

# ANONYMOUS SOUTH JERSEY

## SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

December, 2020

### STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

For all intents and purposes, this is the step that puts it all together-- every step culminates in step 12, which links the three legacies of our program-- unity, service and recovery. It's easier said than done, of course though!

For me, step 12 has two distinct directives for my continued work in the program -- (a) "practicing these principles in all our affairs" in my post-spiritual-awakening existence and (b) "carrying this message to alcoholics." I almost think of it as two steps squished into one to create a nice even number that is palatable to us and feels "do-able."

The two parts very much are interdependent in my experience. When I am actively carrying the message and helping the next alcoholic, I'm doing a better job practicing the principles. This is especially the case when I sponsor-- I need to "practice what I preach" and generally try to follow any spiritual guidance I share with my sponsees, so it keeps me in check! However, the same is also true in the other direction-- I need to practice the principles to have a message worth carrying, a message that has substance and is based on my practical everyday experience using this program to deal with any type of difficulty or adversity I face in any area of my life.

I learned early in recovery that ANY problem I can come up with can be improved by taking it through our twelve steps. In no way was our guide for living limited to freeing us from enslavement to alcohol, but from enslavement to the "isms" of alcoholism, the forms of self that hold me hostage and keep me from being happy, joyous and free. That includes feeling bad for myself when things don't go my way (self-pity), thinking of myself most of the time (self-centeredness), placing my own desires above others' wellbeing (selfishness) and acting on my own wishes even if they are contrary to those of my Higher Power (self-will).

I was told that to be free of self, I would need to develop selflessness, which I could use in a very practical way: When I found myself sinking into a self-pity or wallowing in the problem, I had a simple solution I could do at any time-- reach out to others. This can be texting a newcomer just to check in or upping my service level by arriving early to help set up a meeting. It can also be showing

kindness to someone who may not seem to me "to deserve it" or giving someone I love some special attention just to see them smile.

So my checklist for how well I'm working this step is pretty basic and can be assessed based on an honest daily tenth step inventory. My sponsor taught me that if my day is a pie chart of my mind, I should evaluate how much of the time I was thinking about myself, thinking of others and thinking of my Higher Power. If the slice of "me" gets too big, I need to get right-sized, and grow the part of my mind that is thinking of others and connecting with my Higher Power and what he would have me be. If I am focused on others and on spiritual growth, however, I am on the right path. It doesn't mean things went my way that day, but that my way became subordinate to spiritual and altruistic goals. After all, if "my way" were so wonderful, I don't think I would be hanging out with you lovely people!

In loving service,

Skye of Haddonfield 12 and 12

### TRADITION TWELVE

**Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

Anonymity is maintained not so much for the protection of the individual, as for the protection of the program. It goes much deeper than not just revealing your last name. Tradition 12 means that the principles of the 12-step program should be put first. Personal opinions have no place in our fellowship. This tradition calls for genuine humility. What we are or where we work outside of A.A. has nothing to do with who we are when we enter the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are all just alcoholics trying to get another day of sobriety. The solution to our problems come from the twelve steps (the principles) and our Higher Power, not from any "expert or professional". Even individuals with great knowledge of our beloved Big Book should stand on guard for arrogance, Thinking we know it all ends with doing things our own way. And we all know where that has gotten us.

Putting principles before personalities means we practice honesty, humility, compassion, tolerance, and patience with everyone, whether we like them or not. Putting principles before personalities teaches us to treat everyone equally.

Anonymous

## Promises of AA

In the “before time” I used to attend the Thursday night speaker meeting at Barclay Farms in Cherry Hill. This meeting always closed with a reading of the promises from page 83 and 84 of the Big Book. Since I often went directly to this meeting from work, and hadn’t eaten dinner yet, I was usually trying to decide between Five Guys and Qdoba while these promises were being read. This was often the case even if I happened to be the one reading the promises. I’m not proud of this, but it’s an honest program.

So, having once again volunteered to write about something without first considering my qualifications to do so, I now find myself in a bit of a pickle. What do I know about the promises? More to the point, what are my own experiences with the promises?

When I first came into the program, I just wanted a basic ability to function. Being able to hold a job or not fail out of school was enough for me. It never occurred to me that I might get “a new freedom and a new happiness” out of coming into the rooms. Truth be told, I wasn’t even in the market to get sober when I first walked in the door – I just wanted to control my drinking enough to function at some basic level. Once I did get sober, I was blessed with rewards far beyond “being able to function at some basic level”. These eventually included a wife, children, grandchildren, and a job that is simultaneously beyond both my wildest dreams and wildest nightmares. I could go on....

