew that doing the same thing I've always done would lead me right where I came from—on the brink of death. So, begrudgingly, I took the advice of my sponsor and fellow AA members that I looked up to. I did not date the first year of my sobriety.

I knew that if I distracted myself from a relationship with a Higher Power (who was completely foreign to me), and if I did not completely devote myself to the entire program of AA, I would soon drink.

I believe there are no set rules for when to get into a relationship in recovery. Do I believe that I was given the right advice to not have a relationship in the first year?..absolutely. But who am I, or anyone else, to tell you what your experience in sobriety should be? No one knows God's will for you. All we can do is pray earnestly and take directions from those around us who have had a spiritual awakening. I believe God spoke to me through my sponsor and my friends.

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What Are the Requirements? An AA Considers Religion in Meetings in the Context of the Third Tradition

Sometimes, it seems that the Third Tradition has been amended to "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking and a belief in God. In many meetings, as well as Grapevine articles, I hear that unless I profess a belief in God, I am doomed to drink again. This God is usually not a God of my understanding but a God of their understanding.

I have been sober in AA for well over 30 years. For the first 10 years or so, I tried to believe and I made believe that I believed. At my sponsor's suggestion, I prayed daily and worked the Steps. The more I studied religion and God, the more convinced I became that this was not for me. Yet, I continued going to meetings, sponsoring others (if

they believed in God I did nothing to discourage them), engaging in service work, and stayed sober.

I find most AA literature, on this subject, very condescending. Even chapter four of the Big Book, "We Agnostics," promotes the idea that atheists and agnostics will eventually come to believe in God.

Discretion as become the better part of valor for this atheist at meetings. Many AAs will insist that this is a spiritual program and then go on to explain their religious beliefs and why I should accept them.

Convincing them to become an atheist is not my job or intent. While it is not appropriate for me to point out the errors of their thinking, why do they think it is their responsibility to convert

me? I have no problem in believing in many powers greater than myself. I just believe in one less God than they do.

In the June 2013 Grapevine, "K.K." wrote, "Tradition six reminds us to be careful not to endorse." When a newcomer, or a visitor, comes to an AA meeting and experiences it being closed with the Lord's Prayer, wouldn't they assume that, since this is a Christian prayer, and AA endorses it, therefore AA must be a Christian organization? We say, "We want the hand of AA to always be there..." Are we placing restrictions on who will be allowed to grasp that hand?

—Bob L., Gilbertsville, Penn.

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More Things to Do

Thursday, July 31 - Swedesboro 11th anniversary at the Bethesda Methodist Church in Swedesboro. There will be ice cream sundae making at 7:00 pm and reading and a speaker starting at 7:30 pm.

Saturday, August 2 - Area 45 Corrections Committee 19th Annual Inter-Area Conference "Freedom from Bondage" 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. St. Charles Borromeo RC Church, 176 Stagecoach Rd., Sicklerville, NJ, Hot breakfast & 6 Speakers. Chair: Kathy Jo @ 609-790-3740 or KJSwersky@gmail.com or Co-Chair: Judy K. at 856-404-3057 or Judyn413@gmail.com

Friday, August 15 - The Collingswood Ballroom will have a dinner/show to help Maryville recovery center celebrate their 65 years of addiction treatment. From 6:30-10:00 pm for more info call - Melissa at 856-227-2717

Sunday, August 24 - District 14 9th Annual Picnic- NOON - 6PM. \$10/ Under 12-FREE. Jersey Oaks Camp, 80 Batter Cake Ln, Lower Alloway Creek, Near Maskells Millpond Fish Wildlife Mgmt. West of Rt. 49 So-Quinton/Salem. Door Prizes, 50/50, Arts & Crafts, BYO Chair & Sports Equipment, Food & Speakers! Side Dishes Welcome! Anthony A-856-455-0416, Electric Dave-609-536-5140

Monday, September 8 - Pennsville Churchtown Group District 13 MTG 6:30 pm. Planning for workshop at Assembly of God, 328 No. Broadway, Pennsville.

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

July 2014

Meeting Moved Temporarily - The noon meetings at Prince of Peace, Route 70, Marlton, NJ will be held at Dance Time of NJ, 3003 Lincoln Drive West, Marlton, **from July 28 - August 1.** (Vacation Bible Study at Prince of Peace.)

Saturday, June 21 - Runnemedede New Beginnings Club will have "Summer Fiesta" BBQ starting at 3:00 pm. Special speaker at 6pm - donation \$10. For more info call Bob: 856-718-7446.

