

STEP TEN

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

It's been said that the longest journey is from the head to the heart, meaning that it takes time and practice before something we recognize intellectually to be true becomes something we fully accept. For me, it has taken some time to really accept what Bill W. said in the 12 & 12 about Step 10: "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter the cause, there is something wrong with *us*." *Thanks to good sponsorship, I've begun to accept this spiritual axiom and practice it in my life.*

Early on in my recovery, I thought this Step required me to take inventory when I was wrong, and I was either wrong because I stepped on someone else's toes or I was not wrong at all. Many days in early sobriety I could truthfully say that I had not taken any actions that hurt anyone, often because I was hiding out, staying off the firing line of life. But when my sponsor pointed out that Step 10 asks me to take inventory when I'm "disturbed", all of a sudden I found I had some work to do! How many times through the day had I been caught up in my emotions, so much so that I had very little space to think of other people and how I could be helpful to them? How often do I silently hold others to standards to which I would not and should not hold myself? How often do I withhold forgiveness from others even though I've been given such forgiveness?

You might be saying, "Aren't other people responsible for their actions, too? Is everything my fault?" Hopefully, you've had an experience during the Steps where you saw how often, like me, you had previously blurred the lines between what you could control and what you could not, taking blame or credit where it was not due or did not apply. Because of the perspective my higher power has given me through this work, I have faith that continuing to take personal inventory, even when I'm "just" disturbed will lead me to a good place: it may help me let go of deeply buried resentments or help me find forgiveness for others. Whatever it does, it keeps the channel between me and my higher power open and clean, and that's where I want to be.

So I'd like to challenge anyone reading this to try to live this Step more thoroughly, especially as we witness such a difficult time for the world and our country. My experience is that this Step, like all the others, brings me closer to my higher power, and in doing so, closer to all of my brothers and sisters. And for that I'm grateful.

Andy P

Collingwood Monday Night



TRADITION TEN

Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

One definition of "controversy" is a prolonged dispute, debate, or state of contention, especially one that unfolds in public and involves a stark difference of opinion. Sounds like that might be a problem for me in that I would want to win and have you see things my way. My ego would tell me I am right and everyone needs to know so they can see the truth and be happy.

I can see how this would be a huge problem Alcoholics Anonymous. If my primary purpose is to help alcoholics achieve sobriety, how can I help anyone who is not in complete agreement with me on other matters. Look, I can have my own opinions on outside issues. I can be apart of anything I want to be, but keeping outside issues "private" will ensure that I do not offend anyone that may need me or A.A. I cannot stay sober by scaring people away with my strong opinions and being a source of resentment and misunderstanding.

Considering the election coming up, I think I need to review my way of putting my opinions out for all to see. I can certainly find likeminded people to discuss issues that I care about. I just cannot and should not bring it into AA or around alcoholics that still suffer. My social platform must be tempered if I want be of service to people that have differences of opinion.

I ask myself this, "Do I want alcoholics who are still struggling with alcoholism to avoid me because of my views on issues that have nothing whatsoever to do with alcoholism and recovery? Can I see how his tradition ties into other traditions? When one tradition goes, the rest are likely to follow. Then what? Will AA membership decline? Will our solution for recovery be muddled because of stubbornness and egoism?

Alcoholics Anonymous will surely not survive if individual members and AA as a whole get on the public soapbox. Sure, there are plenty of worthy causes that need to be addressed. Being sober means I can be a part of the world around me. However, if I avoid public controversy, anyone who does not agree with me on other issues will feel safe to ask me for help knowing that I am an A.A. who has found recovery and can carry the message of Alcoholic Anonymous no matter my political affiliation and no matter where I stand on outside issues. Mainly, this is because they will not know where I stand because I keep my life outside of A.A. private.

Nancy L.

The Living Room Meeting, Haddon Heights

AREA 45 District 4 Kick-Off

Calling ALL Groups in



Browns Mills, Cream Ridge,
Ellisdale, Fort Dix, Hainesport,
McGuire AFB, Mount Holly,
New Egypt, Pemberton,
Westampton, New Lisbon

Let's talk about Service

- * Who is your Groups GSR?
- * Interested in being a GSR?
- * What does it take to be an ACTIVE District?



**Wednesday,
October 28, 2020
6:45 pm**

ZOOM Meeting ID: 871 9432 4197

Passcode: Service

DIAL In: +1 301 715 8592

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87194324197?pwd=bnZLcytvMHc4cnB2Z1d1dEJQSnFGUT09>

Sobriety in the Time of Coronavirus

As I write this, I am sitting in my car in the Hair Cuttery parking lot waiting for my first haircut appointment since February. Last week, someone said I had “Einstein hair,” and they were right. For a while, I was embracing the COVID look, but it’s getting old even for me.

