

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

JULY 2015

## April in July: When Someone Confronts You

*I got sober when I was 27. I am 32 now and still learning how to “survive” a variety of experiences and events as a young woman—who no longer drinks—in a world that does.*

Getting sober is tough enough—but sometimes it’s living with our sobriety in a world that doesn’t fully understand it that can be

equally tough. Often I am very confident in my sobriety and the person I’ve become, but I’m still sensitive and prone to emotional setbacks and a few weeks ago at my community pool, I had one.

A woman I don’t know very well had joined a mutual friend and my boyfriend at the lounge chairs. I hadn’t seen her in a year so happily

welcomed her to our group and engaged in some small talk. What started as innocent chatting, ended with her questioning why I don’t go to the bar with my boyfriend. How it even got to that conversation topic I’m foggy on, but the fact is, we were there and my motives were called into question.

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## How Simple It Is To Follow the Sunlight of the Spirit

*My name is Derrick, and I am an alcoholic.*

My sobriety is all about growth: personal growth through the Steps, growth in my resistance to the first drink, and growth in the relationship with my Higher Power.

When I first got sober, I bought a lavender plant, hoping that one day the plant would bloom into delicate flowers, and the scent of lavender would fill my apartment. I placed the plant inside on a table directly adjacent to a window, and would move it periodically, chasing the daylight for optimum exposure to the sun. I marveled at the fact that no matter where I placed the little shrub, it would reach and bend toward the direction of the light. After observing this, I tested it by placing the lavender in in-direct light, only to

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## The Turning Point

*Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

Step Seven is the turning point. It’s where we decide to *perhaps*, put our life on a new basis. I say “perhaps” because, as the Step says, “rebellion dogs our every step.” In this case “perhaps” represents “rebellion.”

My ego fights; it does not want to yield its demands and hopes and dreams; its fantasies of who I will be and what things I will have and the kind of life I’ll be leading. Step Seven answers here also: it says that these fantasies, demands, hopes and dreams are all based on fear; fear that I may *not* get what I need or want or “deserve.”

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# Tradition Seven and Concept VII

## *The Right Amount of Money and Plenty of Prudence*

As I've pointed out in prior essays, it helps in understanding a Tradition or a Concept, to look for personal applications. Tradition Seven concerns self-support. Am I supporting myself, is the Group supporting itself, and are the Trustees of the General Service Board supporting the conscience of the General Service Conference?

Money: too much or not enough, is the subject of Tradition Seven. Too much money—

as in the large donations that would flood in to AA if we allowed it—and the Group would begin to lose sight of just what our primary purpose is. Too little, and we could not pay our rent or support the important activities of the General Service Conference and our local Intergroups in being there as a vital resource for alcoholics who are suffering and do not know where to turn.

Prudence, seems to be the cornerstone principle for

both Tradition Seven and Concept VII. I know that, for me personally, too much money can make me drunk: first, drunk with myself and my ego; then perhaps literally so! As it says in the Tenth Step, "big shottism" is and has been, a recurring problem for me. Practicing prudence with my own finances has been and is, a daily challenge.

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### **Step Seven**

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Fear, I believe, is something bred into us from the time we are children. For one reason or another, I come to believe that, unless I react with fear at every turning, I will be destroyed or something terrible will happen. I have to always be on guard against this terrible thing happening. What that thing is, I could not say; I only know that it will be bad.

After a while, fear became an easy excuse for me to hide from the challenges of life: after all, if I had fear, what more did I need? And when the fears mounted, I could drink and pass out. So fear and drink became my formula for living.

Step Seven offers me a new basis upon which to live. It says that I can replace the fear with *humility*. That I can gradually, move the fear out and move humility in. Not only that, but the Step is unreserved in its declaration that, "without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all." And sobriety is not the only thing at stake here, for the Step continues on with the additional declarations that, without humility, I "haven't much chance of becoming truly happy" nor can I "live to much use

ful purpose."

I should make no mistake about the implication of Step Seven. It asks—no, it requires—that I place humility first in my life as a recovering person: before the things I want or think that I need, before my instincts for "security and personal satisfactions", before the thoughts and ideas bred by ego and fear.

Working the full implications of Step Seven is not an easy or overnight task. It is part of a lifetime of recovery that gradually infuses humility into our lives as sober people. As the Step says, it involves a "square look" at our defects and a "willingness" to have them removed. If we employ these qualities, the Step tells us, "our thinking about humility commences to have a wider meaning."

One final note here: of tremendous help to me in understanding Step Seven, was the substituting of the word "prayerfully" for "humbly", in the process of asking to have shortcomings removed. This little trick helped me to get beyond the, often intimidating idea of 'humility.' Prayer, I could always do; humility, not so "always." Try it for yourself. Let me know how you do.