Saturday, June 21 - Karaoke Dance, Kiss Club, 8:00 pm , 818 N Broad St, Woodbury NJ, Tickets \$10, includes food and beverages. Info call Jim M, 609-970-2483

Saturday, June 21 - N. Wildwood District 19 BEACH MEETING – Noon-4:00 pm, 2nd & Kennedy Dr.: 1:00 pm Gratitude & Service–Stephanie, Area 45 Chair; 2:00 pm Yoga & Meditation—Karen B.; 3:00 pm Traditions—Cheryl G.; Music Jimmy D. Food WELCOME! Call Joe C. : 856-287-5640, Elizabeth W. : 609-408-0435

Sunday, June 22 - Cape May Court House Sick Seeking Serenity Anniversary 9:00 am eat / 10:00 am speakers AA/Alanon/Alateen - Rte. 9 in Cape May Court House

June 27 – 29 – 3rd Liberty Bell Roundup (Philadelphia Woodstock of AA) Clarion Philadelphia Airport, 76 Industrial Highway, Essington, PA. 610-521-9600. Mention LBR. \$99/night. Sells out by May 1. Must Pre-Register: \$35 <http://libertybellroundup.com/> Info: Dave W: 610-342-6876 Dave42day@gmail.com / Scott F: 215-431-0921 scott@newfoundfreedom.com

Sunday, June 29 – Area 45 Corrections Meeting will be held at the Centenary United Methodist Church, 151 S. White Horse Pike, Berlin, NJ 08009 at 1:00 pm. We are looking for volunteers to carry the message to the confined alcoholic. For more upcoming dates, please contact the Chair: Kathy Jo at 609-790-3740 or KJSwersky@gmail.com or Co-Chair: Judy K. at 856-404-3057 or Judyn413@gmail.com

Thursdays, July 3 - Aug 28 - Avalon Women 'KISS' (Keep it Simple Sisters) 10:00 am Maris Stella RC Hall, 5012 Dune Dr.

Tuesday, July 8 - Northfield Group 41st Anny 8PM Spkr Nancy K. from Md. at Good Shephard United Methodist Ch. Zion Rd. & 207 Northfield Ave., Northfield - FFF Desserts WELCOME! more info call: Diane O. 609-402-1648

July 25-27 - Alcoholics needed to chair A.A. meetings at Jal-Con 2014 ("Serenity's Gifts"), the Jersey Al-Anon Convention. Fifty topic meetings, speakers (AA, Al-Anon, and Al-Ateen), banquet, dance, raffle, literature for sale. Sheraton Edison Hotel, 125 Raritan Center Parkway, Edison, NJ, 08837. Pre-registration by mail or online is \$35 or \$40 at the door. For online registration, go to whoscoming.com/jalcon. To volunteer to chair A.A. meetings, contact Dave MacD at davemacd21482@comcast.net or call (856) 358-2952.

Sunday July 27 - 4th Annual Bike Run 818 N. Broad St. Woodbury NJ Riding to Fort Mott and then back to the KISS Club F F F early reg. \$15 Rider - \$5 Passenger Day of Reg. \$20 Rider - \$10 Passenger Register: 8:00 am continental breakfast. Kick stands up at 10:30 am BBQ only \$10.00 per person



Carrying the Message!

I took a speaking commitment for the local IDRC. This is not where you tell your story, but rather, give the participants information about what AA is and what it does and does not do. When I finished speaking, I asked if there were any questions. The lady right in front of me extended her hand as if to raise it and I asked if she had a question. She said, "No, uh, no" and withdrew her hand.

A gentleman raised his hand and I called on him. When I was finished answering questions, I thanked the participants for their time and said I would stay for a few minutes if anyone wanted to talk to me. At that, the original lady gestured quietly to me. I bent towards her and she said, "You have a tag on your shirt."

Gail V.

In the Rooms

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What helped me most was beginning a sincere and honest discussion with God and another person about my past relationship patters, so that I would not repeat them. Doing a thorough Fourth and Fifth step helped tremendously.

I think the one thing I know for sure is that when you sincerely look inside your heart and ask God for direction in a particular relationship, when you genuinely want to know what God's Will is for you, when you keep your ears open and your mouth shut, you will see clearly what God's will is for you (even if you don't like it). God's Will for me was definitely not to get into a relationship in my first year of sobriety and I am incredibly lucky I took direction. Because I did that, I gained a relationship with my Higher Power and myself. I feel comfortable being alone because I know my Higher Power is ALWAYS with me.



CARRY THE MESSAGE
SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH & HOPE

Districts 3 & 22/23 Event Saturday July 12, 2014
Tradition 5 Workshop: Primary Purpose
Carrying the message in Prisons, Hospitals & Institutions, and to the Professional Community

Presentations from Intergroup H&I Chair and Area 45 CPC and Corrections Chairs
Followed by Pot-Luck Dinner and Dancing and 50/50
Please Feel Welcome to Bring a Dish or Dessert
Suggested \$5.00 Donation for Dance



6pm Registration
6:30pm Workshop
7:30pm Dinner
8 – 11pm Dance with DJ Don (DJ from Area 45 Convention)



St Stephen's Episcopal Church
158 Warren Street
Beverly, NJ 08010



Questions??? Contact Jessica S. (609)954-5672/ Kelly W. (609)968-4440