

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

November 2016

Keeping My Character Defects in Check by Seeing My Part

Have you ever belonged to a home group that was cliquish? Or there were members of the group who clearly were not following the principles of the program by keeping their character defects in check? Me too!

For several reasons, I will not give my entire first name, although some of my closest AA friends will probably be able to identify me. When I first came into the program those with sobriety over 20 years I thought were gods. I would be glued to their every word when

they shared and I would try to mold my program into their experience, strength and hope. There are several people in my home group that have over 20 years, therefore, there was *alot* of experience, strength and hope, if you know what mean.

Over my first year, I saw some changes in my home group; some I thought were good, and then some I thought were not so good. My focus was on my program and keeping my side of the street clean. I finished

Step 4, identified my character defects, and so was ready to go. Until it happened.

Someone in my home group rubbed me the wrong way. I am telling you this program is absolutely amazing! How in the heck when someone angers you that you then have to take a look at yourself, and find out what *you* are doing wrong which causes you to be disturbed or upset?

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You're in for a Ride

When I got sober I was 36 and married with two kids at home. My early years of reconstruction were difficult, as everyone tried to adjust to the huge changes in our family dynamic. But gradually, moments of sheer fun began to appear. I began to make new friendships in AA. I had drunk away all my friends from before, so it was fun to have new people to talk with and care about, ones who understood me.

My wife and I got along better for a while. Her medical problems made life nearly unbearable for her and she struggled with my transition to sobriety. I also had a bad disk in my back, so life was physically difficult for me too.

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We Were Powerless Over Alcohol

A fellow AA called me recently to ask about the word *were*: what did it exactly mean in the First Step; did it mean perhaps that we *were*, at some past time, powerless but are no longer so? I thought it a rather strange and novel question. Did not the word *were*, after all, signify the past tense?

My first attempt at an answer, involved relating the word to the past tense implied by the word "admitted"; i.e., "admitted" is the past tense of an action. It means that the person has already made an admission. Thus, when we "admitted", we *were*, powerless. Again though, this answer said nothing about the present.

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Were

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After some going round and round in this fashion, a simpler explanation dawned on me. When Bill W. and company composed the Steps, they were describing the Steps that they had already taken in their lives. They were describing what they had already done. Hence, they, at some past time, “admitted” that they *were* powerless. The fact and the truth about alcoholism however, is that the state of being powerless over

alcohol never ends. It never ceases to be true at any moment in our lives as alcoholics.

My friend suggested that perhaps the Step could read, “We *are* powerless”; and I tend to agree with him there. We *are*, at any given point in time, powerless over alcohol. That wording however, implies a condition (which is true) and not a “step” to be taken; i.e., not an action to be performed or one that was in fact performed already by the writer.

So the Step refers both backwards and forwards: it describes the Step already taken by the writer, but it also prescribes the Step to be taken by the reader each day. And when I take it, and relate to another (or to myself) that I have taken it, I would have admitted that I was, and am, powerless over alcohol. The first sense leaves the door open to go back and remember my past and the wreckage that alcohol caused in my life. The second sense tells me that that remains true.

Masonville Marty

Ride

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After I went through the first 11 Steps with my sponsor, I searched for others to help. I was blessed to meet men who were desperate enough to do what I had done. Watching that special light come on in them was, and still is, a great, fulfilling joy.

When I was sober a few years, my sponsor asked me what I’d like to do with my life. I paused and said that I’d like to be a lawyer. He said, “Are you willing to do what that takes?” I replied that I didn’t know but that I thought I’d find out. So I went back to school. As I progressed in my studies, God brought about a very peculiar chain of coincidences to put me in a job in law, even before I finished my bachelor’s degree.

Then I had back surgery to relieve the pain I’d been in for four years. I began to exercise and get in shape. My career blossomed and I continued to work with men new to AA.

At eight years sober, a doctor diagnosed me with melanoma, with a 60 percent chance that I’d be dead in two years. I felt an enormous amount of sadness and self-pity. But after two surgeries and a series of injections, it looked like I’d make it. Through all this I stayed close to AA, and it occurred

to me, while working my Eleventh Step, that life is short and God wants me to be happy.

So I decided that after an eight-year hiatus, I’d like to resume motorcycling, which had always made me happy. I bought a medium-sized bike and took to it quickly. It was great therapy.

Soon it was time to make amends to my brother. He had once been a significant person in my life, but for years I had kept him at arm’s length. The best way I could make amends to him was to spend time with him. To make this happen, I bought a bigger motorcycle for myself and sold him my old one at a price so unbelievably low he couldn’t resist the offer. That’s how my now 17-year-old reconnection with my brother began.

