

STEP ONE

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

The first step states that we admitted we were powerless over alcohol and our lives had become out of control. Who could have ever guessed that a step about powerlessness could lead me down a path of empowerment? The first step hinges on a fundamental oxymoron: that in order to regain power to make our lives manageable, we must admit we are fundamentally powerless.

When I took the first step, I was full of fear. Fear about what this meant, fear to put my foot even an inch within the gateway to a spiritual way of life that was being offered to me. Five years later, I am so grateful I did. The first step is a commitment. In my mind, the commitment meant I would be a slave to twelve step fellowships and lose everything that made my life fun or interesting. However, it's not a commitment to sign away my life in a contract, it's a commitment to give the next 11 steps my best effort.

Like anything in recovery, it is best for me to approach the steps one day at a time. It was not helpful to imagine the first step as a binding agreement to a lifelong commitment - instead just one step that I take one moment at a time. And then I see what comes next. I am so grateful for my sobriety and grateful that, as a scared alcoholic, I made that decision to move away from fear and into recovery. - Maggie D.

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Tradition 1 asks of each member to create a priority that gets right at the core of every alcoholic's basic problem-- self. We are asked to simply place our common welfare first, knowing that our own personal recovery is dependent on the unity of our organization and its groups.

Do you remember the first time you got an AA coin? Do you remember looking with awe at that "chip" that proclaimed you as thirty days sober or 24-hours sober? For many of us, this was our

first exposure to Unity in the context of the "Three Legacies" of our program. I remember staring at the symbol on my welcome coin for my first 24 hours-- the equilateral triangle with each corner just touching an outer circle holding the whole thing neatly together in a seemingly perfect balance.

My sponsor eventually explained this symbol to me when we sat down together to begin a journey that took me nearly a year on my first go-around with the steps according to the Big Book of AA: She said that "Recovery" is our program of the twelve steps, that "Unity" is upheld by our group traditions to sustain our fellowship and "Service" is contained in all the work we do to help the next alcoholic to get and stay sober.

Our initial tradition identifies unity as paramount in our ability to stay sober individually. What can I do to help sustain unity for my AA group? A simple group inventory tool can help me see the extent to which I am currently contributing to the unity of our group or if I need to do more lest the fabric of our unity be worn over time.

My homegroup, the Haddonfield 12 and 12, changed our format two years ago to utilize the tool I am referencing-- the recently updated "Traditions Checklist." You can find a free electronic copy on the Grapevine website with a simple Google search or buy copies of the of it in the official AA pamphlet from our Intergroup Office's Literature Committee or order by mail from our GSO in New York.

Among some of the most potent questions on this list, I have asked myself, do I function in my group as "a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive," taking the inventory of others? Over my years in recovery, I have found that despite feeling internally that someone else is misguided or taking our group in a direction that is not ideal, externally I can still be a source of unity. I keep learning new ways to diplomatically put my suggestions forward, even when my instinct still cries for drama!

If you have ever been to what some old-timers fondly and humorously refer to as "chair-throwing business meetings," you know what I mean. Are you the one throwing the proverbial chairs or are you the one unifying the group by helping to remind everyone that we all have the same goal of supporting sick and

suffering alcoholics, just different ways we believe are best to achieve it?

Another question I need to consider is “Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?” We are urged in this program to always keep growing, to continue to move closer to our higher power to move further from a drink. And yet, our Big Book warns us in step ten, to be wary of our instinct to “rest on our laurels” rather than utilize our recovery toolkit at all times that it is needed in order to be granted the “daily reprieve” from enslavement to alcohol.

For me, supporting AA as a whole, means “putting myself out there,” often by simply sharing when I don’t feel like it (especially when I am wearing my most unflattering outfit and everyone is staring me down on Zoom!) It also means taking the time to learn about all facets of AA, even if they seem boring or “for someone else” who is smarter or a better AA member than me like our Service Manual. We all have the ability to really grow by putting forth the effort to learn more about our program’s steps, traditions, concepts and history and there is always more to learn!

