

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

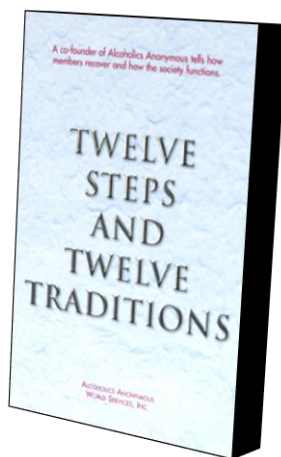
SEPTEMBER 2014

Our 7th Tradition

"Each of us has so much to give, regardless of our financial situation."

Once upon a time, (about 18 years ago), I hit bottom and decided to give A.A. a real try. I'd attended random meetings prior to this, thinking, "Thank God I'm not as bad off as these folks." Well, the day came that I realized that I WAS as bad as some of those folks, and that I was way out of control.

At that point, I had known Ed, my sponsor, for about 18 months. By his original assessment, I wasn't ready to stop. I talked with Ed and explained that I was ready now. We commenced to hit a few meetings, and at my second meeting, we attended the group's "business meeting." The Group (Somerdale Big Book) needed a volunteer to make coffee. I found my right hand raised (Ed helped) and I landed my first ever service commitment in A.A.



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AA and Money

Sitting at a routine Intergroup meeting earlier this year, I was stunned to hear our Treasurer say, rather casually, that monetary contributions from our member groups were down for the first quarter; way down! "How could that be," I thought, "Didn't the members realize how important money was to our survival as a non-organization organization?" Fortunately, as I write this, contributions have picked up somewhat. That, however, does not blunt the shock of hearing about the earlier drop-off in funds.

"Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous—carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. Without it, the Fellowship would wither and die. Yet, even at its simplest level this vital contact between one alcoholic and another involves an investment of time and money" (from the AA Pamphlet, *Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix*).

"Self-support" begins with the individual member. The member is part of the group and the group pays its rent, buys coffee, snacks, and AA literature, and makes contributions to Intergroup, District and area committees, and to the General Service Office in New York. All of these entities in turn, maintain a network of outreach and communications to carry

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Our 7th Tradition

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I found a wealth of knowledge and experience about AA, as well as about myself and my defects, as I attended these "Meetings before the Meeting." Working one-on-one with another alcoholic is truly the crux of what we do here. This ultimately instilled in me the understanding of the value of Service Work in AA.

What, you may be asking by now, does this have to do with our 7th Tradition? A lot, as you'll see.

In order for a Group to be "Fully Self-Supporting," they need to fulfill their basic needs internally. Rent needs to be paid, coffee made, cleanup after the meeting, greeters to direct newcomers to someone to talk to. (You greeters DID know that that was a part of your job, right?) If your Group is typical, you'll find that these tasks are routinely filled by the same folks, over and over. The newer members are shy of asking, or afraid to ask, to do these tasks. They might think, "I know I'll screw this up".

You elder members need to encourage the newcomer to try new things, to not be afraid to fail, and to get involved. Groups are members of a District, members of an Area, and members of an Intergroup. In the same way as the homegroup, these other AA services also need "support."

I know that I'll never achieve the level of financial well-being I enjoyed prior to my drinking alcoholically. I accept that fact, and AA has taught me that my acceptance is the key to living happily in this world today. I still manage however, to put at least a couple bucks in the basket as it passes by. I figure that amount 'trivial' compared to the money I used to spend per night on liquor. It's the very least I can do. What I CAN give, however, is my time to the ongoing efforts of these services.

Money, it is said, is the root of all evil. While this is for the most part true, money is also necessary to be able to accomplish any good in this world. Your homegroup's district needs financial support. The Area

needs financial support. The Intergroup needs financial support. A.A. World Services (AAWS) needs financial support. Each of these entities is out there, every day, doing the things that are beyond the scope of a homegroup's limited resources.

