

STEP FOUR

Made a Searching and Fearless Inventory of Ourselves.

Step 4 gives us a chance to step back and take stock of ourselves. The principle of Step 4 is courage. We search out the flaws which caused our failures in life. We pray that with God's guidance, we are able to look at our defects of character and try to get rid of them. One of the biggest flaws is resentment – it is the number one offender. In dealing with resentments, we write them down on paper and list what it affected (self-esteem, security, personal relationships).

We list people, institutions and principles with whom we are angry. Then we get to examine our resentments to see where they stem from. For example, I was angry at my husband because he constantly made remarks about how much I drank (self esteem, personal relationship). I was angry with my work because I felt they were picking on me (pride, security). I was angry at the bank because they repossessed our car and they kept charging me overdraft fees (security, self- esteem). The truth is, almost all resentments are based on fear. I needed to rely on my sponsor and to pray for guidance in dealing with these resentments because it was not something I could not do by myself.

My first resentment was my husband. His remarks were hurtful and affected my self- esteem and security. Now that I am sober, I am honestly able to examine this resentment. I am able to finally see that he had every right to be angry with me. I neglected him, my children and my house. If he had been the one drinking and neglecting me, I would be furious with him.

Today, I am thankful and grateful that he did not walk out on me. As for work, the reason I was being “picked” on is that I was going to work high and I wasn't doing my work. When they tried to talk to me about it, I was furious – how dare they single me out and criticize me. When I reflect on it now, I am lucky they didn't fire me. As for the bank, if I would have paid the car payment, like normal people do, the car would not have repossessed (not once, but twice), and if I didn't bounce checks, I wouldn't have been charged overdraft fees. Today, I am able to look at the whole picture and recognize that it was my actions, or inactions, that created the resentments I had in the first place.

Sometimes when we write out our lists, there may be someone or something on it that we may feel justified in resenting. Someone may have done something that we feel is truly unforgivable. Holding onto resentment causes, hurt, pain, anger, darkness, and it steals our peace of mind. We cannot control how anyone acts or what they do or don't do. What we can control is how we react to

it. We need to learn to forgive and move on. When we forgive someone or something for a wrong that was done to us, we are not giving them a free pass or saying what they did is okay, what we are doing is freeing ourselves from the hurt and anger that we have been holding onto because of the resentment. We have to learn how to pray for that person and then hand it over to God. It may take a while and some practice to do that, but the serenity we feel when we let go of it is beyond blissful.

The beauty of Step 4 is the freedom we get from it. We get to clear our conscious. We learn how to do the right thing. We are able to recognize when something is our fault and be able to fix it. We start to feel joyous, happy and free. And we get to live the life that God intended for us to live.

Debbie F.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

Over my years in the program I have been in many different homegroups. Each one of the groups had a lot to teach me and each was unique. In our program, we do have certain expectations of our groups-- that they abide by our twelve traditions, that they are safe and welcoming, that they have volunteers who serve the group various committees and leadership roles. And yet, if each were exactly the same, monotony would set in and we would slowly find ourselves disengaging from the program.

Ever visit a city and you walk a few blocks into a new neighborhood and the houses look different, the shops are different, the people look different-- each area has its own flavor and its own appeal. Each meeting is the same way-- as unique as the members who make it up and our group dynamic as members is what can make a meeting appealing to some alcoholics and maybe less-than-appealing for others. There is nothing wrong with that-- different strokes for different folks.

As long as a meeting welcomes the newcomer and puts their wellbeing first and seeks to support AA as a whole, following our wise traditions, they can do lots of stuff that makes them different. For a long time, South Jersey even had a famous “hotdog meeting” at a local clubhouse! We have women's meetings and men's meetings, gay meetings, beginners meetings, etc. It's important to know that any member is welcome at any meeting, however.

