

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

December 2016

Am I Really an Alcoholic?

I am just about to have 18 months of sobriety and recently asked myself “am I really an alcoholic”? I really do not know what caused me to ask myself that question.

I have been going through the same life on life terms, some worse than others, for the entire time I have been sober, many of which I believe should have led me to a drink. However, even though a brief thought may have come to mind about “picking up,” I would run through the process of how I felt and behaved, and knew that one drink would lead to another. The thought would then leave.

As I listen to speakers and people in the rooms sharing, the majority of the stories involve years of abusive uncontrollable drinking. My story is totally different considering. I was always able to drink socially and never had a problem with



drinking too much until my daughter's anorexia diagnosis coincided with me being laid off several months later. I fell into a deep dark place at that time, and alcohol became my best friend. For 46 years of my life, I had no trouble with alcohol until my world came crashing down. I was admitted for attempted suicide and then transi-

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AA at Work

My career has given me the opportunity to attend many business workshops and conferences. I left almost all of them with knowledge and inspiration that would help me do my job better. I also left with a feeling of inadequacy. I thought the speakers were teaching the “right” way to do things and that I was supposed to know more than I did.

Last week I found that when you add AA principals to a business conference it brings it to a whole new (and spiritual) level. I had the pleasure of attending an international Intergroup Office Manager Seminar in Kansas City.

The workshops were structured like an AA meeting. The chairperson shared the experience, strength and hope of their service office then opened the mic to other office managers. As a result I heard about how the high real

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Inside This Issue: Getting an AA Job ♦ At the SJ Intergroup Literature Desk ♦ Opportunities for Service and Speaking Commitments ♦ SJ Area 45 Convention

The Three Parts of Step Two

Step Two has always seemed to me to be the simplest of foundational expressions in the program: a higher power restores me to sanity. What could be simpler?

Lately, however, it appears that the Step is a complex of three parts: coming to believe; faith in a power other than myself; and a source for sanity (or an antidote for insanity!). Each of these three parts is (or can be) a world unto itself.

Coming to believe. After coming to meetings for a few weeks or so, my life got better. Things calmed down. I caught a breather in the self-destructive chaos that was consuming me. I could stop for a moment and look around. I could assess the forces arrayed against me and glimpse—just glimpse—a slight chance of saving myself before jails, institutions, or death.

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Am I ?

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tioned to an IOP, which led me to alcoholics anonymous. I came into the rooms at 47, and it has been the best experience in my life! However, again I started to question my decision to stop drinking. My thoughts were so strong that I had planned out when I was going to the liquor store, the specific liquor store, what I was going to buy and when and how I would drink it. I even spoke to someone in AA trying to convince them how I was not an alcoholic. This is where I experience how alcohol can be cunning, baffling and powerful, and that I was making a conscientious decision to drink again.

I contacted my Sponsor and although I am working on Step 9, she recommended we re-do Step 1

and that I read the first 64 pages of the Big Book. For the next few days I made it a point to make two meetings. One of the meetings focused on Step One. I was very excited and grateful this was the step we were going over. I decided to share my story about my thinking I wasn't an alcoholic. There were some laughs and shaking of the heads, which made me think, Ok, maybe I should not have told anyone how I came to the conclusion I am not like everyone else in the room and that I was calculating "my escape"! After sharing, there were many people in the room that shared they had the same thoughts at some point in their sobriety, and it is totally normal. I felt very relieved to

hear my alcoholic thinking was very common!

In the Big Book I read that the real alcoholic may start off as a social or moderate drinker and may not become a hard drinker. However, at some point when drinking gets out of control.... This is an alcoholic, and this is exactly what happened to me.

Melanie M.

***Sobriety Date 6/18/15
Nooners; Sisters in Sobriety***

At Work

From page 1

estate costs in Chicago and San Francisco impacted the prudent reserve requirement as well as an Alaskan response to a nearby intergroup office closing. I even assisted with chairing a meeting which showed me first hand that speakers are just trusted servants and not experts. Even the board members from AA World Service and AA Grapevine spent as much time listening as they did speaking.

The fact that each group is autonomous was evident in the first workshop I attended. The topic of meeting lists may appear simple – it's not. Do we (Intergroup) create standards to allow meetings to be listed or do we remain open to all AA groups? Do we participate in a national third party app that helps people find meetings? How often do we update our meeting list? The answers were across the board and each one of them had a reasonable basis according to the traditions.