Your group probably could not afford to maintain a phone line and staff it 24 hours a day. Nor could your group, by itself, compile and print a local meeting list. What about a live, relevant website? Keeping meetings and speakers going in jails and hospitals? Keeping up with the latest literature available from

AAWS or the Grapevine? Keeping in touch with GSO and the current events in AA locally and worldwide? Yet, "miraculously," these very things are available to you and to your group, "free of charge", every single day. How does this "miracle" come about? By the voluntary financial contributions that your group makes to these Service Organizations.

Without your group's support, these services will not be able to continue to function. As Joni Mitchell says in her song, "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone", do we want to "Pave paradise and put up a parking lot"? I think NOT!

At its 30th (1965) Convention, A.A. put forth the "Responsibility Pledge", which reminds us that, without each of us being personally responsible, AA itself cannot survive. Let TODAY be the day that YOU decide to "Give back what has been so freely given." It can be financial, it can be time, it can be expertise in a trade or craft. It can be taking a Commitment. It can be just talking to that newcomer and easing his fear and jitters at his or her first meeting. Each of us has so much to give, regardless of our financial situation.

Above my workbench in the basement, I have a sign that I made some 3 years prior to my getting sober. It reads "JUST DO IT!" I have. Now, will you?

Peace.

-- Andy E. ;-)

The 7 Gifts of AA: The 12 Steps Allow Us To Live in Peace and Harmony, and Grow in Goodness

By Patricia P.

In 1987, I went to a public talk given at a church by M. Scott Peck, psychiatrist and author of *The Road Less Travelled*, a book about what he had learned about life over the years of being a psychiatrist and helping people in that capacity. Clearly a spiritual man, he said something that reverberated to my core and has stayed with me to this day. He said the worst thing that happened in the 20th century was the Holocaust. And then he said the thing that brought tears to my eyes, then and now. He said that the best thing that happened in the 20th century was a meeting that occurred between two men in 1935 in the little town of Akron, Ohio.

We all know what that meeting was. He was, of course, referring to the evening Bill W and Dr. Bob met together and talked together and stayed sober together.

To hear that from a most respected and distinguished doctor and psychiatrist, a man who had had a non-fiction bestseller on the NY Times for 10 years, was, to say the least, inspiring. And for AA to get that recognition--wow.

Of course, AA deserves that recognition. No arguments from me that it is the best thing that happened to humanity in the 20th century.

So what makes AA so incredible? I say--the 12 Steps.



These Steps are a blueprint for life, a "design for living," as the Big Book says. They get us sober. They keep us sober. And they give us a whole new way of life, a whole new life. As page 15 of the 12 and 12 says: A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."

So far in my years of sobriety, I have been able to solve my problems, resolve my conflicts, with one or more of the Steps. Sometimes it's a quick and easy fix with a 10th Step. Sometimes it takes more--another 4th and 5th Step to get at character defects that have cropped up again, followed by 6 and 7. And maybe 8 and 9! Always it is Steps 1, 2 and 3, and 10, 11 and 12 to continue to live a life of goodness, and continue to grow in peace and serenity.

Do I live in a constant state of Grace? Nope. Wish I did! But most days I do live in relative peace and harmony--especially compared to my drinking days! No comparison! Then I existed. Now I live.

Where did the Steps come from? Bill W wrote of this for the July '53 issue of the Grapevine. Titled "A Fragment of History: An Origin of the Twelve Steps", it is a great read for those interested in our program's history, and can be found on pages 195-202 of *The Language of the Heart*, a compilation of all Bill W's Grapevine writings. He says on p.195, "In the last analysis, perhaps nobody knows"--where the Steps came from. But he goes on to say on pages 195-6: "...the main channels of inspiration for our Steps were three in number--the Oxford Groups, Dr. William D. Silkworth of Towns Hospital, and the famed psychologist William James, called by some the father of modern psychology. The story of how these streams of influence were brought together and how they led to the writing of our Twelve Steps is exciting and in spots downright incredible." Incredible indeed, as you find out in his article. He concludes on p. 202: "This little fragment of history ought to convince the most skeptical that nobody invented Alcoholics Anonymous. It just grew--by the grace of God."

As do I--thanks to AA.