Lastly, I need to look at this question from our checklist: “Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?” Basically, am I acting like an AA hypocrite-- am I telling newcomers about how much my life has changed when I am still behaving like a selfish infant at home or at work? Sometimes I find myself acting despite my own best AA advice, but not as often these days, and when I am, I am quickly reminded by my Higher Power how to get back on the straight and narrow-- I quickly ask that my thinking be divorced from self-seeking motives and ask for guidance on how to best “amend” my behavior right now before I make a huge mess.

We have just finished a year that required the best unity we can muster--where our personal comfort at meetings was replaced with mask-wearing socially-distanced arrangements and Zoom AA became for many our primary meeting experience. Putting the health and welfare of our groups ahead of our desire to connect in the old-fashioned way of the “before times” as I like to call them, has given many of us pause as we consider group unity in a completely new way.

Wishing you all a safe and healthy new year!

Love, Skye

“Home”

My reality is so harsh to see

Bound to a past I seek to escape

I wish to shed the years long past

Yet they surface just to take

Another bite from me at last

A multitude of tears have run

Their course down cheeks of alabaster

Marring them with angry streaks of crimson

As I curse the abyss of desolation,

Depression rules this prison

I lie chained deep inside

I long for release from

Where before I embraced it

Drinking, thinking I escaped it

But instead, I further chased it

Down the rabbit hole I’d go

Like Alice, I became encaptured

To these words, I hope you’ll listen

There is a light you seek

As you climb out of the abysm

Addiction once swallowed you into

The sun will begin to rise

Shining upon the catacomb

Recovery, now cast upon you

The place you now call....

Home

Kelly NJ 9/20/20



New Eyes to See: Sober for the Holidays

Now that we can finally breathe a sigh of relief and put 2020 in our collective rear-view (I won't go into the reasons for wanting to), I'm reminded of the difficulty those of us who suffer from alcohol addiction must have endured for the past twelve months. It's never easy to avoid thoughts of drinking, or drinking for that matter, but this year tested the resolve of the strongest of us.

For myself, the New Year marks the second consecutive holiday season of my sobriety. During Thanksgiving week of 2019, I came to the stunning revelation that I may have a drinking problem, despite having indulged in the practice (and other mind-altering substances) for the previous 45 years of my life. I never considered myself an alcoholic.... a binge drinker, maybe, but to admit I couldn't stop without assistance never occurred to me.

However, for reasons unbeknownst to me, I had started to engage in behaviors that I would have considered "alcoholic" had I witnessed or known someone else's participation in them. These behaviors include: drinking in my vehicle in the parking lot of the liquor store, drinking to and from my way to work, throwing empty airplane bottles in trash receptacles on the way home or out the window of my truck when there was no other traffic around, chewing gum all of the time to cover the smell of my breath and lying to my wife when she suspected I had been drinking — and doing this all alone.

It wasn't until my eldest son found me passed out in front of our refrigerator following an afternoon of drinking on an empty stomach, and then confronting me in a way that shamed me as no one but one of your children can, that I sought help in the form of a phone call to a great friend who convinced me to go to an A.A. meeting the very next morning. I haven't had a drink since, nor does it hold the power over me it once did. That's not to say I'm out of danger.... no one who's ever attempted to fight this battle would say something so foolish. But, I've learned a few things in the fight, and they may be constructive to those struggling during the holiday season.

First of all, being sober usually means you won't have to apologize for something you said or did to mar someone else's Holidays. The resentments (real or imagined), Seasonal Affective Disorder, and other "blues" attributed to the season have failed to rise from their slumber during the past two seasons for me. My perspective has shifted to a "glass half-full" kind of guy from the sullen pessimist I was while I was

drinking. I've begun to focus on what I may be able to accomplish with the time I have left on this Earth rather than what I didn't in the past. All those yesterdays are gone and nothing can alter them, so I try to learn from the experiences.