“But wait”, you say, “those are rewards of sobriety, not the promises from pages 83 and 84 of the big book!” I’m not the sharpest tool in the shed so I’m just now realizing this myself. Is there a difference between promises and rewards? What happens if I enter “promise definition” into the Googler? Looks like it spits back the following:

*Promise - A declaration or assurance that one will do a particular thing or that a particular thing will happen.*

I have paid just enough attention in meetings to know that AA neither provides a declaration nor an assurance that we will get spouses, jobs, or even become employable by staying sober (granted, we stand a lot better chance of getting and keeping these things if we are). On the other hand, the things we call promises on page 83 and 84 *are most definitely assurances*. So, while the promises on page 83 and 84 are clearly rewards of sobriety, not all rewards of sobriety we receive are promised to us. For some people this may be obvious. For me, it most definitely was not when I walked into AA. As previously noted, I’m not the sharpest tool in the shed.

So, what has been my experience with the promises of AA? Given my Thursday night obsession with burgers and burritos, I think that to answer this I need to go see what these promises actually are:

1. We will be amazed before we are halfway through
2. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness
3. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it
4. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace
5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see

how our experience can benefit others.

6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear
7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows
8. Self-seeking will slip away
9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change
10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.
12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Some days I think I’m still waiting on 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11 (especially 11). Sometimes “knowing a new freedom and a new happiness” or “comprehending the word serenity and knowing peace” seems fleeting at best. Is this because I haven’t received them?

I think there are two answers to this. The first is that “knowing a new freedom and a new happiness” is not the same thing as “always being free to do as one likes and being in a permanent state of bliss”. Likewise, today I do know what it is to be serene and I do know peace. This doesn’t mean, however, that I am always serene and peaceful (a fact to which Al Anon and my co-workers will quickly attest). Just because I still get baffled in some situations doesn’t mean that I am not now intuitively helping others that would have baffled me when I first walked into the rooms. In short, receiving these promises does not mean that all of our problems go away. Again, maybe obvious to others - to me, not so much.

The second answer is that assurances are almost always conditional. The promises on page 83 and 84 are no different. They are preceded by the condition, “If we are painstaking about this stage in our development...”. These promises come at the end of Step 9, but Step 9 comes after Steps 1 - 8. Rightly or wrongly, I read being “painstaking about this stage in our development” as being “painstaking about working the Steps”. Since this is a program of progress, not perfection, some days I’m more painstaking than others about practicing this program in all my affairs. It stands to reason that I will therefore realize more of these promises on some days than others.

This being a program of progress, not perfection, it also makes sense that some of these promises will be gradually realized. The Big Book says as much right after listing the promises; “they are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly”.

There is one thing about these promises that has been bothering me for years and which I am at a loss to explain: why do we shout “we think not” in response to the question “are these extravagant promises” when they are read at meetings? I’m not suggesting that these *are* extravagant promises, or that there is anything wrong with doing this. It just seems weirdly random. Maybe next month someone can write a “Promises of AA” article explaining this.

Paul S.

## Step Twelve Poetry

Genre propels  
Mobilizes  
Like the internal combustion engine  
It guides and takes one forward.

Helping others is the genre,  
The original genre of AA.  
It is the first urge of Bill W.  
On the moment of his awakening.  
His first urge,  
To go forward and work with others.

In the Native American  
There is no difference between the word for  
"work" and the word for "love."  
Practice and helping others,  
There is no difference.  
And this is "practicing"  
In all our affairs.

The Steps are guides  
Which must fall away  
Of their own accord  
Upon being put into practice.  
They become sobriety  
And a way of life  
Larger than life itself;  
Absorbing all of life's difficulties  
And being the "solution":  
In peace and serenity  
And in love and being.

Masonville Marty

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



## SECOND BIARRITZ INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL A.A. CONVENTION (in ENGLISH)

22 to 24 January 2021

Friday 22 14h30 – Sunday 24 January 12h00 2021

Experience, Strength and Hope

Click here: to register for the Zoom login URLs and passwords.  
and to receive your 'secure Page' 8 digit personal password

ALL speakers experienced long-time members & Small

Fred G., Daniel F., Tom M., Jay C., Fergus G., Lynn H., Jimmy A.,  
Donal K, Earl H., Sarahleah H., Terry A, Barefoot Bill., Leo H., Ruth  
S., & Others.