*Masonville Marty*

## **PASS IT ON: *We Never Know How What We Share Can Help Others, but It Always Does***

AA teaches us to take responsibility for ourselves--every thought, feeling and most of all, action. As I gradually learned to do this, particularly by working Steps 4 and 5, I found that the more I did this--took responsibility for myself--the less I felt, thought and acted the victim. But I digress.

The point of this writing is that, when I shared at an AA meeting an experience I had with taking responsibility for myself, it helped a fellow member in that meeting, as I later found out. The experience I shared was "cleaning up my side of the street" of an altercation I had had with my sister after our mother died. She did something that hurt me deeply, and I reacted with rage. And I not only reacted with rage that day--week--month--I held onto that rage and nursed it into a deep resentment that I held on to for a good three years. The whole time I nursed that resentment, I knew it was wrong. I knew it cognitively, but I could not let it go. Don't know why--I've worked this program long enough to know it always works if and when I apply the principles and work the Steps. I guess it just was where I was then. I did what I could--e.g. prayed for her, for me, for us, asked God to help me let go, etc.-and I think, looking back, that must have helped me slowly chip away--or let God chip away--at my wall of resentment. Finally, I suppose, I just got sick and tired of being sick and tired, and realized she wasn't going to ever give me what I wanted--an admission of her guilt and an apology. So I decided to clean up



my side of the street, and I admitted my guilt and sincerely apologized to her. I had apologized to her once before--superficially--and it hadn't worked. This time it did, because this time, I was sincere. She felt my sincerity, and accepted my apology. We started building a relationship again, and today we are good friends.

And what does this have to do with passing it on? Well, I shared this experience, like I said, at a meeting a year and a half ago. Come to find out another woman at that meeting, who has since become my friend, also had a not so good relationship with her sister. They weren't even speaking. She told me later

that what I said touched her heart, and she decided to do what I did, and called her sister. From there, they began talking, and now are sisters and friends again.

Today that sister is in the hospital, and might not make it. My friend, as sad and upset as she is, is at peace with that--because she is at peace with her sister. She knows she did the right thing--the AA thing--and today she can be and is there for her sister and her family.

What a grand thing AA is! We never know how what we share can and will help others--but it always does--when we share and Pass It On.

*Pat P.*

## April in July

*(continued from page 1)*

When I started to explain myself (without breaking anonymity) I was cut off and asked whether I was a nun. I was mildly offended but pressed on saying that wasn't the case, and that our relationship is fine without me accompanying him to a bar on the rare occasion he goes. She then pressed on and cut me off again saying "fine fine April, just admit to us all that you're a recovering alcoholic." She meant it as a joke—not knowing I am sober, and certainly not about to earn the privilege of really knowing me and anything about my sobriety. But it hurt.

A woman who is incredibly inconsequential in my life had the ability to unglue me. And sure, I didn't let her know how upset I was. I just let her laugh it off and then proceeded to ignore her remaining small talk. But it got me and I immediately got in my head. Am I a bad girlfriend because I don't go to the bar? Is my boyfriend unhappy with



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me? Am I unfun because I don't drink anymore? And then the pity party began. Why me? Why do I have to be different than other 30 somethings? Why would my boyfriend really want to be with someone with all THIS?

I stewed on my lounge chair for 2 hours until my boyfriend decided it was time to head home and I walked him to his car. And boy did he have no idea what to do with the emotional tidal wave I laid on him. He of course assured me that I was being crazy and this woman is an idiot—which helped. But the rest of the day I was in my head and thinking of different responses I should have provided, how I could have avoided this confrontation all together, and had to keep repeating my boyfriend's assurances to remember that my sobriety has no negative effects on our relationship whatsoever.

But here's the thing—this happens to us occasionally—

the confrontation with a drinker who thinks nothing of their pressing questions and "jokes." My sponsor reminded me that the simple truth is, I am an alcoholic. And people can see me one of two ways. Either drunk and falling down making a fool of myself (as we tend to do), or sober, with my head held high. Obviously I am incredibly proud to be standing on both of my feet living a happy, joyous and free life. And I need to remember that and hold it close when someone is making me feel less than for the person I am. I also must remember that I can do anything I want—anything!—except drink alcohol. And instead of getting in my head over someone not worth my time and throwing the pity party, that's why we have this fellowship of other awesome sober people to talk to and get back in the right mental space. Next time I will be calling my sponsor a bit sooner than 24 hours later!