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.*

Money and AA: What Our Members Are Saying

The amount of money someone has has nothing to do with their sobriety. If you lend an AA friend money, do not expect to be paid back.—TJ from Riverside

We are self-supporting through our own contributions. That is very important.—Angela from Willingboro

*It's the best deal going!
—Rob from Hainesport*

*"Corporate poverty," that's our goal. Whatever we have we should spend. That's from Bill W. by the way, not from me. I say this from experience. I've seen that, for many groups, money can be destructive. By the way, members should try Googling 'Money and AA.' There are some interesting results.
— Gino from Hainesport*

Groups should try experimenting with different ways to raise money. I know a group that has a 50-50 raffle each month with a new Big Book as the prize. This sort of thing is done all over the country. —Anonymous

*My group pays its rent of \$100 per quarter and keeps \$125 as a prudent reserve. All other funds get sent upward.
— Joe D. from Willingboro*

They have tens of millions of dollars in New York. There's 113,000 member groups and New York has 83 employees. Besides which, their rent is fairly reasonable for New York. I know this because my sponsor was a Trustee. AA hasn't really grown in 25 years. The number of declared members has remained the same, although alcoholism and drug use has increased. — Anonymous

No One Tried To Sell Me Anything

Early on in recovery, I was attending a regular Steps and Traditions meeting in my neighborhood. Being summer, one of the first readings I participated in was the 7th Tradition chapter in the 12 and 12.

At the time, I was putting all of my thought and energy into staying sober, so I felt like for me, studying the Traditions was a waste of time. I was still trying to get a handle on the 12 steps. I didn't think the finer points of how AA functions as an organization would help me much.

Then one of the attendees shared this: "At my first AA meeting I was completely confused. All of these strangers were coming up to me and saying 'hi', but no one was trying to sell me anything."

The comment was funny, but as I got more sobriety time under my belt, I began to understand what a profound statement that is.

I remember how people welcomed me when I first came to AA. They were warm and went out of their way to say hello, but it wasn't that phony "great-to-see-you" I experienced at so many of my work-related functions. They made it clear that they couldn't cure me of alcoholism, but if I wanted to stay sober, they would be there to help me.

I have a little over a year sober now, and I am so grateful for my fellow AAs. They have helped me with words of encouragement and are always ready with helpful advice.

AA and Money

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the message of AA to the next suffering alcoholic. This framework of resources and support assure that the hand of AA will always be there any time anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help.

Supporting AA with regular monetary contributions (i.e., putting money in the basket) is the direct responsibility of every AA member. One of the reasons that this is so, is that AA depends solely on its own members to sustain its activities. We do not, cannot, and should not rely on outside support. Since its early days, AA realized that outside support would be the death knell of our survival as a large and vital entity with only one primary purpose—to keep our own alcoholism from destroying our lives and to help the next person who wished to do the same.

Outside contributions come with their own "strings attached." They come with the givers' agenda, prejudices, and "well-meaning" interferences in how that money is spent and used. Large stockpiles of cash and other assets lead to energy-wasting and self-destructive fights among members over just how such assets should be used. Our primary purpose—to stay sober and help others—becomes lost amid the cacophony of competing interests and voices and our integrity and dignity as an organization is quickly compromised. Thus, our Seventh Tradition: "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

When an AA member puts money in the basket, he or she supports his group, his Intergroup, and AA worldwide. He or she makes sure that AA gets meeting space, that phones get answered, that prisoners get Big Books, that professionals get correct answers, that loners get letters, that newcomers get literature and meeting books, that patients get meetings, that each member's voice gets heard, and that AA's around the globe share experience, strength and hope.

-- Masonville Marty

To me, that is the heart of what Alcoholics Anonymous is—helping each other to stay sober. The 7th Tradition is a part of that because being self-supporting means we have to rely on each other.

If I were paying somebody for treatment, I'd be really mad right now because I am not cured! I know now that alcoholism cannot be cured, but that it can be conquered. I just have to conquer it one day at a time. Thank God I don't have to do it alone.