AN AA FELLOWSHIP EVENT

AL-Anon & YPAA, Participation

RECOVERY and ECONOMY & Small

NO TRAVEL! NO HOTEL! NO RESTAURANT!  
NO EXPENSE!

Website: [://aavirtualconventionbiarritz.com](http://aavirtualconventionbiarritz.com)

Contact & info: [babanglophonegroup@gmail.com](mailto:babanglophonegroup@gmail.com)

Login URL & PASSWORD information

Login URLs and passwords for Biarritz Virtual Convention are  
available on the event website secure page for which you will  
require your unique personal 8 digit access code (received when  
you register and at the lower left corner of your PayPal receipt)

Thank you for helping with security

REGISTRATION

Registration fees (minimal) for the virtual convention are  
necessary, and cover Zoom license fees, Website fees, and  
organizational expenses. The success of the event depends on  
your kind generosity. This event is a stand-alone convention  
supported by your registration fees for which we thank you.

## December Notable Events in A.A. History

12/27/1893 – Rev. Samuel Shoemaker is born.

12-11-34 – Bill admitted to Towns Hospital for the  
fourth and last time (fall '33, '34 in summer,  
midsummer and final admittance).

12-12-34 – Bill has Spiritual Experience at Towns  
Hospital.

12-13-34 or 12-14-34 – Ebby visits Bill at Towns  
hospital, brings William James' book, Varieties of  
Religious Experience.

12-12-37 – Bill meets with Rockefeller Foundation and  
tries to get money, and fails.

12-38 – Twelve Steps written.

12-2-43 - Bill speaks to 300 at meeting inside San  
Quentin

12-20-45 – Rowland Hazard dies

12-7-49 Sister Ignatia received Poverello Medal of St.  
Francis on behalf of A.A.

12-10-75 – Birds of a Feather AA group for pilots is  
formed.

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 Opportunities

### Answering Service

#### Time slots needing volunteers:

Tuesday: 10am -12 noon

Wednesday: 4pm-6pm

Thursday: 6:00am – 8:00am; 4-6pm;8-10pm

Friday: 4:00pm – 6:00pm

Saturday: 4-6pm; 8:00pm – 10:00pm

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

As meetings begin to open and people willing to meet others one-on-one; please continue to remind everyone that more volunteers are need for the 12-step list. Areas we need most help: Berlin, Camden, Hammonton, and Salem. We have signup sheets available for anyone wishing to take a copy to their home groups. If you know anyone who would like to be of service, please have them contact us at [answeringservice@aasj.org](mailto:answeringservice@aasj.org) or invite us to speak at your home group. Hospitals & Institutions

*“I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”*

Please consider making a personal contribution to Alcoholics Anonymous at [AA.org](http://AA.org). Due to most face-to-face meetings being cancelled, group donations are at a minimum.

### 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 [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org).

#### **We need you!**

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



## Humility for Today by Bill W. AA Grapevine, June 1961

There can be no absolute humility for us humans. At best, we can only glimpse the meaning and splendor of such a perfect ideal. As the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" says: "We are not saints. . . we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." Only God Himself can manifest in the Absolute; we human beings must needs live and grow in the domain of the relative. We seek humility for today. Therefore our practical question is this: "Just what do we mean by 'humility for today' and how do we know when we have found it?" We scarcely need be reminded that excessive guilt or rebellion leads to spiritual poverty. But it was a very long time before we knew we could go even more broke on spiritual pride.

When we early AAs got our first glimmer of how spiritually prideful we could be, we coined this expression: "Don't try to get too damned good by Thursday!" That old-time admonition may look like another of those handy alibis that can excuse us from trying for our best. Yet a closer view reveals just the contrary. This is our AA way of warning against pride-blindness, and the imaginary perfections that we do not possess.

Now that we no longer patronize bars and bordellos; now that we bring home the pay checks; now that we are so very active in AA; and now that people congratulate us on these signs of progress--well, we naturally proceed to congratulate ourselves. Yet we may not be within hailing distance of humility. Meaning well, yet doing badly, how often have I said or thought, "I am right and you are wrong," "My plan is correct and yours is faulty," "Thank God your sins are not my sins," "You are hurting AA and I'm going to stop you cold," "I have God's guidance, so He is on my side." And so on, indefinitely. The alarming thing about such pride-blindness is the ease with which it is justified.

