

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

January 2018

When a Romantic Vacation Got Real

I had just returned from a romantic and jam packed vacation in Paris. My boyfriend had never been out of the country and I couldn't think of a better city to start him on the joys of international travel.

Going into the vacation I was excited to show him some of my favorite parts of the city, explore new places, and drink espressos every few hours. The French sure know how to do delicious coffee drinks! I wasn't at all nervous

about my sobriety—I know today—without a doubt—that the only reason I can afford to travel



and make these memories is because I put down the drink. There isn't a drink in the world that is worth risking my ability to travel the world. While my boyfriend drank a glass of wine with dinner, I happily partook in sparkling water. It's amazing that trend hasn't caught on fully in the US yet! And after dinner if he were still nursing his drink, I had no problem ordering an espresso to settle in with my dessert. We were having a great time and there was no

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Resolve to Ask for Help

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol---that our lives had become unmanageable.

When I read Step One, I read such words as “defeat”, “powerlessness”, “unmanageability.” How are these words to be reconciled to the idea of making New Year's resolutions? I have concluded that they cannot be. Which is why I have given up the idea of making any New Year's resolutions (except perhaps to make more meetings or talk to my sponsor more or work more with other alcoholics).

Resolutions, for me, imply some sort of control and/or man manageability. Step One tells me that that is not the case for my life. Not that my life is in fact, unmanageable; it is just not manageable *by me!* I have to yield

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Inside This Issue: ♦ SJI Trivia ♦ Grapevine: No More Angry Nights ♦ Opportunities for Service ♦ This Year, One Day at a Time ♦ Meetings: My Secret Weapon ♦

Thank You, from Your Editor!

I've served as your editor and newsletter chair for the last two years. It's been a wonderful service opportunity and I'm grateful to have been of service.

This is my last newsletter as chair and I'm faithfully handing the reins over to Judy P., who graciously has stepped up as chair. Please welcome her as she takes over for the February edition!

Thank you,
April E.

No More Angry Nights

Until he got sober, he spent his evenings smoking, drinking and nursing grudges

When I showed up on the door step of A.A, my mind was in a state that could only be described warped. My evenings were spent alone and taken up with hours of smoking, drinking, and nursing grudges from the recent and distant past. Anger and bitterness and self-pity and blaming were my constant companions. I was honing hatred to a fine edge.

For reasons I still don't understand, I was taking some kind of pleasure in this way of thinking. I was using it to justify my drinking as well. After all, I thought, I had been wronged so often by people that my state of mind was their fault and not mine.



After spending time in meetings and reading the literature and listening to my fellow alcoholics talking about the AA Principles that had brought them to a sober life, I became painfully aware that I had played a significant part in my bad relations with my fellow human beings. Indeed, my behavior towards them had been anything but spiritual. Persistent in my thinking was the idea that I was a sweet innocent Catholic kid who had been mistreated. If I had ever been such a person, my drinking and attitudes and character flaws had changed me in to someone else decades earlier.

I was 40 years old at the time I entered AA. It was time for a serious self-appraisal. The Steps cleared up the errors in my thinking and behaviors.

The principles I have to live by have eased my suffering. I no longer arouse anger in my fellows. Living the AA way of life means "making honesty, tolerance and true love of man and God the basis for daily living."

When I listen at meetings or read and contemplate what I find in the Literature, ideas come to me from I know not where. This is one of those ideas: If anger and resentment burned holes in the other guy's belly,

I would be all for them. I would be willing to suffer if only the other suffered as well. It seems to me when I suffer because of anger or resentments, I suffer alone.

Because of AA. principles, I seem to suffer a lot less these days; there is no longer a need to seek relief in the bottle. Recently, I saw someone at a meeting that I had not seen in a little while. He extended his hand and asked how my day was going. My reply surprised me. I said, "My day is going just fine," and added, "I just don't have bad days any longer." What a change since I came to AA and have learned a better way to live.

John E., Albany, N.Y.

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Paris

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head butting about our activities, what he or I were drinking, or how we were handling our first time out of the country as a couple. Things were going great.

However, we were in Paris during the terrorist attacks. And this

changed the course of the end of our vacation. What was a fun time away in another country turned into fear, worries about getting home, and sadness.

But thanks AA and my tool chest that I've filled over the past few years, I knew how to handle myself. Prior to getting sober, an event similar to this gave me something to drink over

daily. I justified my bad behavior because of what I had been through. But today, I was able to stop, take care of myself, check in with my AA family, and pray. I knew that if left to my own devices too long I would stew and get into a funk. AA has taught me exactly how to avoid this.