One Saturday evening in early March, a friend and I went to the JFK Hospital meeting as was our custom, at the time. We got there and found – nothing. The room was dark and, at least for a while, no one else was there. About the time we were ready to leave, two others did show up, one of whom was not a regular attendee and the other a newcomer. We ditched the usual meeting format and went around the room sharing our experience, strength, and hope and thought little of why no one was there when we arrived. A few days later, we found out that the meeting had been cancelled due to COVID. “OK”, I said, “It’s in a hospital and medical professionals tend to get a bit touchy about pandemics. Surely, this insanity won’t spread to the real world”.

I lived in a state of COVID denial for another few days until I got the text from my homegroup indicating that our landlord, the church had closed. Like any good alcoholic, I immediately got a resentment; how dare they close “my” meeting. Surely everyone was overreacting to this disease. I immediately replied to the text, bemoaning the risk averse nature of the society we live in. (What I actually said wasn’t quite that nice).

The next several days resembled a video game where you try to run across rocks that are slowly sinking into molten lava. I would show up at a meeting only to find it had just closed or was about to close. Surely, I thought, the nearby clubhouse would never, ever, ever close. That very night, I went to a meeting there and learned that they were about to hold an emergency business meeting to decide whether to shut down.

By now, you may have surmised that I tend not to take disruption very well. A few days later came the lockdown orders. Supermarkets with shelves resembling those from the old Soviet Union, and a sudden transition to working from home. To add insult to injury, Al-Anon was in New Zealand visiting our granddaughters and her flight home was cancelled. She had no idea when she would get back. At the outset of all this, my household therefore consisted of myself, my youngest daughter (rarely around), and a menagerie comprised mostly of cats, birds, and one very vocal dog. Did I mention that I don’t particularly like dogs?

On the “plus” side, I was totally down with the whole stay at home thing. Like many good alcoholics, I am naturally an isolator extraordinaire. The idea of getting to stay in 24/7, doing what I want, when I want has always had a particular attraction. Actually, for all of my life prior to getting sober, and not infrequently thereafter, I have done what I wanted, when I wanted, as long as I thought I could get away with doing so. Confronted with a COVID lockdown when

drinking, this would have been a perfect excuse to stay home, stay thoroughly marinated, and listen to psychedelic music. In early sobriety, finding myself alone in a COVID lockdown would have been a golden opportunity to either work 16 hours a day - at the expense of everyone and everything around me - or to live on the couch watching *Ozark* episodes and scarfing junk food, also at the expense of everyone and everything around me. Needless to say, none of this ever took me to a good place.

Fortunately, I had friends in the program with whom I talked and texted on a regular basis. A few days after my local club house closed, I got word of an outdoor meeting at Cooper River Park one Friday afternoon. I got there and found about 50 other Alcoholics. We sat on bleachers in the March drizzle and had a meeting. Shortly thereafter, I attended my first virtual AA meeting. Since then, my AA fellowship has consisted largely of virtual meetings, punctuated by phone calls and the occasional outdoor rendezvous. Of late, I have started to go back to some face-to-face meetings. My homegroup is still virtual. The bottom line is that I’ve stayed plugged into the Fellowship throughout this whole thing, sometimes in spite of myself.

I have always marveled at how early AA’s stayed sober when the closest meeting might be hundreds of miles away and the primary means of AA communication was the postal service. There are still places in this country where meetings are pretty infrequent and scattered far and wide. In the South Jersey area, we have been blessed with hundreds of meetings a week for a very long time. Thanks to COVID, we now not only have access to meetings in the South Jersey area, but also to meetings all over the world. Better yet, the AA’s in the sticks now also have access to these meetings. Maybe some of these online meetings have been around for longer than I realize. If so, they have been brought front and center by this crisis.

As it turned out - and I’d like to think as a result of working the Steps - I not only made meetings, but also was extra vigilant to take care of myself mentally, physically, and spiritually and to keep all things in balance. This meant practicing a daily prayer life, cleaning/repairing the house, paying bills on time, and keeping in touch with family to make sure they are OK. (Something else I don’t do naturally). It meant getting up at my usual time, showering and getting into clean clothes to go to work – even though work was in my attic man cave. Finally, it meant knocking off work at a reasonable time to take care of my other responsibilities.