And so I left the best conference I ever attended knowing that I can do my job well. Learning that there is no "right" answer gave me a new freedom. By remaining open to better ideas and referring to the traditions for guidance I can't go wrong. After all, God is in control.

Karen M

Hosted by SJIG Social Events Committee



Holiday Spirit Dance

Dinner, Dancing and Fellowship
Saturday, December 17th 6:30 TO 10:30

Nicolosi Catering
1 Hessian Ave. Woodbury, NJ 08096
www.nicolosicat.com

Tickets in advance \$25.00 per person

For more Information, contact the Social Committee

Sal C (609) 741-7393 Dylan B (609) 922-5390
socialevents@asj.org

I Don't Participate at Meetings; I Needed a Job

There isn't much to do at meetings. Of course, there is the fellowship, the coffee and the sharing, but not much else to do. There is no doubt that some are well attended and the topics are usually on target. Then there are those small little meetings where everyone gets to talk. But there is no place to participate. There are no service commitments being offered. No clear delineation involving the traditions of our wonderful society.

For me, I needed much more than what a meeting had to offer. I needed an AA job. I learned that I could only get an AA job if I participated in AA groups.

So, it was early in my sobriety (1982) that I was told to attend meetings that were actual AA groups. I was told that a lot of the "meetings" weren't interested in the traditions.

When they pass the basket, and collect money, there was no design for how to spend it. They could support themselves if they like. Although they call it a 7th tradition, it is not generally used to support AA. In fact, AA cannot accept money from club houses period.

For an example, club houses can use it to fix the roof or buy new paintings for the wall or fix the toilet. Or, if I fall behind on my

electric bill, I can have a meeting, pass the basket and use the money to pay for my electric. So, the more meetings they have, the more money they make. If I decided to have 7 meetings a week at my house and only 10 people show up, but they all put \$1.00 in the hat, I am making \$70.00 a week for my electric bill. Not a bad idea, especially since I am on a fixed income.

Beside the fact that I am not honoring the 7th tradition, it is also in direct opposition to the 4th tradition because it affects AA as a whole. I shouldn't even have to mention the 1st tradition as it affects our unity, that is without question.



***The South Jersey
Intergroup
Newsletter Com-
mittee wishes all
its readers a joy-
ous and sober
Holiday Season.***

Trivial Pursuit

December Trivia Question:

How can someone find out about open service positions outside of the homegroup? (Answer published next month)

Here's the answer to November's trivia question, "How can intergroup help your group promote an AA event?"

There are a few ways intergroup can help you promote your events:

1. Post your group event on the website at <http://www.aasj.org/pages/events.html>
2. Bring flyers to the intergroup meeting or e-mail them to sjintergroup@verizon.net to be printed
3. E-mail your event to newsletter@aasj.org for publication
4. And don't forget to come to the monthly intergroup meeting to announce your event.

Hint: submitting events 2 months ahead will give our committees and reps plenty of time to get the news out.

An AA Job

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But it is much bigger than that. I can't get a job at a "meeting". I can only get an AA job from a group. Our third legacy is service. Boy, did I need to get into service in early recovery. I needed a job to help me fill the time gap left open when my drinking stopped.

My very first AA job was to chair our group's business meetings for 1 year. To be a group chairperson back then also included opening the meeting, setting up the room, making the coffee and washing ash trays. As the group

grew, we could solicit volunteers to do some of that work. We also gave jobs as Secretary of the group. We had a Treasurer, an Intergroup Rep. a GSR, a greeter, a literature chair person, a Grape Vine Rep. All jobs that I applied for throughout the years and usually got. The traditions came alive for me and very dear and important for my future recovery. And the pay was great.

From the Intergroup Rep I learned about all the different committees. Cooperation with the Professional Community, the Hospitals and Institutions, working with the Medical community, answering service, literature sales, meeting list, 12th step list. I learned that I could

become Chairman of Intergroup. Then I became the GSR and attended area 45 functions and meetings and after 34 years of sobriety, I am still involved in service. WOW, I could have never done that at a "meeting".

So, the next time you attend a meeting, check to see if they are a group and if they have a job for you. If they are not a group, see what you can do to change that. We need jobs for our members. This is our third legacy and needs to be available for everyone's recovery.

Yours in Service,

Eddie "J"

S. Jersey Intergroup Trustee

Step 2

The fact that AA allowed me this opportunity for a "breather" and a "glimpse" at something better, was the only break I had had in a very long, spiraling down to nowhere. So, why not believe? What was there to lose? Death and destruction? This was my first "coming to believe." (Followed, of course, by a "staying" to believe; but that is for another article).