We may have different stories, but we all have the same problem. No amount of money can fix us. But by working together, by being there for each other, by welcoming the newcomer with phone numbers and meeting lists, by doing service, we can stay sober together. And with the grace of our Higher Power, we will have a life more fulfilling than we ever thought possible. That is worth more than anything in the world.

-- Steve W. Masonville

Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey. Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either AA or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are printed with permission from AA World Services, Inc., and/or the AA Grapevine, Inc.

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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24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444
Toll Free Hotline: 1-866-920-1212

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

The importance of Sponsorship

One of the very first “suggestions” I was given in AA was to get a sponsor. That was before I even entered my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had



no clue what I was getting myself into, more importantly, I had no idea what a sponsor was. How do you pick these sponsor-things anyway? (There is actually tons of literature about sponsorship).

When choosing a sponsor, I chose the first woman I saw who told my exact story. This was at my very first AA meeting- a noontime Speaker meeting in Marlton. Unfortunately, at that time she had not been through the steps and said she could not sponsor me...Darn this is going to be harder than I expected, or so I thought.

At the time I came into Alcoholics Anonymous I was very young and impressionable. I was attracted to chaos and people who did not live a program. It took me a very long time to see this and finally get the sponsor that I have today that essentially “has what I want”.

Was I supposed to choose the prettiest girl in the room so one day I could be as pretty as her? How was I supposed to know what I wanted? I had no idea who I was walking into Alcoholics Anonymous. All I knew was that I did not want to die and I would do anything you said to get out of this boiling hot hell I was living in day in and day out.

I was told to go to a lot of meetings and listen to suggestions. I also listened to a lot of people who relapsed, came back in and confessed what part of the program they were lacking when they picked up that first drink. I knew I needed a solution from day one. Staying dry was not an option for me. I've tried that before and relapsed horribly. I needed a Sponsor. Someone who had been where I had been and achieved serenity and peace to show me the way.

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Let's Eliminate the Question

Have you gone to a meeting lately? Of course you have. Were you asked, "**ARE YOU WILLING TO BE A SPONSOR?**" If so, please raise your hand. Did you? DON'T ANSWER THAT QUESTION! I don't think the answer is the problem. It's the question that creates the problem.

In most of the meetings that I've been to, when the question is asked, less than one-fourth of the people in the room raise their hand.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. This question and its' answer are an unnecessary roadblock for the new person. If we can't be a full time sponsor when someone asks us, I know we will be supportive and encouraging until they find the right person.

Let's just return to the "old way of doing things" and eliminate the question. It is my opinion the answer to that question is not the best example of our willingness to "go to any lengths" to stay sober. It is not a good representation of the "spirit of AA."

I have been in the rooms of AA for years. We have seen many changes over those years, but this is the first time I have felt compelled to ask, " why, and, does this serve a good purpose"?

My hope is that we start this conversation in our business meetings. If you agree with me (or not) just attend the business meeting at your home group and ask for some discussion and a vote....it is that simple.

--Cathie A., South Jersey
Space Coast Florida

AA Workshops

Anonymity in the 21st Century

Saturday—September 27, 2014

2:00 pm—4:00 pm

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

26 S Forklanding Road

Maple Shade, NJ

(Entrance: red door on Helen Avenue)

This workshop brings AAs together to discuss and explore issues surrounding the maintenance of the 11th and 12th Traditions (the principles of 'anonymity' on the personal and the group level) in the age of electronic and social media.

2014—Day of Sharing

Saturday—October 18, 2014

8:30 am—noon

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church

1989 Marlton Pike E. (Rt.70)

Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

Perhaps the "mother" of all workshops for South Jersey AA. Members and representatives from three South Jersey Intergroups (South Jersey AA, Cape-Atlantic AA, and Central NJ AA) and from Area 45 (South and Central New Jersey) will gather to discuss issues and share ideas. Workshops will focus on such issues as safety and security, Newsletters, Public Information and Outreach, Money and Literature.

In the Rooms

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I never in my life knew what serenity and peace was. What I do know is that there are people in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous that have attained it, and they once stood in hell, too.