I’m not bragging; this is stuff “earthlings” do all the time without thinking about it. In normal times, these are things I can also do without too much thought. Put me in a situation, however, where I am disoriented, isolated, a little frightened, and not in conscious contact with God, and I can quickly revert to the “do what Paul wants, when he wants” mode of operation. This may not progress to the point where I drink, but it will make me extremely miserable every time. (cont’d page 4)

Sobriety in the Time of Coronavirus (cont.) Newcomer's Corner

This pandemic has reminded me that I have a LOT to be grateful for. For example, I am grateful that this article is titled "Sobriety in the Time of Coronavirus", not "Sobriety in the Time of the Giant Martian Scorpion Swarm". (I'm also not particularly fond of scorpions). In the grand scheme of things, my COVID experience and that of most - certainly not all - of my acquaintances in AA, has been one of minor inconveniences. I do know that alcoholics have stayed sober through far worse than what I've gone through this year. The Big Book tells about member's experiences in World War II when AA's were scattered across the world and largely stayed sober (no internet back then). Why? Because the principles of this program work by dealing with the problems within us, not those around us. I was taught early on that we can stay sober no matter how bad things are around us. Conversely, if we fail to work this program, we can get drunk regardless of how well things are going around us.

Which brings me back to the haircut. I did watch a lot of Netflix during this pandemic, and I did wait a lot longer than I had to before returning to the barber. This is a program of progress, not perfection.

Paul S. 10/6/20

The Best Advice Given to Me

Before I got sober, I needed everyone to like me. If people got mad at me or didn't like me, I would be devastated and I would jump through hoops to apologize and make them like me because I was sure I had done something to offend them. I hated myself so much back then so I needed other people to like me to validate myself.

I was maybe 3 months sober and had a falling out with someone in the program. I was new in sobriety and my feelings were raw. As was my habit, I was sure I did something wrong to upset her and I just had to apologize so that everything would be okay and we could continue our friendship. I remember crying and asking what I could do to make her accept my apology. A dear friend (with quite a bit of time) gently stroked my hair, hugged me, looked at me and said "what other people think of you is none of your business." I felt like she had slapped my face - I couldn't understand how she could say such a thing. Didn't she understand that I needed everybody to like and accept me. After thinking about it (for quite some time), I realized that what she said was true. Once I started to accept myself for who I am, I realized that I don't need anyone's approval to validate who I am. I know there are some people who do not care for me and I'm okay with that. There are some people that are just not my cup of tea, and that is okay, as well.

It has taken a long time, but for the most part, I have stopped worrying about what other people think of me. I now realize that the person I had that falling out with has toughened my skin. She made me realize that not everyone I meet will be the best of friends. That it is okay to have different likes and opinions and still be civil to those who don't share my thoughts and opinions.

-Debbie F.

I'm 133 days clean, but I've only been to 5 meetings. I've only been to 5 because I just started going. 133 days ago, I used for the last time and made the decision to get away from it all. My family was using. My friends were using. My whole city was dying. So I packed up my car, took my husband, took my son and got the hell out of dodge. I ran from my problems for sure. Thought moving up to Maine would help keep me on the right track because hey, I had no dealers up in Maine. I had no familiar corners. I had no "routine knowing" of where to get what I needed because I took myself away from it. I had the support of my best friend with whom we were staying. She went through the motions with me.

The rage I felt, the burning want to get high, the frustration I felt when I couldn't get it, the physical and emotional withdrawals, fighting me on going back home to go to my old ways...Sometimes my friend would scream at me: "You'll go back to nothing going back there! You'll end up being nothing or in jail or dead! Do you want that? Do you want that for your son?!" No, I for sure didn't. But now that I'm past the rage, I feel consumed by confusion and pain. But things are finally going okay. I've straightened out our budget, I got a new car that I make payments on, I just started work.

All of these successes may sound great, but they're so overwhelming and finally I just felt it in me that I needed more support. So I'm starting to work the program and I'm recognizing some hard truths about myself and I'm also seeing more and more of who I want to be in the process.

It's scary having to deal with all of the things you "dealt with" by getting high that are now right in front of you, and you're truly facing them the second time around when you're stone cold sober. Being clean isn't easy, but being unclean is even harder.. I just need to put faith in the process and surround myself with the success stories that I hear at every meeting.

Maiya

The views and opinions expressed herein are those of each individual and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policy of South Jersey Intergroup or AA as a whole.

Service Opportunity

newsletter@aasj.org.

Answering Service

Recent retirements have time slots needing new volunteers:

Monday: 6:00am – 8:00 am

Tuesday: 8:00am -10:00am and 2:00 - 4:00pm

Thursday: 6:00am – 8:00am

Friday: 4:00pm – 6:00pm

Please ask your home group for volunteers to fill this service.

As meetings begin to open, volunteers are need for the 12-step list. Areas we need most help: Berlin, Camden, Hammonton, and Salem. If you know anyone who would like to be of service, please have them contact answerservice@aasj.org or invite them to speak at your home group.

We need you!

Please ask your...
sponsees,
homegroup members,
newcomers,
old-timers
to write articles for us!



EDITORIAL POLICY

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey Alcoholics Anonymous. 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

Due to travel and group restrictions imposed by the French government, and lack of traveller confidence, it has been decided to postpone the 2020 BIARRITZ INTERNATIONAL AA CONVENTION to 08 to 10 OCTOBER 2021.