But we need not look far to see that this deceptive brand of self-justification is a universal destroyer of harmony and of love. It sets man against man, nation against nation. By it, every form of folly and violence can be made to look right, and even respectable. Of course it is not for us to condemn. We need only investigate ourselves.

How, then, can we do more and more about reducing our guilt, rebellion and pride? When I inventory such defects, I like to draw a picture and tell myself a story. My picture is that of a Highway to Humility, and my story is an allegory. On one side of my Highway, I see a great bog. The Highway's edge borders a shallow marsh which finally shelves down into that muddy morass of guilt and rebellion in which I have so often floundered. Self-destruction lies in wait out there, and I know this.

But the country on the other side of the road looks fine. I see inviting glades, and beyond them great mountains. The countless trails leading into this pleasant land look safe. It will be easy, I think, to find one's way back. Together with numbers of friends, I decide to take a brief detour. We pick our path and happily plunge along it. Elatedly, somebody soon says, "Maybe we'll find gold on top of that mountain." Then to our amazement we do strike gold--not nuggets in the streams, but fully minted coins. The heads of

these coins each declare, "This is pure gold--twenty-four carats." Surely, we think, this is the reward for our patient plodding back there in the everlasting brightness of the Highway. Soon, though, we begin to notice the words on the tails of our coins, and we have strange forebodings: Some pieces carry rather attractive inscriptions. "I am Power," "I am Acclaim," "I am Wealth," "I am Righteousness," they say. But others seem very strange. For example: "I am The Master Race," "I am The Benefactor," "I am Good Causes," "I am God." This is very puzzling. Nevertheless we pocket them. But next come real shockers. They read: "I'm Pride," "I'm Anger," "I'm Aggression," "I'm Revenge," "I'm Disunity," "I'm Chaos." Then we turn up a single coin--just one--which declares: "I am the Devil himself." Some of us are horrified and we cry, "This is fool's gold, and this is a fool's paradise--let's clear out of here!" But many would not return with us. They said, "Let's stay here and sort over those damned coins. We'll pick only the ones that carry the lucky inscriptions. For instance, those that say, 'Power' and 'Glory' and 'Righteousness.' You fellows are going to be sorry you didn't stick around." Not strangely, it was years before this part of our original company returned to the Highway. They told us the story of those who had sworn never to return. They had said, "This money is real gold, and don't tell us any different. We're going to pile up all we can. Sure, we don't like those fool mottoes. But there's plenty of firewood here. We'll just melt all this stuff down into good solid gold bricks." Then our late arrivals added: "This is how the gold of Pride claimed our brothers. They were already quarreling over their bricks when we left. Some were hurt and a few were dying. They had begun to destroy each other."

This symbolic picture graphically tells me that I may attain "humility for today" only to the extent that I am able to avoid the bog of guilt and rebellion, and that fair but deceiving land which is strewn with the coin of Pride. This is how I can find and stay on the Road to Humility which lies in between. Therefore a constant inventory which can reveal when I am off the road is always in order. Of course, our first attempts at such inventories are apt to prove very unrealistic. I used to be a champ at unrealistic self-appraisal. I wanted to look only at the part of my life which seemed good. Then I would greatly exaggerate whatever virtues I supposed I had attained. Next I would congratulate myself on the grand job I was doing. So my unconscious self-deception never failed to turn my few good assets into serious liabilities. This astonishing process was always a pleasant one. Naturally this generated a terrible hankering for still more "accomplishments," and still more approval. I was falling straight back into the pattern of my drinking days.

Here were the same old goals--power, fame, and applause. Besides, I had the best alibi known--the spiritual alibi. The fact that I really did have a spiritual objective always made this utter nonsense seem perfectly right. I couldn't tell a good coin from a bad one; it was spiritual gold-bricking at its worst. I shall forever regret the damage I did to people around me. Indeed, I still tremble when I realize what I might have done to AA and to its future. In those days I wasn't much bothered about the areas of life in which I was standing still. There was always the alibi: "After all," I said to myself, "I'm far too busy with much more important

matters." That was my near perfect prescription for comfort and complacency.