Second, I have come to accept the concept of a "higher power", though I still haven't formulated what that really is, and I may never. Perhaps the pursuit of what many call "God" is fundamental to our existence here and it may take the remainder of my life to define it, or I may pass without ever discovering what it is. I believe it's in the quest that whatever you call "God" may find you and keep you.

Having been a member of A.A. for a little over a year now, we oftentimes read and hear about the gifts that we receive from our sobriety. I have to admit I was skeptical about all of the positivity that I'd been told would eventually come to me as a result of abstinence. But, having been a part of this fellowship, my doubts have dwindled and I do count several of these gifts as unexpected blessings. Among them is a belief in the kindness, generosity of heart and empathy from and with others that I thought was gone and could never be retrieved. That is an immeasurable fortune which alone has been worth the journey of the past year for me.

Additionally, sobriety has bestowed upon me a clarity of vision that alcohol and drugs sullied for my entire adult life. I now have a desire to again pursue the positive endeavors I once enjoyed, and then neglected, to engage in self-destructive and self-defeating abuse and indolence, even if it's on a limited basis and even if I fail at them. Failure is but the first stepping stone to eventual success. It is in the effort that we find our greatest worth.

Finally, I find myself wanting to reach out and doing what I can to be of assistance to others. Everyone has limited time and your time is a precious commodity that could be spent in any number of ways. I know I haven't done as much as I can to reach out to other alcoholics, but that is my intention as I move forward in this fellowship. My journey may be unique, as is every person's who suffers from this affliction. But, I'm convinced I can be of some service to someone, if only to listen to his or her story. It is in the service to others in which I believe I can finally attain the vision of the man I hoped I would be. Thanks for allowing me to share.

Michael M.

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 β 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 β Small

NO TRAVEL! NO HOTEL! NO RESTAURANT!

NO EXPENSE!

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

Contact & info: babanglophonegroup@gmail.com

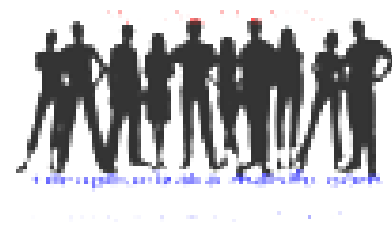
Login URL & PASSWORD information

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.

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

Volunteers are still needed to fill the open time slots for South Jersey Intergroup's Answering Service. During this time of world-wide pandemic and the resulting, quarantines, isolation, death of loved ones and personal health issues, alcoholics must have their phone calls answered when they finally, desperately reach out to Alcoholics Anonymous. Ask your Higher Power if you can help fulfill this important commitment. Ask a sponsee or old-timer friend that may be interested in doing service without having to leave the comfort of their own home. Please make announcements at your home group for volunteers to fill this service.

We also have a 12th-step list that is used for those calling the answering service that may need to speak in depth about alcoholism and recovery or may need a ride or might just need to speak to someone that understands. That's when someone from the Answering Service will reach out and see if someone from the list could reach out to the caller.

Please continue to remind everyone that volunteers are needed. Areas we need most help for the 12th-step list are 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 or invite us to speak at your home group about this much-needed service opportunity.

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 newsletter@aasj.org.



Sobriety and the Holidays

As I sat down to write about “Sobriety and the Holidays”, it occurred to me that animals have taught me a lot about my relationship with God and the Program of AA, especially around this time of year. Why did I think of animals? I don’t know. I don’t think it’s because of the role of animals in the Nativity. I also don’t think it’s because we often serve animals at holiday feasts (though I’ll touch on livestock a bit later). I think it’s partly because we got Moose four years ago right before Christmas.

