

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

November 2017

Feeling Blue

December can be tough for some alcoholics. One member hopes his fellows understand

Another run through the holiday gauntlet: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah, New Year's Day and many others I am ignorant of or have simply forgotten. Heck, even Halloween is a marketing bombardment that spurs drinking to excess.

During these times, depression seems to be prevalent, and even more so

for those of us in AA. It is no secret that many AA members suffer from depression in some fashion or another. The severe depressive

is mentioned in the Big Book (I wish they had written an entire chapter about it). There also is moderate to mild depression.



And then there is my case, which is that of the person with depression who longs for the "mental bill of health" he once had. This situation of mine can be a difficult one in AA, as there are plenty of people profess-

ing (or maybe I should say, preaching) in meetings about how others should feel. I recently heard a man with more than 20 years in the

program declare, "Happiness is a choice. I make it every day. God wants us to be happy, joyous and free after all."

(Continued on page 5)

The 10th Step Experience

This step says we continue to take a personal inventory, continue 4 times in the first paragraph on the 10th step in the Big Book. Pretty impressive right? Whenever they – Bill and Bob, repeat themselves like this, it's telling us that its real important. I believe this means we have to discipline ourselves to do this, What? Discipline? Me an alcoholic?

Not something that comes too easy to us real alcoholics. It took me quite a few years to put this into action. Today it is something I do every day, all day, and a formal one at night.

The daytime, walking around all day, 10th step is me watching my actions and words. When wrong, promptly admit it. It doesn't say if we were wrong, but when.

(Continued on page 5)

The New Guy In The Room

Things he heard when he first came around stuck with him forever; now, he never forgets what it's like to be the new guy in the room

Early sobriety is a tumultuous time. I was a jumble of up-and-down emotions as I battled cravings for alcohol. When I was new to the program, I was going to five or six meetings a week. I was afraid that I would drink if I didn't. Until I stopped drinking, I had no clue how much my life had revolved around drinking.

Everyone talked about how it was "one day at a time." But then

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue: ♦ Opportunities for Service ♦ Trivia Question ♦ SJJ and Big Book Sales ♦ Announcements and Things to Do

New Guy

From page 1

someone told me if that sounded too daunting, I could take it one hour at a time. Or five minutes at a time. I found myself putting that into practice when I was feeling overwhelmed, and it worked.

I recall being new and sitting at a table talking about the First Step. One of the meeting regulars said: "There's no problem that I have today that can't be made worse by drinking."

That hit me between the eyeballs. I never forgot it, and it's helped to keep me sober many times since.

One night I was at home feeling sorry for myself, so I called a man who was clearly a respected leader at one of my meetings. I ran down my list of problems. He suggested that I go to a meeting. I lamented that the meetings had already started and it was too late. That didn't impress him and he said that I could still go to a meeting anyway.

"The meeting starts when you get there," he told me.

Here's the thing: I didn't go to a meeting that night. But the short talk on the phone helped. I haven't seen that man in years. But I still remember what he told me, and have found myself using the same line on others.

I came to the program as an agnostic. But I was told I could use the group as my Higher Power. That

worked for me because collectively the group was "a power greater than" myself.

I had a lot of messy business in my life, but as I began to meet people who had years of sobriety, I discovered that they had problems, too, but they seemed more at peace with their lives.



The message I heard from them was steady and consistent: put your sobriety first, and the rest of these issues will sort themselves out. Maybe not by tomorrow, but in time. I took that to heart. And over time, I found out that the old-timers were right. (Maybe that's how they got to be old-timers!)

I also learned what didn't work. At times, I had a holier-than-you attitude because I had discovered sobriety and suddenly thought I had all the answers. I discovered that giving lectures to people about what they should do with their lives was neither welcomed nor effective.

In early sobriety, I always knew exactly how many days I had.

When I was 17 days sober, I walked into a new meeting. Everyone there seemed to know everybody else and it seemed like these guys

had been sober forever. The meeting had a strange format. It felt like a club where I didn't really belong.

As I was leaving the meeting, one of the members caught up to me as I getting into my car to leave. We talked a bit. I found myself returning to the following week. The man who talked to me that night became my first sponsor. The strange meeting I walked into at 17 days of sobriety became my home group. It still has a strange format. Many of the guys who I thought had been sober forever are still there, week in and week out.

Sometimes I look around the room and I realize that I now have more sobriety than many others in the room. But it's not my job to point that out or be too impressed with myself. Just put out my hand and welcome newcomers to the meeting. It's my job to say: "Hey, if one day a time seems too long, try five minutes at a time." It's my job to point out: "There's no problem that I have today that can't be made worse by drinking." It's my job to say: "The meeting starts when you get there." It's my job to tell them: "If you put your sobriety first, everything else will eventually sort itself out in the long haul."

It's my job to never forget what it was like to be the new guy in the room.

-- B.G.

Minneapolis

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Editorial Policy

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

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

Please send your submissions to newsletter@asj.org.

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

November Trivia Question

Why are we moving money from the H&I Committee to the Public Info Committee for the 2018 budget?

Answer to the September 2017 Question

What experience and skills are needed to chair a committee at Intergroup?

While experience and skills are important for running a successful committee, they are not required when you take the position. In the spirit of service and recovery, we learn as we go. As some of our service workers like to point out "once you get good at something we rotate you out."

So if you are interested in learning more about any committee, please let us know! We'd love to have you join our team so you can learn and grow with the rest of us.



Big Book Money and Our Primary Purpose

(Inspired by the Office Manager Seminar in Dulles, VA)

Who thinks the electronic version of the Big Book a good thing? Out of a room of over 100 Intergroup Office Managers I was the only one raising my hand (and unfortunately not very high). To me electronic Big Books show that we are accessible to more alcoholics and that AA is ready to move into the future. So why don't office managers think it's a good thing?