*April*

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## 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.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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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

## Tradition 7

*(continued from page 2)*

According to Tradition Seven, not only must a Group be “self-supporting, but it must be careful to maintain only a “prudent” reserve. Here is a safeguard against the intra-group turmoil that can come from arguments about what to do with a large sum of money on hand. Here is also a place to remind the Group to contribute its excess funds (“excess” here meaning, “beyond a prudent reserve for operating expenses”) up to the District, Intergroup, and the General Service Conference in New York. It is these entities that provide the lifeline points of contact with the millions still out there suffering from this disease and not knowing where to turn.

Concept VII takes the principle of prudence to another level still. The Concept, while recognizing that the General Service Board Trustees are, for all intents and practical purposes, in charge of managing AA as an international entity, places a final “check” on any unlimited power that such responsibility might entail. It states, once and for all, that the ultimate authority within A.A. remains always with the A.A. group conscience, as that may be expressed through and by the individual group delegates to the General Service Conference. At **any** time, the General Service Conference can step in and block a proposal or an action by the Trustees, where the Conference feels that the Trustees are just not acting prudently on a given issue. Not, of course, that this has occurred in anything but rare instances in A.A.'s history. Nevertheless “prudence”, as expressed by the General Service Conference, remains firmly enshrined in A.A.'s history and its daily functioning, and Concept VII makes that clear.

*Your Editor*



## Seeds

(continued from page 1)

come home and find the plant had again reached out for the sun.

I over-watered it. It got gnats, became infected with something, and eventually died. Still, the lesson of the lavender plant stuck with me; I must always reach for the light. It struck me as a poetic metaphor, a symbol for spiritual practice, evidence of how spirituality requires no explanation, it merely reaches for the light.

Before sobriety, I endlessly complicated the relationship with my Higher Power, attempting to intellectualize and reason God either into, or out of, existence. I felt that if I read more, if I could come to the belief that there was a God through study, I would *know* that there was a God, and God would then become real in my life, and everything would then work out alright (be the way I wanted it to be). This never helped me, it only solidified the belief in my mind that God was something outside of myself, something to be sought, something that must be worked for. Before sobriety, God was something that had to firmly reside in my mind, without doubt, in order for me to have faith. I rarely, if ever, considered that God was something that resided in my soul.

I had to let go of the idea of God in my mind. Only when I was able to let go of understanding God was I able to

allow my relationship with God to grow in its fertile place: in the garden of my soul. This is the simplicity of faith that was lacking in any kind of spiritual practice I had attempted before



sobriety. When I surrendered to my powerlessness over alcohol, when I surrendered to the Second Step, I stopped believing that I could manipulate my relationship with God, and instead began to sincerely pray to be a servant of God's will.

That is the simplicity of spirit demonstrated by the lavender plant. I learned that a plant has enough consciousness, enough good-orderly-direction, to follow the sun, and I attempt to follow that example in remembering how simple it is to follow the sunlight of the spirit. I don't need to pull my roots out, climb from the pot, water myself—these are all examples of self-will gone riot. I only need to let go and follow the light, and believe that God is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

I was intrigued by discussion about bottoms at a meeting. It occurred to me how apropos the metaphor of growth and plants is to sobriety. At the end of my addiction,

I had dug a hole that I would eventually recognize as my bottom. This is where the seed of sobriety was planted. All of the dirt, all of my character defects, my past—all of this is the nutritious soil that was placed over the seed. Working the Steps and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is the tending and watering that the seed needs to grow; without it, it will stay dormant, eventually decomposing in the darkness under the soil. Like any other seed, it wants to grow, it wants to reach, to strive toward the light.

When I work the Steps, the seed is tended to properly, and somehow, the warmth and light of God is able to penetrate through all of that soil and the seed sprouts. I am early in recovery and have just broken the surface of the topsoil, but already I know that I must seek out the light to grow. When I think of where I started, that seed at the bottom of my hole, I'm filled with gratitude and awe at how this spirit has sprouted, how even in my moments of dormancy, when I continue to not drink, go to meetings, and work the program, my roots continue to feed the plant. The sprout continues to seek the sun. The flowers will surely be more beautiful and fragrant than I could ever have imagined, and I'm sure the fruits will be beyond my wildest dreams.

Thank you for allowing me to share.

*Derrick*

# No God to a God of My Understanding

It was said to pray and look up at the heavenly  
father that lives in the clouds,  
So with the thoughts of doing that the brightness  
grew to dark clouds.

What we were getting use to changed over night,  
Living the life of love turned into nights of fright.  
Cause the system said this is the way it should be,  
I became what they sent us back to see.

A world of turmoil and chaos which was plain  
insanity,  
My little heart melted into a hard stone with  
no penalty.

The God which was mentioned for me to pray  
to at night,  
With my new way of living I felt there was no  
answer to my fights.

So being handed the drink at an early age,  
made me feel and see things an entirely different  
way.