In early sobriety, I accidentally showed up to a men's meeting in New York while I was travelling and I guess from the look on my face they could tell I really needed a meeting that night. The fact that I was not turned away or told I didn't belong was a testament to our program-- while they were autonomous and had an area of focus of supporting our male members, they knew that what really ties us all together is our common disease and that any alcoholic is welcome. I don't remember running into any of those members again, but that moment truly stuck with me and I am still grateful for the grace they showed in accepting me into their group that night.

I have found my current home in a group that focuses on the traditions every other week and I have had many years to discuss the traditions and see how they can work in our groups and in my own life. One of the most useful pieces of advice I have ever learned in this program is straight out of the 12 and 12: It has to do with my group's and my own "right to be wrong"-- to learn lessons from it and grow from it! Command it to memory, put it on your wall, tattoo it to your arm: "Rule #62: Don't take yourself too damn seriously!"

Skye S.

On Finding Homegroups

For those who have never seen that cheesy 1997 movie of the same name, nor spent time watching the History Channel, the Titanic was an ocean liner that hit an iceberg and sank off Newfoundland on April 15th, 1912 (about 109 years to the day before this newsletter comes out). Only 705 of the roughly 2200 passengers made it into lifeboats. Those who did not either drowned or froze to death in the icy sea. After the Titanic sank, the survivors huddled in their lifeboats in the middle of the North Atlantic for almost 2 hours before being rescued by the Carpathia.

I bring this up because the Big Book compares AA to "the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to the captain's table". I don't know whether Bill W was thinking of the Titanic when he wrote this, but I always picture the Titanic survivors in their lifeboats, alone in the freezing darkness, when we read this part of 'There is a Solution' at a meeting.

If AA is comparable to the survivors of the shipwreck, then I would submit that the lifeboats are sort of like groups. Some have just a few people in them, others are packed. Some are inflatable rafts, while others may be those orange motorized fully enclosed modern lifeboats. What do they all have in common?

- The occupants of the "lifeboat" get to know each other quite well.
- The occupants of the lifeboat have the greatest chance at survival if they work together.
- Those who choose to jump back into the water stand a good chance of dying.

This analogy does have its flaws. In case you haven't figured this out yet, I have a morbid fascination with shipwrecks and have read many accounts of people's time in lifeboats. Not once have I ever heard of a survivor saying "you know, these people in lifeboat #14 are #\$.@%&s. I'm going to swim over to lifeboat #7" or "let's start our own lifeboat by lashing all those wooden deckchairs together".

How did I select my first homegroup? Much the same way that the unfortunate passenger who finds themselves tossed into the North Atlantic selects a lifeboat - the closest one they see. In my case this was the 4021 Club in west Philadelphia. Technically this is more than one group, but all these groups met in the same place and, to a large extent, the same people attended the meetings held by the various groups. It is where I first bonded with the people in the rooms.

When I had been sober about a year, I lived for several months in a leafy suburb on the west side of Philadelphia and attended meetings that tended to be in Anglican churches. Many attendees drove late model German or Swedish cars. Men's fashion trended towards yellow shorts and pink golf shirts. Women had names like "Bunny". Most of these meetings met once a week and there was a lot less overlap between the people at different meetings than at 4021. I can't say any one of these meetings was my home group, but I generally went to meetings with the same few, mostly newly sober, people.

We got to know each other quite well. I went to the meetings that the people with cars selected. Again, this was a case of "get to the closest lifeboat". A few years after I got sober we bought a rowhouse in Northeast Philadelphia. I looked in the directory and started attending meetings at a nearby clubhouse. There were several well-known clubhouses in this area, one of which was located over an indoor pistol range so that meetings were regularly punctuated by the sound of gunshots. All of them had a clientele that ran towards bikers, roofers, and biker-roofers. Men did not wear pink golf shirts at these meetings.

