

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

APRIL 2019

Where Do I Belong ?

Until recently, I was always struggling to fit in. I moved a lot, traveled, and hung out with people who were different. I was, and still am, more comfortable where I am not expected to fit in. One thing I like about our fellowship is that we come from varied backgrounds, have nothing in common except a desire to stop drinking. Another thing I like about our program is, although we each work the same 12 steps, the spiritual solution is unique to each of us. So, in both the fellowship and the program, AA encourages me to be myself and I feel like I belong here even if I don't always "fit in."

I moved to Switzerland in April 2018, after living in South Jersey for 12 years. My wife is Swiss and grew up here. [You may have seen the article I wrote about the move in the July 2018 issue.] Now, I am planning to visit SJ with my wife and 7-year-old son in April 2019. My wife was eager to reconnect with SJ friends, but I was not. I thought we should move on; focus on making new friends and experiences.

But there was something deeper behind my reluctance to visit SJ. Leaving SJ was painful, a huge hit to my ego. I had a great job, and after a couple years in AA, was just starting to feel comfortable with myself, like I belonged, had purpose. On the other hand, I was beginning to understand that my life is not just my own, or even my family's. Everything we have was given to us in some way. In my spiritual journey I was learning to be able to let go of things, good and bad. And I know that taking on new challenges can be a good stimulus for growth.



But just knowing these things doesn't make it easy. It can be painful at times to think about what I left, and I am apprehensive of the emotions that might arise when I visit.

On the whole, our life situation is good here, and my wife and son are happy here. I am, too, but would like to be more useful. I don't have a job, and it can be difficult to prioritize. I procrastinate or get anxious, wondering if I'm doing the right things. I knew this could be a problem with too much free time, but I have my AA survival tools. Each day I make a list of priorities with the help of my Higher Power. And when I feel troubled, I immediately ask my HP for help. Sometimes, I have to dig deep to figure out what's going on in my head, but often it's the same old stuff that I've already dealt with, and I can let it go. Not always, though, and that's okay. (Continued on Page 2)

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Where Do I Belong? (Continued from Page 1)

I can't will my character defects away, but willingness is where I can start.

I no longer let my defects define me. I can now see my true self through them. It is a wonderful feeling to be able to observe my thoughts and feelings from an independent, un-self-centered perspective. Sometimes I simply have to laugh at their absurdity! I also find it helpful to write them down, and discuss them with my sponsor and others. I have to remain motivated to let them go – willingness is not enough. It's a program of action, right?

The English speaking AA community here is small and disorganized. I have to remind myself to be patient at the weekly meetings, where it seems we often talk more about our problems than solutions, and lose focus on the steps and principles. This meeting has been around for decades, but I don't know how much longer it will last. Sometimes we have to cancel if no one is able to attend. So I was happy when a new English speaking NA group recently formed. It is also small, but well organized, focused and inspiring. The steps, traditions, and principles are the same, and they consider alcohol to be a drug like any other, so I felt like I belonged there right away.

I realize I was very fortunate to be in SJ for the beginning of my recovery. The depth of the fellowship there provided such great support, especially when I relapsed. Now that I have cultivated a stronger relationship with my HP, I feel like I can manage with less fellowship support. I am also finding support outside of AA from people who talk about their own challenges and how they overcome them. AA provided a safe place for me to learn how to connect with others and now I feel free and unafraid to connect with people in other places too.

See you on the road of happy destiny...

Jason S.

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:

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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

Group Autonomy

I recently heard someone use “each group has the right to be wrong” as a key part of their position on a heated topic at a group business meeting. While this may be true, it is not the message that we *should* be carrying. Each group needs to have an informed group conscience so they can effectively insure AA’s future while maintaining group autonomy.

The book “*TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS*” a.k.a. (12 & 12) tells us how each of our Traditions were hammered out on the anvil of experience the same way the steps were developed through a trial and error process. The need to stay sober and survive guided those before us and we do not need to re-invent the wheel. We ought to learn and follow these traditions.

Tradition Four is the Charter for Group Freedom and the long form reads:

“With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.”