Moose is a puppy-mill-bred cockapoo with anxiety issues. He barks incessantly, chews any soft thing near the floor (including the carpet), and becomes aggressive if you try to confiscate old food he just retrieved from the trash. He is alternately terrified, and fiercely jealous, of the obese tuxedo cat that also lives here. My daughter’s fiancé once compared Moose to what you might get if you tried ordering a golden retriever from Wish.com. At least he is housetrained, which is a lot more than can be said for our previous dog. Moose recently had minor surgery and is currently walking around the house with a cone to keep him from chewing the stitches. He is not a happy dog.

The fact we got Moose around Christmas had absolutely nothing to do with the fact it was Christmas. How he came to live here is a story unto itself and this article is already headed down a rabbit hole, so I won’t elaborate. I will say that adopting Moose was not my idea.

Moose’s cone reminds me that God knows what he is doing and that I do not. To me this cone is a way of keeping Moose from injuring or infecting himself. To him the cone is a random injustice the gods have foisted upon him, even though he loves the gods and shows this by heralding them when they come home, warning them of approaching birds, and cleaning their faces when given the chance. I’m sure if he went to dog meetings, he would be complaining to his sponsor about how unfair it all is.

It also occurs to me that Moose can really do nothing through the application of his considerable self-will to improve his lot in life. We feed him, take him to the vet, and keep him on a leash when outdoors so he doesn’t run onto the street. We love him (in our imperfect human way) even though he is often a royal pain in the butt. Self-will is not going to get him more of what he needs. It may get him more of what he thinks he needs, but that is likely to be a razor-sharp old tuna can. In fact, there’s lots of scenarios I can envision involving Moose exercising his self-will. None of them end well for Moose. In my life I too have found that self-will frequently leads to lacerations from old tuna cans.

Moose’s propensity to fight us when we are trying to help him also reminds me of my relationship with God. Try giving him medication. If he cooperated the whole thing would be done in a few seconds, he would get a treat, and he would feel better. As it is, this process usually takes two people, lots of growling, and multiple attempts to get the meds into the dog without getting bitten (arguably not much different from getting a sponsee to do a fourth step).

These traits are hardly unique to dogs. Sheep are equally willful and are even more prone to self-destructive groupthink. There’s a reason why sheep often appear in biblical parables. I know this because I’ve had firsthand dealings with sheep (and pigs and steers). Which brings me to the next tenuous link this article will attempt to make between sobriety, the holidays, and animals.

When our kids were younger Al Anon though it would be a great idea for them to be in 4H. I was less than enthused but went along because over the years I’ve learned that most good ideas in our family originate with Al-Anon and – well – sometimes it’s just easier to go along when she gets something like this into her head. Every week we would take the kids to 4H and, once a year in early January, we would take animals to a well-known agricultural fair in Pennsylvania. For an entire week we would partake in activities such as:

- Getting up ridiculously early
- Spending hours in the bitter cold
- Shoveling manure
- Lugging around heavy equipment covered in manure.
- Trying to get through crowds, often with animals or heavy equipment.
- Dealing with other people and their bratty kids
Dealing with cranky farmers
- Dealing with strong willed creatures, often much bigger, stronger, and faster than I.

The last item on this list included “walking” pigs from their pens to a wash rack that was usually on the complete opposite side of a crowded hall. Much like alcoholics, these 350-pound pigs had strong ideas about where they wanted to go and really did not appreciate being directed elsewhere. The way one “directs” a pig is through the use of a “pig board”, which is a piece of plywood about 2 feet square. You hold this in front of the pig’s face to steer him/her in your preferred direction. This doesn’t always work because pigs can run a lot faster than humans, but I digress.

As I said, 4H went on for much of the year but reached a crescendo right after Christmas when we prepared for, and then attended, this fair. I hated the whole thing. At best it was a major imposition on my time. The people part was WAY outside of my “comfort zone”. We did this for about 20 years. If I’m completely honest I have to say that this never reached my top 10 list of favorite activities. I will say, however, that as I became a little less self-absorbed, I discovered some other things:

- Winter sunrises can be extremely beautiful.
- If you dress appropriately (as opposed to not and then complaining) Winter weather is kind of nice.
- There’s an upside to almost everything. For example, crowds get out of your way when you, or the thing you are carrying, are covered with manure.
- The other people, their bratty kids, and the cranky farmers could be a lot of fun.
- When God closes one door and opens another, he’s just using a pig board.