We have ridden together, and with friends, for tens of thousands of miles. We even rode to Milwaukee for the 100th anniversary party for one of my favorite motorcycle companies. That was a ton of fun. They threw a big party with live rock-and-roll music and street dances alongside a half-million or so bikes of all shapes and sizes and a museum dedicated to their bikes and art.

Better even than Milwaukee, though, was our ride across the United States with some of our pals. My brother and I have toured other parts of the country try too, with my favorite rides passing

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My Part

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I ended up with a resentment not only against the person whom I felt had done me wrong but against my *entire* home group. You see, the person has over 20 years of sobriety and was in a clique in the group (which I am sure exists in all home groups), so when she, what I will call "went off on me," it left me feeling like an outsider. Since we all need to focus on our side of the street, this went on and the group did not skip a beat.

The emotion of feelings I had surprised me because in order to keep my side of the street clean and keep my character defects at bay I said nothing to this person or to anyone else about what she had done in front of the entire home group. We are not supposed to gossip (which *kills* me not to do so) therefore, I said nothing. But in doing so I ended up with a resentment or should I say resentments!

I spoke to my sponsor about my resentments and I just knew she would be on my side, but she kept neutral. I could not believe she didn't say, "what girl?" "They did?" "Well, they owe you an amends"! None of that happened. She asked me what was *my* character defect that caused me to be angry at the person who spouted out at me? What role did *I* play?

Can I tell you that was not the answer I wanted to hear. Of course I thought about saying I played no role; however, I knew from the 4th Step I had. I now

COME CELEBRATE 24 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES

Monday, October 31, 2016

7:00 to 7:30 pm *Dessert Table*

7:30 to 8:30 pm *Featured speakers*

AUDUBON LAST MILE
STEP & TRADITION GROUP

United Methodist Church
314 W. Graisbury Ave.
Audubon, NJ 08106



had to dig deep to find that character defect(s). My sponsor asked me to take a couple of days to think about it.

It took me a few days to really think about the part I played, but eventually it came to me. All those ugly character defects surfaced: envy, jealousy, self-seeking, and yes, there were more! From that experience I realized several things. (1) Even if someone does have more than 20 years, they are still an alcoholic. They are still sick. (2) If you are angry or upset at someone, look at yourself. There is a character defect somewhere peeking its ugly head out. (3) The best lesson I learned was that by not saying anything to that person and not gossiping about the situation, and looking at my side of the street, I did not have to make amends. And that is the best feeling of all!

MM

Sobriety date 6/18/2015

November Service Opportunities

Intergroup Reps wanted: If your home group is not represented at Intergroup, please join us on November 16 at 8 pm at St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church (Rt 70 in Cherry Hill). Be sure to stop at the Unity table to learn more about being an Intergroup rep.

Literature Sales: The Literature committee is looking for volunteers to cover shifts and/or substitute. For more information, please contact Jimmy at literature@aaSj.org or call 856-486-4446 during literature hours.

Newsletter Articles: Please submit articles to newsletter@aaSj.org by _____ for our November Newsletter.

Public Information: We need some people to help with distributing literature and meeting lists to places such as hospital emergency rooms, libraries, and police departments. Please e-mail publicinfo@aaSj.org for more info.

Unity: The Unity Committee is currently looking for committee members and a new Co-Chair. Please contact Cletus at 856-266-4961 to see how you can help.

SPEAKING COMMITMENTS

Please contact Patti or Frank at handi@aaSj.org if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:

Monday, Nov. 7—Ancora State Hospital -202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton NJ 7-8 pm (arrive 30 min early)

Tuesday, Nov. 1 and Nov. 22—Solstice Counseling Center - 561 Rt 38 W, Lumberton NJ 7-8 pm



Wednesday

- **Nov. 23**—Unity Place I - 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill NJ 12:40-1:30 pm
- **Nov. 23 and 30**—Delaware House, 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton NJ 1-2 pm
- **Nov. 9, 16, and 23**—Solstice Counseling Center, 1561 Rt 38 W, Lumberton NJ 11 am-12 pm

Thursday

- **Nov. 3 and 17**—Ancora State Hospital - 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton NJ 7-8 pm (arrive 30 min early)
- **Nov. 24**—Lourdes Medical Center, 218 Sunset Road, Willingboro NJ 8-9 pm
- **Nov. 3 and 17**—Unity II - 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton NJ 2-3 pm November 3, 17
- **Nov. 10, 17, and 24**—Daybreak - 368 White Horse Pike, Atco NJ 10:30-12pm November 10, 17, 24

Friday, Nov. 4, 11, 18, 25—Vineland Victory Group, 2000 Maple Avenue, Vineland NJ 7-8 pm.