The club I attended did not have a shooting range downstairs, but it did have a basement room that was sometimes used for a second meeting and which, as it turned out, was a shooting range of sorts. It was like the main meeting room except that the folding metal chairs were even more bent up than the ones in the first-floor room. One

evening I was at a meeting in the basement room sitting behind a 350-pound steam fitter who was sharing about his struggles with the obsession. As he got done sharing, he suddenly shouted “I’m sick of this”, turned and threw a folding metal chair at the wall behind me. Folding metal chairs are surprising aerodynamic in the hands of newly sober steam fitters. I didn’t see it go by, but its slipstream ruffled my hair and I heard it slam into the wall. The thrower then sat down without another word. The chairman thanked him for sharing, called on someone else, and the meeting went on. After about 5 minutes the steam fitter turned to me and in a tone of voice normally associated with “so - any good plans for the weekend?” said, “I didn’t hit you, did I?” For about two years, most of my meetings were at this clubhouse. I don’t remember a lot of emphasis there on working the Steps. I did not take commitments there but did make some friends and helped some newcomers.

One night, one of these friends introduced me to a meeting about a block away that was held in the living room of a halfway house. It was small, typically about 10 people counting the residents. There were no metal folding chairs. There was, however, a bit more discussion of the Steps and of practicing the principles of the program in our day to day lives. Technically it was not really an AA group because it was run by the halfway house and there were no business meetings that I can recall. On the other hand, it was attended by multiple recovering alcoholics who were not residents of the halfway house and who had long term sobriety. One of these was “Bob”, who lived in my neighborhood and who also happened to be a parishioner at my church. This was my de facto homegroup for a time.

One evening I received a call from Bob, who said he, and another neighbor, were thinking about approaching the pastor of our church to see if he would rent us space in the church hall for a meeting once a week. The pastor was agreeable and the three of us started a meeting.

“Church hall” (aka “Marian Hall”) was a generous term for the space we rented. It was the rear half of the original 1870’s church built when it was way out in the country and the entire parish consisted of about 20 people. There was a tiny choir loft above where we held the meetings used to store extra coffee supplies and old broken furniture. The meeting area had room for four tables and - you guessed it - about 30 folding metal chairs. Sometime around 1900 Philadelphia caught up with Marian Hall, surrounding it with row homes. Cars hadn’t been invented in 1870, so there was no church parking lot.

Local residents would scowl at us when we parked in “their” spaces. Air conditioning was also not “a thing” in 1870’s rural Pennsylvania churches, hence no air conditioning in Marian Hall. The meeting we started had a speaker-discussion format. In the beginning there was no question of ducking out of taking commitments; we had to take turns making coffee, setting/cleaning up, and chairing the meeting. It

is said that you should attend business meetings if you want to get involved in a group meeting. If you REALLY want to be involved in a group, help start one.

Over the next few years this group grew from three people at one meeting a week to about 30 people at each of three meetings (we later added a Step and Big Book meeting). To this day I really don’t know how that happened. I am still working on the character defect of pride and would like to take credit for some of this as one of the “founders” of the group. Since this group no longer exists, however, I guess I’d then also have to take the blame for its demise. More to the point, I believe meetings grow when there is a need for them and shrink, or die, when they have served their purpose. We just happened to be the ones to come along at the right time with a grungy old coffee pot. What “need” was this group fulfilling? Some of the other people involved in starting it had a good grasp of the Steps. Even when this was just a speaker-discussion meeting there was a lot of talk about the program of AA, rather than just staying away from the first drink. Without really realizing it, my program at that point had become limited to regular attendance at meetings and staying away from “people, places and things”. Those are fine things, but I was still a walking self-centered mass of untreated fear and resentment. I liked what the other “co-founders” had and wanted the same. Apparently so did a lot of other recovering alcoholics in Northeast Philadelphia.

As happens when you get a lot of (i.e., two or more) alcoholics together, there were controversies. These included the usual things like allocating commitments and anniversary speaking slots, staying in the good graces of our landlord, - and smoking. It was the early 90’s and we smoked in Marian Hall. On some winter evenings, when the windows were all closed, the cloud ceiling was about 5 feet and we navigated the room by looking down for nearby feet and furniture. We eventually “compromised” with the nonsmokers by designating one of the four tables in the 20 x 30 ft room as the “non-smoking table”.