Many of us only know the window shade version or short form of this tradition which states “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.” This is sad because it does not tell the whole story.

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill explained how the groups responded to him when he tried to run AA from NY:

“We like what you are doing. Sometimes your suggestions and advice are good. But whether to take you or leave you alone is going to be our decision. Out in the groups, we are going to run our own show.

We are not going to have a personal government in New York, or anywhere else. Services, yes. But government, no.”

This was the birth of AA’s Tradition of group autonomy, which includes the right to be wrong.

In July of 2007, “*The Washington Post*” printed an article called “*Seeking Recovery, Finding Confusion - AA Group Leads Members Away from Traditions*” which talked about how a group in Bethesda, MD had a chosen “leader” and disregarded the AA Traditions. It was alleged that older men were having sex with teenage girls, young members had to break ties with their families, and they had to follow other supposed practices necessary for sobriety. We know this is not AA, but the public got the wrong message about us. That group started in the 1980s and grew to 400 members. They appeared to be a cult. Fortunately, that group has disappeared, and these types of stories are rare, because of AA’s 12 Traditions.

In various 1948 Grapevine Articles Bill said:

“Tradition Four is a specific application of the general principles already outlined in Traditions One and Two.”

“In each tradition, the individual or the group is asked to give up something for our common welfare. Tradition One asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire. Tradition Two asks us to listen to God as he may speak in the group conscience.”

The “12 & 12” teaches us that our egoic nature drives us to want to try every conceivable deviation from the steps and traditions, but the grace of God has brought us to where we stand today. Bill W and Dr. Bob made great sacrifices to ensure our future and we need to have the same respect for the AA traditions. Take some time to study the traditions and carry the message of the other half of the “*TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS*”.

Anonymous,
South Jersey



APRIL SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Secretary: We are looking for a new assistant secretary. The requirements are 3 years continuous sobriety, involvement in your own Home group and commitment to serve for 2 years. Job description: Shall take minutes at IG meetings and see that minutes are distributed to Member Group Representatives in a timely manner. Also shall perform any such recording and clerical duties as the Trustees or Panel may request. Please contact the Intergroup Chairperson at chairperson@aasj.org

Answering Service Shifts: We currently have six open shifts: Sunday 2-4PM and the Sunday O/N (overnight) from 10PM-8AM, Thursday 8-10AM, Friday 8-10AM and the Friday O/N (overnight) from 10PM-8AM, Saturday 8-10PM. Please e-mail answeringservice@aasj.org to request a shift.

12-step list: The updated list is half the original size so we are in need of new volunteers who would like to be of service. This is a great way to be part of the solution. Working with others and reaching out to the newcomer or those just coming back who needs us the most. Please contact the Answering Service committee at answeringservice@aasj.org for more information.

Literature Sales: The Literature Committee is looking for a volunteer for the Tuesday 10:00 AM –Noon Shift. 1 Year of sobriety required. Contact literature@aasj.org to find out more, or if you are interested in volunteering.



This Month's Trivia Question:

A well-known passage regarding acceptance is located on pages 417-418 in the 4th edition of the Big Book in the (renamed) personal story "Acceptance was the answer."

In the 3rd edition of the Big Book, on what pages did this passage appear, and what was the original title of that same personal story?

Last Month's Answer:

Calvary Episcopal Church and the priest was
Rev. Samuel Shoemaker



Go Fourth!

It's April and time to mention the Fourth Step. For some reason, the Fourth Step has taken on the status of an Obstacle Course in sobriety. As if you have to get well enough to take on the thing that you need to do to get well! My own experience with it was pretty much apathy followed by apprehension and coupled with angst. It took a while for the first, second, and third steps to finally hit me because I was a moving target, but with a lot of help from above, I slowed down enough to realize that just not drinking was not going to work, because I came to believe that I would return to the bottle if I did not do something more. That something was this big dark nasty called the INVENTORY.

This was not the first time that I had come to AA and I had upgraded my drunk resume considerably in my absence. I wasn't happy to look at those years, much less all of the time before. Why all of this retrospection? Was all of this necessary? Let's get on with the sobriety stuff! Still I knew how my way always worked out and I heard others, many of whom, sounded a lot like me, talk about the changes they had discovered in recovery; so I knew that I had to give it a shot.