Saturday Nov. 26—Cooper Psych Unit - 1 Cooper Plaza, Camden NJ 11am-12pm

Cumberland County Jail : Anyone in Cumberland County looking for a good service commitment should consider joining the effort to bring meetings into Cumberland County Jail. Please contact District 14 or e-mail info@aaSj.org for contact info.

High Schools: The public information committee needs your help to bring our message to high school students. Please contact Eileen at publicinfo@aaSj.org for more information.

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@asj.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.
PO Box 2514
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446
Email: Info@asj.org
Website: www.asj.org
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

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

Trivial Pursuit

November Trivia Question:

How can Intergroup help your group promote an AA event?

October Trivia Question and Answer: Where do we send our group's contributions?

South Jersey Intergroup PO Box 2514 Cherry Hill, NJ 08034	Southern NJ GSA Area 45 PO Box 3724 Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
The General Service Office Grand Central Station PO Box 459 New York, NY 10164-0423	LIPS: Area 45 CTF Committee PO Box 3724 Cherry Hill, NJ 08034
District: Please contact Area 45 or South Jersey Intergroup for your District contact information	

Ride

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through Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. The beauty of that area is awesome. Along the way we had many adventures, and are now closer than ever.

Then there was my son. When I was newly sober, he and I did not get along. We struggled even after I made amends to him as best I could. He had considerable issues to deal with over his childhood and didn't want much to do with me. But after time passed, we started getting along better. He joined the Navy about the time I reached 11 years sober. I flew out to see him graduate from boot camp. I wept with pride watching the ceremony. We spent time just hanging out, eating meals, going to the beach and shooting pool. We got closer. When he was discharged, he stayed with me for a few months, so I rented him a bike to ride with me and my brother.

One day, the three of us were riding some mountain roads in Colorado. My brother and my son were riding ahead of me and I was overcome by how wonderful I felt to be riding
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Ride

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with both of them through this beautiful scenery. I teared up.

Once, my son took me to an experimental aircraft convention in Oshkosh. We stayed in a college dorm room and hung out all week looking at aircraft and watching air shows. We had such a great time.

When I went to Cleveland for heart surgery, he came with me and gently helped me through some of the toughest days of my life. When I woke from anesthesia, I looked over and there he was. I felt so comforted to know he was there that I was able to drift right back to sleep.

One of the most poignant conversations I've had with him was when I was sober 20 years. We were at my house and I began to tell him, yet again, how much I regretted the way he had to grow up. He got angry and said, "Will you stop it? You're not even the same man." Words can't express how much that meant to me. My son and I have become quite close. We have coffee or breakfast every few weeks when he's in town.

As for my daughter, she has her own family. When I was about eight years sober, her biological father wasn't contacting her

much and she was hurt by it. I proposed to adopt her as an adult, telling her that she needed a dad, even though she was already an adult at the time. She consented. I feel so proud when she introduces me as her father.

When she was pregnant, her husband was too squeamish to

"When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned."

participate in the birthing classes. She asked me if I would coach her through the birth of their child. That was the best compliment she could ever have given me. So I was her coach through a scary and joyous experience. I was so proud that she trusted me.

I spent most of my life in unhealthy relationships, culminating in three divorces (two in sobriety). But after much prayer and self-inventory, I was blessed to meet the best woman in the world. She is my wife of three years now. I am sensitive to criticism; she doesn't criticize me. I am kind of needy for affection; she is generous with her affection. She loves to ride on the back of my motorcycle. She is independent and strong. She is in-

telligent. She is prudent with finances and has achieved her own success. She is light of heart. We laugh together nearly every day. She took me to Paris before we were married. We've traveled to South America together. We love being with each other and keeping each other's happiness uppermost in minds. Our lives and our relationship have a spiritual basis. What a joy to be in this kind of love at this stage of my life.

Did I "earn" all this fun and happiness? I don't know. I do know that, as the Big Book says, "When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned."

I know that I once couldn't make a living. I didn't have love. I didn't have friends. I didn't have good relationships with my brother, my son or my daughter. And now I have all that and more.

I ask every alcoholic who wants to get well to follow the instructions in the Big Book, challenge every point, see for yourself whether it's true. Then, hang on, because you're in for a ride.