While the events in Paris were

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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@aasj.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@aasj.org
Website: www.aasj.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

January Trivia Question

When was the aasj website designed?

Answer next month.

Answer to December 2017 trivia

question, Can someone who doesn't share at meetings still carry the AA message?

Answer: Yes! One great way to share if you don't like to speak is to contribute articles for our Newsletter or the AA Grapevine. Articles for Anonymous South Jersey can be e-mailed to newsletter@aasj.org and Grapevine articles can be submitted at <http://www.aagrapevine.org/content/submit-grapevine>. We look forward to reading your story! (Note: you still need to listen to your sponsor about sharing at meetings.)



Things to Do

Mon. Dec. 25 – Pennsauken 482 Social Hall will have a Christmas alcathon starting at 7 am – 8 pm. 6702 N Crescent Blvd. Pennsauken.

Sat. Dec. 30 – Mullica Hill will celebrate their anniversary with FFF starting at 4pm @ St. Stephens Church Hall, Rt. 45 Mullica Hill. (Church with red door)

Sun. Dec. 31 – Florence BB will have an alcathon @ Florence United Methodist Church, Broad & 2nd St., Florence. FFF food starts at 5 pm, meetings from 6 pm - 12 am. Call Nick: 609-864-6787

Mon. Jan. 1 – Burlington Early Hope gap will have a New Years Day alcathon from 7 am – 9 pm at St Mary's Guild Hall Broad & Talbot St. Burlington, NJ More info call Pat: 609-456-8887.

Sat. Jan. 13 – Haddon Heights "Daily Reprieve" will celebrate their 17th anniversary at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 18 White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights, NJ. Two great speakers, food, fellowship. Starting at 9 am - speakers at 9:30 am.

Sat. Jan. 20 – Woodstown Group will celebrate its 63rd anniversary. Eating begins at 6:30 pm, speaker to follow at 8 pm. Local: Woodstown Presbyterian Church 46 Auburn Rd. Woodstown. More info call: 856-769-0863

This Year: One Day at a Time

My name is Derrick and I'm an alcoholic.

My sobriety date is July 8, 2013, and as I reflect back on the past year, and the new year ahead, I realize that 2014 was the first calendar year since 2003 that I did not take a drink. The significance of this is at once monumental, yet inconsequential. When I celebrated my first full year of sobriety, my sponsor told me, "Now you've gone through every season of the year, every holiday, every Friday night and every mundane Tuesday without picking up." I smiled and felt proud. Seeing this, he tacked on one of his favorite things to tell me: "Now GO GET ANOTHER DAY."

I have completed a full year of sobriety. I have completed a full calendar year of sobriety. I never picked a day to start being sober; it took what it took, and when the time was right my Higher Power put the right circumstances and the revelation of a bottom in my life to enable a spiritual awakening of willingness and surrender. If I had picked the day, like many do with New Year's resolutions, I feel I would have inevitably chosen another, as I would have never actually turned over my will.

This date, July 8th, is the New Year's Day of my sobriety, the spiritual calendar around which my sobriety revolves. Like the regular

New Year's Day, however, the date is largely inconsequential—it serves no other purpose than to

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mark time. This is not to say that the day is insignificant, but it is truly not as significant as the day that I am presented with some seemingly insurmountable challenge or pain, and don't pick up a drink. In this sense, every day, every moment is the New Year. I make progress on the daily schedule, by not picking up a drink one minute-hour-day-week-month at a time. Marking this time fills me with wonder, gratitude and appreciation for AA and my Higher Power, that I could stay sober for any measurable amount of time. When I consider how I've changed

by working the Steps and improving myself and my relationships, that's where I begin to mark real progress, progress that cannot be measured on a calendar, but only in my capacity to attempt to do the next right thing, continue to practice honesty, open-mindedness and willingness, attempt conscious contact with my Higher Power,

and not pick up the first drink, one day at a time. This revelation is the true occasion for my own personal fireworks and parade. However, just like mere hours after the ball had dropped and the cleaning crew descends upon the city, the debris is swept away and the whole glorious reason for the celebration begins again: one day at a time.

Thank you for allowing me to share.

--Derrick

Paris

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down a negative path. A drink won't make anything better—and in fact, will only make things infinitely worse.

Today I am so thankful that I have such an amazing support system in my life, and tools to help me process the world around me.