Then there were the relative newcomers who insisted the group needed a window air conditioner. They were reminded that if they were still drinking, and un-airconditioned Marian Hall was the only bar around, they’d spend hours there. I think that this group may have been the first true “homegroup” I had in sobriety. After the meeting was over, we would often find ourselves still talking outside the hall an hour after locking the door. We would visit each other’s houses and got to know each other’s families. We gave each other nicknames. These included “John the Legend” (a legend in his own mind), “Phone Bill” (a guy named Bill who worked for a phone company), and “Punctuality Paul” (known for habitually being 10 minutes late to meetings, and who might or might not be related).

About 10 years after this group was started, I moved to New Jersey and had to find another “lifeboat”. I have had three home groups

since I have lived here, and all have shared that feeling of “belonging” I got from the group that met in Marian Hall. At the same time, for whatever reason, none has been quite the same. Maybe this is just nostalgia. Maybe I need to work harder at being “a part of” my current homegroup. I do know this: I will not survive for long in the water and had therefore better stay in this lifeboat, or another floating nearby. Finally, if I do decide to start another “lifeboat”, I will lash wooden deckchairs together – the folding metal chairs don’t float.

PAUL S.

Practicing the Principles

When I first came in to the fellowship of AA, I wasn't sure it was going to be for me. I was at the end of my rope, I couldn't stop drinking on my own, and I desperately wanted a change in my life. I didn't know what else to do, so I decided to give it a chance, despite certain preconceived notions. I wasn't turned off by all the God stuff, but I wasn't quite ready to dive headfirst into a spiritual way of life. What really attracted to me the program was how people talked about action. I followed a few simple suggestions and was quickly relieved of my obsession to drink. That made me believe that something here was working, so I took more suggestions, gave up my old ideas, and dug in a bit deeper. I found that many of the principles I was learning would help me in many aspects of my life.

When people talk about "practicing these principles in all our affairs" I often think of them as outward actions. How am I treating other people? Am I acting in a loving way? Am I practicing patience? Am I being honest with others? When I leave my house this morning how am I going to go about practicing these principles? I had an interesting thought recently though. Yes, I should be less of a jerk to others now that I am sober, but what about myself? I should really take a look at how I implement these principles when dealing with myself. Am I honest to myself? What are my motivations? I needed to start a little closer to home.

Having had this thought, I looked up the 12 principles of AA, and as it turns out, at least to me, they seem to be principles that are more geared towards oneself, not outward actions to others. Things like integrity, humility, and discipline. I can act with integrity, humility, and discipline no matter what is going on in the world around me. Willingness and open mindedness was the key to me accepting this program. Surrender and courage, the combination of these two principles is what led me to AA in the first place, I need to keep those in mind as I navigate my new life.

I haven't been doing this all that long and I am continually blown away at my sobriety. Just the fact that I'm here, living and breathing and not obsessed with alcohol, and enjoying a life I couldn't imagine just a few years ago, is more than I ever expected. I came to AA because I was running out of options and I didn't know how to stop drinking. I've stayed in AA because I want to learn how to live a spiritual life in

sobriety. I am far from perfect, but I am committed to practicing these principles in all my affairs, outwards to others and inwards to myself.

Damon M.

BIARRITZ (France)

INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL A.A. CONVENTION (in ENGLISH)

25 to 27 June 2021

Friday 25 (14h30) – Sunday 27 January (12h00) 2021

LOVE and SERVICE

Click here: to register for the Zoom login URLs and passwords and to receive your ‘registration access’ ALL speakers experienced long–time members

Iilir T. (USA), John F. (USA), Joe K. (USA), Jay C. (USA), Joe C. (USA), Kiki R (USA), Karen C, (USA), America K. (USA), Paul McC. (IRL), Colin F (UAE), Sean N. (IRL), Clive B. (UK) & others. Speakers include Bob Darrell Las Vegas (NV/USA) and Karen Casey (author Each Day a New Beginning)

AN AA FELLOWSHIP EVENT

AL-Anon & YPAA, Participation

RECOVERY and ECONOMY

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

OPENING CEREMONY

Welcoming Panel (more than 300 years recovery)

Website: <https://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 registration access. (received from us when you register and instantly from PayPal) 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 registration fees for which we thank you. Donations exceeding the event’s needs will be donated to Intergroup and/or GSO.