Now here was a problem. I was one of those who read the white part of the Big Book. I thought I was pretty bright, but it just didn't dawn on me that the Mr Brown business was actually describing the inventory. Surely it couldn't be that simple? This sounded like a real soul ripper and that stuff seemed pretty light weight. No, I needed something more complex. My first attempt at an inventory, as I see it now, was pretty lame. I'd give it a C, maybe, but it was a beginning and that is what is important. Remember that the inventory leads to the rest of the 'working' steps and that we measure progress, not perfection.

A bit later I was working at a rehab and we had tons and tons of inventory guides. It was the most baffling thing you might encounter. Then some AA friends introduced me to the Joe and Charlie talks and that was a real eye opener and I revisited the inventory with a different perspective. A perspective I might have gained by asking for help earlier. Still progress, not perfection.

Over the years in AA, I have found that a beginning must be made in the steps. Simply staying away from the drink is not the same as recovering from our malady of Alcoholism. The boot camp of AA is Steps Four through Nine. No one shows up at Boot Camp ready to master the obstacle course. It takes work and effort. Don't let the fourth scare you into apathy. Seek help and make your start. You'll be glad you did.

Anonymous

Don't Stall, JUST DO IT !

Announcements & Things to do

Wednesday, March 27 - 'Voorhees Women of Grace' will be celebrating their 27th Anniversary. The celebration will be at Hope Church, Cooper Rd. and Centennial Blvd. Voorhees NJ. It is directly behind 'The Meeting Place'. Snacks & desserts will be served from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. followed by 2 speakers from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Gentlemen are Welcome!

Saturday, March 30 – Area 45 Speaker Jam Hosted by Area 45, 55th Convention Committee. 10am-2pm, Doors open at 9:15 \$10 Includes Lunch - Columbus Baptist Church 24260 Main Street Columbus, NJ

Saturday, April 6 - 482 Social Hall will host an Area45 Corrections Committee Workshop at 2pm.

April 12 -14 – SEPIA's 2019 Round-up at the Grand Hotel 1045 Beach Ave. Cape May.
Saturday, April 20th - Collingswood Men's Early Risers 12th Anniversary 7:00 AM Fellowship Community Church 710 Collings Ave. Collingswood

Thursday, April 25th – YMOM (Young Men Of Moorestown) 8th Anniversary, Food & fellowship at 7:00PM - Meeting at 8:00 First Baptist Church 19 West Main Street, Moorestown. Enter through side door on left.

Thursday April 25th – Audubon (formerly Oaklyn) How It Works will celebrate their 32nd year at 7:00 PM Calvin Hall, 118 W. Merchant St. Audubon

April 26 - April 28 - Annual Spiritual Retreat for 2019 in Vineland, New Jersey. This year marks year number 12 for our retreat (a magical number!). Appropriately, our theme this year will be, Step 12 - A Spiritual Awakening". As always, our Retreat is being held on the weekend following Easter. More info call: Martin Perrotta - 856-313-9531

Saturday May 4 - Area 45 mini-conference which will be held at the Carslake Community Center in Bordentown from 9 – 12. Light breakfast will be served and registration opens at 8:30am. Come out to help our Delegate prepare for the GSO Conference in late May.

Sunday, May 19th - Area 45 Spring Assembly, registration begins 8:30am, DCM/GSR Orientation 8:45am, Assembly 10:00am; Committee Meeting to follow. Elmer Grange Hall, Elmer NJ

This Month in A.A. History...

April 1, 1939 - Publication date of Alcoholics Anonymous, AA's Big Book.

April 1, 1966 - Sister Ignatia died.

April 2, 1966 - Harry Tiebout, M.D. died.

April 3, 1941 - First AA meeting held in Florida.

April 3, 1960 - Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J., died. He was Bill W's "spiritual sponsor."

April 16, 1973 - Dr. Jack Norris presented President Nixon with the one millionth copy of the Big Book.

April 25, 1951 - AA's first General Service Conference was held.

(Brought to you by the Archives Committee)