—Arthur J., Englewood, Colo.

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Spirituality on the Go!

Clip out these A.A. prayers to keep in your purse or wallet, or copy and paste them into your smart phone. Chances are, they will come in handy.

In our busy lives, we are always on the move: Eating while we drive; answering email on the bus; sending text messages while waiting at the doctor's office. Well, here's a little spirituality to take with you for when you need a little help from your higher power. And who among us doesn't need that?

SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

MY CREATOR, I AM NOW WILLING THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL OF ME, GOOD & BAD. I PRAY THAT YOU NOW REMOVE FROM ME EVERY SINGLE DEFECT OF CHARACTER WHICH STANDS IN THE WAY OF MY USEFULNESS TO YOU & MY FELLOWS. GRANT ME STRENGTH, AS I GO OUT FROM HERE TO DO YOUR BIDDING.

THIRD STEP PRAYER

GOD, I OFFER MYSELF TO THEE — TO BUILD WITH ME AND TO DO WITH ME AS THOU WILT. RELIEVE ME OF THE BONDAGE OF SELF, THAT I MAY BETTER DO THY WILL. TAKE AWAY MY DIFFICULTIES, THAT VICTORY OVER THEM MAY BEAR WITNESS TO THOSE I WOULD HELP OF THY POWER, THY LOVE, AND THY WAY OF LIFE. MAY I DO THY WILL ALWAYS!

ELEVENTH STEP PRAYER

LORD, MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF THY PEACE--THAT WHERE THERE IS HATRED, I MAY BRING LOVE--THAT WHERE THERE IS WRONG, I MAY BRING THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS--THAT WHERE THERE IS DISCORD, I MAY BRING HARMONY--THAT WHERE THERE IS ERROR, I MAY BRING TRUTH--THAT WHERE THERE IS DOUBT, I MAY BRING FAITH--THAT WHERE THERE IS DESPAIR, I MAY BRING HOPE--THAT WHERE THERE ARE SHADOWS, I MAY BRING LIGHT--THAT WHERE THERE IS SADNESS, I MAY BRING JOY. LORD, GRANT THAT I MAY SEEK RATHER TO COMFORT THAN TO BE COMFORTED--TO UNDERSTAND, THAN TO BE UNDERSTOOD--TO LOVE, THAN TO BE LOVED. FOR IT IS BY SELF-FORGETTING THAT ONE FINDS. IT IS BY FORGIVING THAT ONE IS FORGIVEN. IT IS BY DYING THAT ONE AWAKENS TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

November 2016

Saturday, October 22 – 6th Annual Freedom Fire. Appel Arts & Music Ctr. 457 Shirley Rd. Elmer, NJ Donation: \$10.00. 4:30 PM Food & Fellowship, 6:30 PM Speakers. Joanne M – Haddon Heights, Robbie W. – Wildwood. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. More info: Rich-856.904.3534, Amy-856.404.0237, Jesse-609.217.1295.

Wednesday, October 26 – The Sisters in Sobriety is having their 30th Anniversary with food at 6:30 PM with a speaker to follow. First Presbyterian Church, 494 Beverly – Rancocas Rd. Calvin Hall.

October 28-29 – Haddonfield Grace Ch. 19 Kings Hwy E. will have a couple days of speakers giving their experience, strength, & hope. Fri. 7pm - 10pm, Sat. 10am - 10pm. No reg. fees. Will be supported by the basket.

Monday, October 31 – Audubon Last Mile Step and Tradition Group will be celebrating it's 24th Anniversary. Desserts will be served at 7:00 pm before the two speakers. We are located on the corner of Wyoming and Graisbury Aves. in Audubon, NJ. United Methodist Church.

Tuesday, November 15 – The Maple Shade Group will be celebrating its 54th Anniversary at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Forkland Road and Helen St., Maple Shade. This is an eating meeting, with food served beginning at 7:00 p.m., and the meeting to start promptly at 8:00. As always we will feature a mystery guest speaker, and other fun stuff.

Friday-Sunday, November 18-20 – 10th Annual Waves of Sobriety Grand Hotel, 1045 Beach Ave. Cape May. Cape Atlantic CAIG. For more info contact the website: www.wavesroundup.net .

March 24-26, 2017 -

Area 45 Southern NJ Annual General Service Convention. More info will be coming soon.

If you have any changes or any new items that you feel would benefit our fellowship, please let me know, so we can get it out to the people. Wayne: 856- 534-0104 or wcp714@verizon.net