The answer that I see her coming home trashed,  
with men she claimed to have known from the past.  
Then from that one day that I felt the escape from,  
more of that would be years to come.  
Not really understanding then of what I know now,  
this was not God's work but thru the hands of man  
of wow.

Thru those feelings grew fear and hate,  
which God passes on love and Faith.  
Becoming the alcoholic that she was,  
my defiance blocked me cause I didn't see for all  
that it caused.  
I wasn't the individual that she became,  
I was the individual that I have become.  
The reality hit when I mentioned I didn't get sober  
to be miserable,  
When you ask and are ready to hear the truth it  
won't be unbearable.

I let happen cause that is what I was used to it,  
so now how do I get rid of this.  
The true lessons on change and life will be revealed,  
When you fall to your knees in tears praying what  
you always feared.

Faith that you can see, feel, hear, touch and smell,  
That at one time I would tell you all to go to hell.

Today with the help of many in all different ways,  
some close, some far, I've come a long way to see  
what pays.

Faith without Works is Dead once was blended with  
the white,  
Now I see all of his works with not even a fight.  
To Love instead of be loved,  
to understand instead of being understood.  
Is a much easier way to walk these days,  
which keeps my heart open for better ways.

Fear is led by EGO,  
Faith guides us to Let Go.  
The things I've learned from walking his path,  
There was no time to sit in anger or cry on the  
couch cause I always had to dash.  
My answer from him came in a way that I didn't  
know

until,  
I was so far into it with my hand out to give from my  
heart not from the till.  
I didn't have two dimes to make a quarter,  
even with a full time job that I was in so much wa-  
ter.  
Believing and seeing for the first time the black of  
Faith without Works is dead,  
Finally made me see and learn so much more then  
what I've read.

More will be revealed I know,  
But today there is a faith that at one time even so-  
ber that I didn't want to know.  
One thru twelve is a much better way,  
Even on one of my worse days.  
What AA has given to me,  
As well as what more is to be learned about me.  
Fear of the pains lessons only last so long,  
Faith with works carries us thru in song.  
Live it, Luv it, Enjoy it,  
we have one life to make the best of it.  
We have a choice today to make the best of our  
day,  
so wake up with a positive attitude to fully make  
yours and someone else's day.

*Kelly B.*

# Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

July 2015

## **New Beginner Meeting**

Washington Township "How Important Is It Group," Thursday's 7:30 PM. St Charles Borromeo School. Johnson & Stagecoach Rds. Open. Joe 856 589 5710.

## **New Open Big Book Meeting**

Saturdays at 7PM at the Center for Family Services, 108 Summerdale Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043 (upstairs).

## **New Women's Meeting**

"Sisters Share and Care." Tuesdays 6-7pm. Big Book—Step Study. Zion Lutheran Church, Fairview and Pavilion Aves., Riverside, NJ.

## ***Mark Your Calendar!***

**Sunday, June 21** – Sunday Spiritual Meeting Revised. 10:30 AM – 11:30 am. Brooklawn Senior Citizen Center, 101 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Brooklawn, NJ. NEW

**Monday, June 22** – Palmyra Group is having their Anniversary pot luck dinner at 6:30 pm. Epworth Methodist Church, 5<sup>th</sup> & Morgan Sts. NEW

**Wednesday, June 24** – Absecon Speaker Group Anniversary 6:30 pm.

**Saturday, June 27** – Ashland Morning Glory Group is sponsoring a "Drop The Rock Workshop" (dealing with steps 6 & 7) from 11am to 4pm at Ashland Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Lunch will be included; - materials will be provided (\$5 donation for materials). Please text or call Jill D @ 856-816-4093.

**July 2-5** –International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Atlanta, Georgia. Please visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) for details.

**Tuesday, July 7** – Northfield Tuesday Night Big Book and Step Meeting celebrates their 43<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary. 7 pm at Good Shepherd United Methodist Church, 207 Northfield Ave., Northfield, NJ. Speaker: Chris B. from Philadelphia.

**July 20 - 24, 2015** – The Marlton Group that meets at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church at noon every weekday, will be meeting at Dance for NJ, 2003 Lincoln Drive, Suite A, Marlton, NJ.

**Thursday, July 30** – Swedesboro 12th anniversary at the Bethesda Methodist Church in Swedesboro. There will be ice cream sundae making at 7:00 and reading and a speaker starting at 7:30.

**July 31- August 2** – 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania State AA Convention in Harrisburg, PA. For information, visit [aapastateconvention.com](http://aapastateconvention.com).

**Sunday, August 2** – District 14 Annual Food, Fun, and Fellowship Picnic @ Parvin State Park. More details later. NEW