Over recent years General Service Office book sales to individuals has been increasing while sales to Intergroup Offices has been declining. This is very threatening to many Intergroup offices, a few of whom rely on book sales for as

much as 50 percent of their income. They believe that the General Service Office needs to offer better discounts and/or share e-book profits with Intergroup Offices because without Intergroup Offices who would reach out to the alcoholics? While this is a good point, GSO can make the same point about their organization. So the General Service Office and many Intergroups have come across a problem of money and property (as we are warned about in the 6th tradition).

At the seminar, the office managers selected a committee to begin ongoing discussions with GSO. Fortunately many of the GSO staff and all the talented office managers across the US and Canada are working our amazing program of

recovery. This will hopefully allow the discussions to keep the priority on how we can best serve the alcoholic and not who makes the most money.

Apparently this is an ongoing situation and one that makes me grateful for our groups and Intergroup service workers in South Jersey. Thanks to the generous contributions from our groups we haven't needed to rely on income from book sales. Because of our talented and willing service workers we do not need to carry wages for full time office staff. So to all those who are reading this, thank you for allowing us to keep the focus on our primary purpose and carry the message to the alcoholic.

Karen M.



Sacrifice Means Survival

The unity, effectiveness and even survival of A.A. will always depend upon our continued willingness to give up some of our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice means survival for the individual alcoholic, so does sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for A.A's entire Fellowship.

*A.A. Comes of Age
pp. 287-288*

Experience

From page 1

This implies that I will make mistakes. And this step gives me a process to correct these mistakes. Admit my wrong, apologize if necessary, talk to another AA, and go help someone else. Helping someone is the easy part, admitting I am wrong... oh boy, not so easy! This seems like a lot of work for this tiny step, at least in my mind. I thought the hard work was done...but not so. God certainly has a sense of humor!

It also states on Page 84 of the Big Book that we vigorously commence this way of life.... Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. What does that mean??

In my experience, with a lot of prayer and meditation, it means to try to put myself in someone else's shoes before reacting to a situation. By effectiveness, it means we can help others when we do God's will...an effective member of society, helping other AA's, family, and friends.

Doing a 10th step all day, watching the way I treat others, talk to others, get mad at others, or lie to others is what this step is all about. So because I have had a few spiritual experiences by this time, my ideas have had a dramatic shift, due to working this step everyday. I still have a way to go, but it's a good start.

I start by being patient, putting myself in their position. I start correcting myself when considering not telling the exact truth. I have become quick to understand others and not get so angry. I become helpful instead of selfish.

Wow! What a change from the very sick, hopeless person I came in as, some 13 years ago. The results are this: my family wants me around, my coworkers like me, my friends and I laugh together again. I have fun!

What a beautiful way to live, there is more growing and learning ahead in steps 11 and 12, and I look forward to it.

God bless.
Patti S.

Blue

From page 1

Well, good for him. But statements like his can be detrimental to people who are of the depressive type. Doesn't he think we ask God to remove our depression? Don't we want to be happy, joyous and free? I guess I must have done the Steps wrong. I must not have the right Higher Power. That is what we depressive types in the program hear at times.

While some strive to be happy— hell, while they excel at it—it's actually a daily struggle for many others of us to thank God for keeping us sober and giving us a shot not to do something harmful to ourselves, our loved ones or our sobriety. We're doing the best we can. Drinking to excess wasn't a choice; it was our physical allergy coupled with our mental obsession. In other words, it was our disease. We had to, and have to, pray that it be removed on a regular, sometimes daily, basis, even with multiple years of sobriety.

Mental illness is a disease as well, and to say I am simply supposed to be happy by choice can be as dangerous as it is ridiculous. I must pray that my mental illness, which is depression, be removed every day.

Please be careful throwing around absolutes in the rooms of AA. What works for some members to be happy may work only to keep some people sober. We sometimes have to settle for that being OK with just being OK. We have lives to lead. We have family and friends who rely on us and we have sobriety to maintain. It's hard enough to meet these responsibilities without being told that feeling happy is just a choice. Especially this time of the year.

—Stu K., Phoenix, Ariz.

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Opportunities For Service

Answering Service:

Currently we have shifts open on Friday 8am until 10am, Wednesday ,10am to 12pm. Also have shifts on Saturday 6pm to 8pm. We also continue to take name for our waiting list, and are still taking AA members to sign up to be available for a 12 step call, so please have interested people continue to contact us via answeringservice@aasj.org.

Committee Service:

The following committees are looking for some new people to get involved with possibilities for stepping into the committee chairperson position: **Answering Service, Bookers, Budget and Finance, Meeting List, and Unity**. Please reach out to the current chairperson or e-mail info@aasj.org for more information.

Speaking Commitments

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

Monday

Princeton House, Moorestown – Nov. 6 9:30-10:20 am

Tuesday

Cooper Hospital - Camden NJ - Nov 28 8-9 pm

Wednesday

Unity I, Cherry Hill – Nov. 1, 15, 22, 29 12:40-1:30 pm

Solstice Counseling, Lumberton – Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 12-1 pm

Thursday

Ancora, Hammonton – Nov. 16, 30 7-8 pm

Lourdes Medical, Rancocas – Nov. 16, 23 8-9 pm

Unity Place II, Hammonton – Nov. 2, 16, 30 2-3 pm

Daybreak, Atco NJ Nov. 9, 16, 23, 30 10:30-noon

Saturday

Maryville women's, Williamstown – Nov. 4 8-9 pm

Inspira Underwood Woodbury NJ – Nov. 11 4-5 pm

Cooper Hospital, Camden – Nov. 25 10:30-11:30 am

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