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 sometimes edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Use your imagination or use one of the following topics: Beginners, Young People, My Best Advice in AA, Recovery in the Time of Coronavirus. You can also send us information on your group's anniversary or other event.

Write one yourself or ask a sponsee or friend to write, as well.

No time to proofread, no worries. Our editing team will fix it up in a jiffy!

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLE IN WORD, PUBLISHER OR A GOOGLE DOC.

Artists: Send some original paintings, drawings or photography (no photos of faces please in keeping with tradition.)

Due to space limitations, we are sometimes 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.

We need you!

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



Upcoming Events

Early Risers Men's Meeting will be celebrating their 14th Anniversary on Saturday April 17th at 7:00am. They will be meeting in person and on-line. The Zoom meeting ID 834 0285 2952 Password 537258

April Intergroup Meeting (Virtual) on 04/21/2021 from 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Tuesday Serenity @ Noon's 20th Anniversary on 04/27/2021 from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

May Intergroup Meeting (Virtual) on 05/19/2021 from 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

CAYPAA & NJYPAA present Field dA.A.y on 05/22/2021 from 12:00 pm

June Intergroup Meeting (Virtual) on 06/16/2021 from 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm



APRIL HISTORY

IN ALCHOLICS ANONYMOUS

April 1935: Dr. Silkworth told Bill to quit preaching at drunks & tell them of obsession & allergy.

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

April 11, 1938: The Alcoholic Foundation formed as a trusteeship for A.A. (sometimes reported as May 1938

April 10, 1939: The first ten copies of the Big Book arrived at the office Bill and Hank P shared.

April 26 or May 1, 1939: Bank forecloses on 182 Clinton Street.

April 22, 1940: Bill and Hank transfer their Works Publishing stock to the Alcoholic Foundation.

April 23, 1940: Dr. Bob wrote the Trustees to refuse Big Book royalties, but Bill W. insisted that Dr. Bob and Anne receive them.

April 24, 1940: The first AA pamphlet, "AA", was published.

April 7, 1941: Ruth Hock reported there were 1,500 letters asking for help as a result of the Saturday Evening Post Article by Jack Alexander.

April 11, 1941: Bill and Lois finally found a home, Stepping Stones in New Bedford.

April 1950: Saturday Evening Post article "The Drunkard's Best Friend" by Jack Alexander.

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

April 1958: The word "honest" dropped from AA Preamble, "an honest desire to stop drinking".

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

April 1966: Change in ratio of trustees of the General Service Board; now two thirds (majority) are alcoholic.

April 1, 1966: Sister Ignatia died.

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

April 1970: GSO moved to 468 Park Ave. South, NYC.

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

April 30, 1989: Film "My Name is Bill W." a Hallmark presentation was broadcast on ABC TV.

Group Histories

Do you know your group's history? Your group's history is an important part of the growth of AA in southern New Jersey. The Archive Committee of South Jersey Intergroup is collecting the histories of the groups in our area. Why not download our group history questionnaire located at <https://aasj.org/resources-page/archives/> and submit it to Archive@aasj.org.

The Archive Committee organizes and stores historic materials regarding the South Jersey Intergroup. We gather histories of the groups and Old-timers for our area. If you have historic documents/literature to donate or would like to be interviewed about your group's story or your own personal story, please email us at archives@aasj.org

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.

Responsibility. Statement. I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,. I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that, I am responsible.