But sometimes I would simply have to look at certain situations where, on the face of them, I was doing very badly. Right away, a rousing rebellion would set in. Then the search for excuses would become frantic. "These," I would exclaim, "are really a good man's faults." When that pet gadget finally broke apart, I would think, "Well, if those people would only treat me right, I wouldn't have to behave the way I do." Next in order was this: "God well knows that I do have awful compulsions. I just can't get over this one. So He will have to release me." At last came the time when I would shout, "This, I positively will not do; I won't even try."

Of course my conflicts went right on mounting because I was simply loaded with excuses and refusals. When these troubles had finally exhausted me enough, there was yet another escape. I would commence to wallow in the bog of guilt. Here pride and rebellion would give way to depression. Though the variations were many, my main theme always was, "How god-awful I am." Just as I had exaggerated my modest attainments by pride, so now I would exaggerate my defects through guilt. I would race about, confessing all (and a great deal more!) to whoever would listen. Believe it or not, I took that to be great humility on my part, and I counted this as my sole remaining asset and consolation! During those bouts with guilt, there was never a decent regret for the harms I had done, nor was there any serious thought of making such restitution as I could.

The idea of asking God's forgiveness, let alone any forgiveness of myself, never occurred to me. Of course my really big liability—spiritual pride and arrogance—was not examined at all. I had shut out the light by which I might have seen it. Today I think I can trace a clear linkage between my guilt and my pride. Both of them were certainly attention-getters. In pride I could say, "Look at me, I am wonderful." In guilt I would moan, "I'm awful." Therefore guilt is really the reverse side of the coin of pride. Guilt aims at self-destruction and Pride aims at the destruction of others.

This is why I see humility for today as that safe and secure stance midway between these violent emotional extremes. It is a quiet place where I can keep enough perspective, and enough balance to take my next small step up the clearly marked road that points toward eternal values. Many of us have experienced far greater emotional gyrations than I. Others have experienced less. But all of us still have them at times. Yet I think we need not regret these conflicts. They seem to be a necessary part of growing up, emotionally and spiritually. They are the raw material out of which much of our progress has to be made.

Does anyone ask if AA is but a retching pit of pain and conflict? The answer is "Certainly not." In great measure, we AAs have really found peace. However haltingly, we have managed to attain an increasing humility whose dividends

have been serenity and legitimate joy. We do not detour as much or as far as we once did.

At the outset of this meditation, it was thought that absolute ideals are far beyond our attainment, or even our comprehension; that we would be sadly lacking in humility if we really felt that we could achieve anything like absolute perfection in this brief span of earthly existence. Such a presumption would certainly be the acme of spiritual pride. Reasoning thus, many people will have no truck at all with absolute spiritual values. Perfectionists, they say, are either full of conceit because they fancy they have reached some impossible goal, or else they are swamped in self-condemnation because they have not done so.

Yet I think that we should not hold this view. It is not the fault of great ideals that they are sometimes misused and so become shallow excuses for guilt, rebellion and pride. On the contrary, we cannot grow very much unless we constantly try to envision what the eternal spiritual values are. As Step Eleven of AA's recovery program says, we "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." This surely means that we ought to look toward God's Perfection as our guide rather than as a goal to be reached in any foreseeable time. I'm sure, for instance, that I ought to seek out the finest definition of humility that is possible for me to envision. This definition doesn't have to be absolutely perfect—I am only asked to try. Suppose I choose one like this: "Perfect humility would be a state of complete freedom from myself, freedom from all the claims that my defects of character now lay so heavily upon me. Perfect humility would be a full willingness, in all times and places, to find and do the will of God." When I meditate upon such a vision, I need not be dismayed because I shall never attain it, nor need I swell with presumption that one of these days its virtues shall all be mine. I only need to dwell on the vision itself, letting it grow and ever more fill my heart. This done, I can compare it with my last-taken personal inventory. Then I get a sane and healthy idea of where I actually stand on the Highway to Humility. I see that my journey toward God has scarce begun.

As I thus get down to my right size and stature, my self-concern and importance become amusing. Then faith grows that I do have a place on this Highway; that I can advance upon it with deepening peace and confidence. Once more I know that God is good; that I need fear no evil. This is a great gift, this knowledge that I do have a destiny. As I continue to contemplate God's Perfection, I discover still another joy. As a child, hearing my first symphony, I was lifted up into its indescribable harmony, though I knew little of how or whence it came. So today, when I listen for God's Music of the Spheres, I can now and again hear those divine chords by which I am told that the Great Composer loves me—and that I love Him