A power other than myself. AA was a power other than myself. It was the first such power I recognized in the whole of my arrogant life thus far—and that's 44 years of pure arrogance! Again, what choice did I have here? I could continue to follow my arrogance down the rabbit-hole of self-destruction or I could try something else. Clearly, my 'self' had to go—at least temporarily or at least long enough to give this program a chance to work. I had no idea what a power other than myself was or could be; but I was dead anyway so, to turn things over to something other than myself was the only option there was (other than, of course, the four horsemen!).

A source for sanity. So here's the hardest part for me. I have always (even after stopping drinking) turned to a variety of sources for my sanity: philosophy, literature, Zen, religion, writing, love, work; you name it, I tried it! The problem was that, all of these sources were *my* choice and ended up reflecting me back to me; in endless loops of insanity-sanity-insanity. Again, here, I would have to yield my thoughts to something that was not me and did not originate with me. Doing this was (and is) the only route to sanity and peace. It happens all the time and it works all the time. Jettisoning me and whatever comes from me, restores me to sanity.

So it seems, Step Two turns out to be quite substantial with several distinct layers of meaning. It encompasses three rather distinct processes: a coming to faith; knowledge of a power other than me; and finding channels to sanity.

Not, by any means, easy levels to navigate and channels that (like the Amazon) take a lifetime to come to know. But after all, I have a lifetime—now!

Masonville Marty

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.

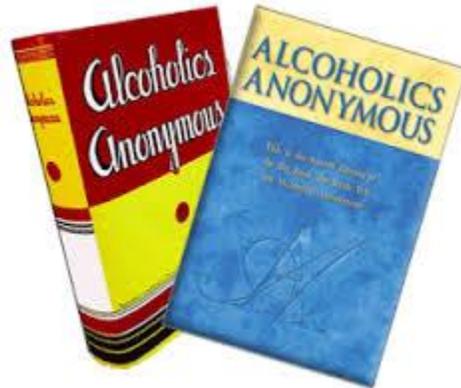
CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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

Manning the AA Literature Desk at SJ Intergroup

It's not a requirement of course, but most AA meetings you go to probably have some literature you can take away with you. There might be some meeting lists and pamphlets, maybe even a whole rack full of them. They're likely to be free for the taking. A lot of groups have copies of the Big



Book available, and some have *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and some other titles. There's usually a price for the books, and it's likely to be more or less what the group paid for them (though at my home group we've sometimes had a hard time remembering what that was).

Where did the group get the literature? Around here, it's likely that it came from the South Jersey Intergroup office, a little suite of rooms in an industrial park near Cooper River Lake. Storing and selling literature is one of the main things we do at that office. You could even say it's one of the main reasons to have an office.

The literature committee consists of approximately nine recovering alcoholics (more would be better) who sit at a desk in that office in nine two-hour shifts every week, ready to sell you literature when you come in to buy it for your group or for yourself or your neighbor. Our hours are listed on the front of the meeting list: ten till noon every day but Sunday, and six till eight on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evening. On the meeting list it says "Call first." That's not usually necessary; we've been pretty good about covering all our shifts, except in weather emergencies. But it wouldn't hurt -- especially if you're coming in near the end of a shift. After ninety minutes with no customers a volunteer may start to look forward to leaving. Knowing you're coming in helps us to have the right attitude if you show up at ten minutes to closing.

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Literature

From page 5

There are shifts when no customers come in at all. I've done a lot of them. And then there have been times when two customers come in while I'm already busy with another one, and then there's a temptation to get impatient because I imagine people are impatient with me. Usually they're not. They're doing service, and usually it seems they're grateful to be doing it.

You can also buy literature from Intergroup's office manager, who works three paid three-hour shifts every week: Tuesday from 3 to 6 p.m. and Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 3 p.m. So on those three days we're open five hours straight, which can be useful if you're trying to find us for the first time, because it can be confusing. (More about that later maybe.)

What do we sell at the Intergroup office? Other than meeting lists and two little cards that were made up by the Committee years ago, it's all things that we buy from AA World Services or the AA Grapevine. From the AA Grapevine there's the monthly by that name (\$2.50 an issue), the Spanish-language quarterly *La Viña* (also \$2.50), a lot of books made up of material that appeared in the Grapevine through the years, and a few other special items like the Preamble card, the Traditions Checklist, and those five Gothic-lettered slogan signs you see at some meetings.