Paul S. 1/4/21

JANUARY HISTORY IN ALCHOLICS ANONYMOUS

January 1, 1948: First A.A. meeting was held in Japan, English speaking.

January 2, 1889: Bridget Della Mary Gavin (Sister Ignatia) was born in Ireland.

January 3, 1941: Jack Alexander told Bill Wilson the Oxford Group would be in his Saturday Evening Post article on A.A.

January 4, 1939: Dr. Bob stated in a letter to Ruth Hock that A.A. had to get away from the Oxford Group atmosphere.

January 4, 1941: Bill and Lois Wilson drove to Bedford Hills, NY, to see Stepping Stones and broke in through an unlocked window.

January 7, 1984: "Pass it On" was published on this date.

January 8, 1938: New York A.A. split from the Oxford Group.

January 13, 2003: Dr. Earle Marsh, author of "Physician Heal Thyself," sober 49 years, died

January 17, 1919: 18th amendment, "Prohibition," became law.

January 20, 1954: Hank Parkhurst, author of "The Unbeliever" in the first edition of the Big Book, died in Pennington, NJ.

January 21, 1951: A.A. Grapevine published memorial issue on Dr. Bob.

January 23, 1961: Bill W. sent an appreciation letter, which he considered long-overdue, to Dr. Carl Jung for his contribution to A.A.

January 24, 1918: Bill Wilson and Lois Burnham were married, days before he was sent to Europe in WW I.

January 24, 1971: Bill Wilson died in Miami, Florida, only weeks after sending a postcard to Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa, saying he wanted to live long enough to see Hughes become President.

January 25, 1915: Dr. Bob Smith married Anne Ripley.

January 26, 1971: New York Times published Bill Wilson's obituary on page 1.

January 27, 1971: The Washington Post published an obituary of Bill Wilson written by Donald Graham, son of the owner of the Washington Post.

January 30, 1961: Dr. Carl Jung answers Bill's letter with "Spiritus Contra Spiritum."

DR. CARL JUNG'S LETTER TO BILL WILSON JANUARY 30, 1961

Dear Mr. Wilson,

Your letter has been very welcome indeed.

I had no news from Rowland H. anymore and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason that I could not tell him everything was that those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I had found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Rowland H. But what I really thought about was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God.*

How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?

The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Rowland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best one.

I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society, cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words arouses so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.

These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Rowland H., but I am risking it with you because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter that you have acquired a point of view above the misleading platitudes one usually hears about alcoholism.

You see, "alcohol" in Latin is "spiritus" and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.

Thanking you again for your kind letter

I remain

Yours sincerely

C. G. Jung
(See page 8 for original letter)

PROF. DR. C. G. JUNG

KÜSNACHT-ZÜRICH
SEESTRASSE 22B

January 30, 1961

Mr. William G. Wilson
Alcoholics Anonymous
Box 459 Grand Central Station
New York 17, N.Y.
=====

Dear Mr. Wilson,
your letter has been very welcome indeed.
I had no news from Roland H. anymore and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason ~~was~~, that I could not tell him everything, *was that* those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I had found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Roland H. But what I really thought about, was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.
His craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in mediaeval language: the union with God.¹⁾

How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?

The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is, that it happens to you in reality and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path, which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends, ~~or~~ through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Roland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best one.

I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world, leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition, if it is not counteracted either by a real religious insight or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words arouse so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.

These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Roland H. but I am risking it with you, because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter, that you have acquired a point of view above the misleading platitudes, one usually hears about alcoholism.

You see, Alcohol in Latin is "spiritus" and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.

Thanking you again for your kind letter

I remain

yours sincerely

C.G. Jung.

¹⁾ "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (Psalm 42,1)