Please join us for our virtual convention on 22-24 January 2021.

BIARRITZ INTERNATIONAL AA CONVENTION

**LE GRAND LARGE HOTEL /
ALL ACCOMMODATIONS HAVE OCEAN-VIEW**

- **KEEP IT SIMPLE** [Countdown To Event](#) | [Convention website](#)
- **VENUE HOTEL** [Accommodation here](#) | [Alternative accommodations](#)
- **VENUE HOTEL** [Slideshow](#) • **BIARRITZ** [Slideshow](#)
- **2021 BIARRITZ INT'L AA CONVENTION IS IN AN ALL NEW CENTRALLY LOCATED VENUE**
- **HOTEL ON THE OCEAN-FRONT, ROOMS HAVE UNOBSTRUCTED OCEAN/SUNSET VIEW**



When I was Handed the Promises

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." (Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book", page 83)

We are told that this is a program of attraction, not promotion. When I was new to AA, I didn't find a whole lot "attractive" about it. I was actually still quite attracted to a self-destructive existence on the fringes and perceived the positivity in the rooms to be somewhat phony.

However, one notable exception that broke through my stubborn sick mind, were these mysterious and exciting "promises" read at the end of every meeting. I noticed that the reading was usually delegated to the newest person at the meeting or the most miserable one or the one who just didn't seem to be "getting it".

One day early on in my time in the rooms, I got my butt to the meeting early, and someone plopped an old laminated paper in my lap--"The Promises". I couldn't help but look them over to make sure that I knew what I was going to read, hoping I wouldn't stumble over the words. The meeting seemed to zoom past me and all I could think about were these supposedly non-extravagant promises that struck me as so distant, but so enticing.

When it was finally my time to read them, I felt them through my whole body-- I had heard them already many times, having been to quite a few meetings in my early recovery, but reading them aloud to dozens of folks who have seen them come true affirmed them for me in a way that hadn't seemed real up till that point. It suddenly felt as if now these promises could actually come to fruition for me at some point, not just for everyone else who tried to do these steps.

Some things in the promises struck me as quite alien-- like serenity. Though I knew the dictionary definition, I think I had never actually used that word before coming into the program. The concept struck me as so foreign-- just being ok with things and accepting them, no matter how crappy they

got. After years of feeling sorry for myself, that just seemed fascinatingly odd. I also couldn't help but also be fascinated by the idea of no longer being self-centered or self-seeking-- I had no idea up until a few weeks before that I even was self-centered or self-seeking!

The promises of relief from fear and the implicit trust in a higher power also appealed to another new seed that had just been planted in me-- spirituality. And it was a spirituality that was quite useful-- one that was clearly keeping me sober now one day at a time, longer than I had been since I first started drinking alcoholically. It was a spirituality that served as a direct communication, unvarnished by wordy prayers, where I could just "talk" to a higher being, even though I still wasn't sure whether there really was one yet or not.

I wanted all of it, even though it didn't quite seem real-- the new attitude, the new outlook, the freedom, the intuition on how to handle life. I had always felt like so much of my life was out of my control, and I had just admitted that my drinking was out of control, so to imagine being able to intuit the best course of action when I had just come out of a place where I truly believed all I could do with a problem or unpleasant feeling was drink at it, seemed almost unreal.

Fast-forwarding to my current sobriety, I see that these promises have woven their way through my years in recovery. Does every single one materialize for me every single day? Certainly not--we aren't dead and living in heaven. But every single one of these promises has manifested for me over time in multifaceted ways that become clearer and clearer to me over time. In our program, when we walk hand-in-hand with our higher power, and live by the principles of our steps and traditions, the gifts we receive actually go way beyond what can be written in a beautiful paragraph like the oft-quoted one above.

To quote the next set of promises (tenth step) in our Big Book, the miracles of our changed attitude and outlook will continue to thrive with one simple caveat-- "keeping in fit spiritual condition." The tools for that fitness are available to us anytime we need to use them-- whether it is reaching out to our sponsor or a newcomer, doing inventory on a specific issue, being in service for our homegroup, taking the high road when someone else is misbehaving, praying for others when we want to retaliate, or writing an article for our newsletter.

-Skye (Haddonfield 12 and 12)

COME TO THE CIGAR CIRCLE WITH BILLY N.



LET'S
STUDY
**THE A.A.
SERVICE MANUAL**

WITH A PAST G.S.R., PAST DELEGATE PANEL 49
AND PAST CLASS B GENERAL SERVICE TRUSTEE

combined with

HOMework
AND
QUESTIONS

**TWELVE CONCEPTS
FOR WORLD SERVICE**

by Bill W.

SUNDAY
6:00PM EASTERN
OCTOBER 4TH-DECEMBER 27TH
ON ZOOM
ID: 452-100-1634 PW: 31236