I don't need to understand why bad things happen in this world. The truth is, they do. But if I can approach life on life's terms and deal with my feelings without numbing myself over warm vodka and boxed wine, I'm not adding to the chaos of the world—at least for my family and friends!

April E.



JANUARY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

The Website Committee is looking for people with IT experience to get involved with creating and maintaining the new website. Please contact Josh at webmaster@aasj.org for more information.

Speaking Commitments

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

Monday

- Ancora, 202 Spring Garden Rd ,Hammonton – Jan. 22, 29 7-8 pm

Tuesday

- Cooper Hospital, 1 Cooper Plaza, Camden, – Jan. 2, 9 8-9 pm
- Solstice Counseling , 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton – Jan. 2 7-8 pm
- Delaware House, 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton – Jan 2, 9, 23, 30 2-3 pm

Wednesday

- Unity I, 1 Keystone Ave Cherry Hill – Dec. 27, Jan. 3, 17, 24 12:40-1:30 pm
- Seabrook Women 133 Polk Ln, Seabrook, 08302 – Jan. 31 7:30-8:30 pm
- Addiction & Treatment Center, Camden VOA, 510 Liberty Street, Camden 08104 – Jan. 3, 17, 24, 31 7-8 pm
- NJ Solstice Counseling, 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton – Dec. 27 12-1 pm

Thursday

- Ancora, 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton – Dec 28, Jan. 18, 25 7-8 pm
- Unity Place II, 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton – Jan. 4, 18 2-3 pm
- Daybreak, 368 White Horse Pike, Atco – Dec. 28, Jan. 11, 18, 25 10:30-12:00 noon

Saturday

- Cooper Hospital, 1 Cooper Plaza, Camden –Jan. 6 10:30-11:30 am

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

Step 1

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the idea of manageability to someone or something else; just as I had to do that first day of sobriety, when I got down on my knees and asked for God's help. In everything I do, in every plan I make, in every decision I decide to act upon, I must first check with someone else. Usually that person is my sponsor, but it can be my wife (who grows wiser as I get soberer!) or it can be another alcoholic whose opinion I trust. As long as it's not me.

This daily check on my behavior, thoughts and plans, is in fact what is meant by the idea of unmanageability. This way of living seems to exclude the idea of "resolutions." As I look back at my personal

history, resolutions have never worked for me. Either they were wrong, or they weren't in tune with reality, or I broke them just as quickly as I made them. I have found a better, more effective way to do things: *ask someone else!* That is a completely new idea for me and has really never failed (since becoming sober) in putting me on the right path.

So I guess that my resolution for 2015 is to make no resolutions. It is just to ask God to bless the year for me and for others and to keep on doing what works: letting my higher power, my sponsor, other AAs, and my wife, manage my life. That seems to always work for the best.

Masonville Marty

Meetings: My Secret Weapon to Keeping My Ego in Check

I sat on the edge of the bed, and the counselor asked me if I was OK.

"I'm not the guy who winds up in rehab," I said. Of course, technically I wasn't in rehab. It was my first day of detox, rehab was still four days away. But once I finished my intake and caught my breath, the shame of winding up in a "facility" hit me.

"Don't worry," he said. "They will help you deal with that when you get to rehab."

That was more than 18 months ago. I am still sober, but I also still have my struggles with shame. It's like in sobriety I feel like I've been defeated somehow, that life got too hard for me and I just couldn't take it. Everything else just bubbles up from there—I should be more successful, have a better job, make more money, be

better known and respected. And so on.

I shared some of these feelings with an AA at my local meeting, and he said, with more than a little gravity: "You know what that is? That's your ego."

I knew right away that he was right.

So now my problem is how to deal with my ego. After all, my ego is part of who I am and, when it's not shaming me, comes in handy. The solution came from something I heard in my first week of rehab: The key to staying sober is "don't drink, and go to meetings." The first time I heard that, I rolled my eyes. Such a corny, hackneyed phrase could not seriously be the key to my recovery. Funny thing, though. Going to meetings worked.

Every time I go to a meeting, I get something out of it. Even if I sit there and just zone out for an hour, it's still an hour that I dedicated to my recovery. Honestly, though, I don't think I have ever gone to a meeting without learning something important about myself and/or my alcoholism.

Meetings keep my ego in check. I don't know how, but I still use my cell phone even though I don't really know how that works either.

It's like the rock paper scissors game. You know, ego beats sobriety, but meetings beat ego. In the battle between my ego and my sobriety, meetings are my secret weapon. They keep me on track and keep me focused on my recovery.

So I'll see ya at the next meeting.

--Steve W.