Everyone chooses a sponsor differently. Everyone needs a different type of sponsor that will get them in contact with a Higher Power. I believe when

the desire to know God is great enough, God will put those people in our lives, that God speaks through them in order to get us closer to him/her/it. Even if we don't have a strong desire to know our Higher Power I still believe God speaks through people. Constantly aiming to get us to lean on him more.

A Sponsor's job is not to save us. A sponsor's job is merely to put our hand in the hand of God's through work with the Twelve Steps. I believe

we are guided to those people who are meant to help us when our scorecards read zero and we are willing to close our mouths and listen. They do not need to look a certain way, or have a certain reputation in the rooms. All they need is to have had a spiritual awakening as the result of the twelve steps. You will see that spark in their eye that you are drawn to. You will see them act in the real world, just as they do in the rooms.

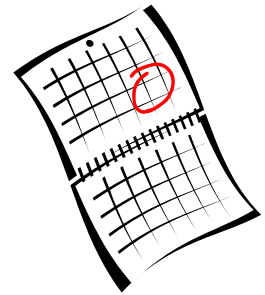
Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

September 2014

Sober Bowling

Starting September 12: Sober Bowling at Westbrook Lanes. Every Friday at 7:00 pm. Cost is \$13 per week and covers lanes and shoe rental. Runs 12 Weeks until the end of season.

Mark Your Calendar!



Sunday, August 24 - District 14 9th Annual Picnic, noon to 6:00 pm. \$10 (Under 12-FREE). Jersey Oaks Camp, 80 Batter Cake Ln, Lower Alloway Creek, near Maskells Mill-pond 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.

Tuesday, August 26 - District 13 Salem Co. Hosts FUN Nite OUT. Blue Rocks Minor League Baseball Game \$10 ea. 6:45 pm. Call Kathy P. 856-678-9412 to Book Tix. VERY kid-friendly event. FREE parking. ALL WELCOME!

Saturday, September 6 - Area 45 will take its Inventory. Registration begins 9:30am, Inventory will begin promptly @10am. To be held @ Carlslake Community Center, 209 Crosswicks Ave, Bordentown NJ.

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

Sunday, September 21 - Cape Atlantic Intergroup Unity Breakfast - The Grand Hotel, Cape May 8 am open 9 am Breakfast 10:00 am Sobriety Countdown Speaker - Joe Crogan, Palm Coast, FL Send a check for \$26 each to Virginia Fisher, 450 So. Main St., Woodstown, NJ 08098-1023.

Sunday, September 28 - Kiss Club "into Action Group" will celebrate their 2nd anniversary starting at 7 pm.

October 9-12 - 18th Naional AA Archives Workshop "Love & Service"- Doubletree Hilton, 301 W. Dekalb Pie, Route 202, opposite King of Prussia Mall. Optional Bus Trips Oct. 8 Stepping Stones, Oct. 9 AAWS GSO. Overflow hotels. Visit AA Nationalarchivesworkshop.com or Call Co-Chair Anne Marie at 215-205-5390, or Shakey Mike 610-212-0812. For info, email: NAAAW2014@yahoo.com if interested in AA Archives.

Saturday, October 18 - 4th Annual FREEDOM FIRE - Food, Fun, Fellowship, bonfire and 2 speakers: Anthony C, Bel Air, MD and Al B, Runnemede, NJ 4:30 - 6:30 Food and Fellowship 6:30 - 9:00 Bonfire and Speakers for a small donation you can Dunk the Drunk - Old Cedar Campground, 274 Richwood Rd., Monroeville, NJ 08343. Please bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on. \$5.00 donation to cover costs is requested, but not required. Call Rich for details: 856-904-3534.

Saturday, October 18 - St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church will have a day of sharing and will be joined by 3 inter groups and area 45 to discuss problems, issues and solutions. 8:30 am - noon. Continental breakfast will be provided. 1989 Marlton Pike E. Cherry Hill.

Saturday, November 15 - Gratitude Dinner Dance, \$25.00 person, DJ Philly D. Great Night Out, Fellowship & Unity. Tickets Available at IG Office and IG Meeting.