From World Services we buy, of course, the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, in many forms, hardbound, softbound, large print, and "abridged" (meaning without any of the stories after Bill's and Bob's). The "Twelve and Twelve" comes in many formats too. *Living Sober* is five dollars for the familiar small paperback, five and a quarter for the large-print edition. You can see a list of books we sell, with prices, by going to intergroup's website, www.aasj.org. Click on Resources, and then two more clicks should bring you to the list. This will show you most of the books we sell, and over fifty pamphlets, but it's not complete. We have the Big Book and some of the other titles in Spanish translation, as well as several of the pamphlets in Spanish. We have some little flyers we don't charge for because AA World Services doesn't charge us for them, like "AA at a Glance." We have a few things on CD and DVD. And we have the AA Guidelines, fifteen cents each, or the full set for \$2.25.

The website aaws.org can give you a better idea of all this material than our own little price list. You could order from that website too, directly from the publisher, or call them at [\(212\) 870-3137](tel:2128703137). That could be the quickest way to get something if we don't have it in stock, or if you can't get to a bookstore. But you'll pay a charge for shipping.

If your group wants literature but can't send anybody

to the Intergroup office, your Intergroup representative can buy it at the monthly meeting at St. Bartholomew's in Cherry Hill. But the selection won't be as good. We usually pack up a few boxes with meeting lists and books to bring there, guessing at what people will want. We don't usually bring many pamphlets. If you want something in particular, call us a few days ahead of time, or send an e-mail message, and we'll work with you.

At the office or at the Intergroup meeting, we'll accept cash or checks. We can't process your card. We have cheerfully accepted some rather large payments in one-dollar bills, but a few tens would have made that easier. Please do not bring a fifty-dollar bill for payment at the office unless you're willing to spend the whole thing. It just makes it awkward, the way we're set up there. Even if you're spending forty-nine dollars, changing a fifty is difficult.

AA World Services gives us a discount for buying twenty of one title at a time, and a bigger discount for buying a hundred at a time. When an order is over five hundred dollars they don't charge shipping. We make several orders of that size every month. So we get the books and pamphlets at a good price. We charge a little more than we pay for them. And with that money, we help the groups by paying some of the expenses of an Intergroup office.

James G.



December Service Opportunities

Newsletter Articles:

Please submit articles to newsletter@asj.org by December 9 for our January Newsletter.

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@asj.org or call 856-486-4446 during literature hours.

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 Eileen at publicinfo@asj.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

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

- Monday, December 19 - Ancora Hammonton 7-8 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 21 and 28 Unity I - Cherry Hill 12:30-1:30 p.m.
December 7 Delaware House Westampton 1-2 pm
- Thursday
 - December 1, 8, 15 Ancora , Hammonton NJ 7-8 p.m.
 - December 15, 29 Lourdes Medical, Willingboro 8-9 p.m.
 - December 1,15,29 Unity Place II, Hammonton 2-3 p.m.
 - December 8, 15, 22, 29 Daybreak MICA, Atco 10:30 a.m. - 12p.m.
- Friday December 2,9,16, 30 Vineland Academy - Vineland 7-8 pm
- Saturday December 17 Maryville women's Big Book - 7-8 pm

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

High Schools:

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

SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY AREA 45 53rd ANNUAL GENERAL SERVICE CONVENTION

Speaker Meetings,
Marathon Meetings,
Workshops,



Fellowship,
Old-timers Panel,
And
Al-Anon Program

Saturday Night Banquet DJ & Karaoke PLUS Photo Booth!

PRE-REGISTRATION Ends March 10th, 2017 (*mail-ins must be postmarked by this date*)

Meal packages and/or Rooms Do NOT Include Convention Registration

THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL – 2349 MARLTON PIKE (RT 70) CHERRY HILL, NJ, 08002

CONVENTION CHAIR – Kelly W. email: conventionchair53@gmail.com phone: [\(609\) 379-5884](tel:6093795884)

REGISTRATION CHAIR - Laura H. email: conventionreg53@gmail.com phone: [\(609\) 250-2485](tel:6092502485)

All PARTICIPANTS MUST REGISTER INDIVIDUALLY Meal Packages Discounted for pre-registered ONLY. To Register online go to snjaaconvention.org
Registration Opens December, 2016

****Regardless of how many roommates you add, room cost must be paid upfront by ONE PERSON.**
If there are roommates, please give their first and last names as part of the pre-registration process.
*If you have a roommate who already bought a room, just complete standard registration, merchandise, meals, etc.***