

STEP FIVE

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

When thinking back to when I did my very first 5th step with my sponsor, I remember how closely I worked with her on this step. My thinking was so warped and delusional, that I had no choice. So much so, that I had to re-write my 4th step because all I did was blame others.

Before we began, we would say a prayer. I like the Set Aside Prayer when I work with others today. We always should include a prayer nonetheless to invite God in to witness.

This step is really all about deflating our ego. Getting to where we are one with others. Not better, not worse, but right along with another. This connection is so important, and it may take a while for some folks, but it will come.

This is also considered a vital step because if not done completely, can lead us back to drink. I was not going back there, so I was as thorough and complete as I could be at that time. And with my sponsors help, I left nothing out, no matter how shameful or embarrassed I was.

One of the biggest promises, in my opinion, you get from this step is the end of isolation – as it says in the 12&12 How true that was for me, I was able to open up to other women and become a true friend. Something I had never really been able to do before. Another promise this step offers is we often gain humility- mostly because we see we are the same as the other alcoholics, not different.

It says in the 12&12 that in doing this step we will be brought to a place where we can rest our heads, and we begin to prepare ourselves for the remaining steps... which in turn will lead us to a full and meaningful sobriety. I like that promise. It feels like hope.

Most of us are afraid of this step, and when we all complete this step, see it wasn't as bad as we thought. There is usually some relief and a much better connection to God. That's the beauty of this step.

Patti

TRADITION FIVE

EACH GROUP HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE – TO CARRY ITS MESSAGE TO THE ALCOHOLIC WHO STILL SUFFERS

Tradition 5 is perhaps the most single important tradition for any group to follow. It's a reminder that "faith without works is dead", that we as group members must ensure that we are actively reaching out to the alcoholic who is still suffering with untreated alcoholic. What this looks like for each group might be different, but it should serve as the focus of that group's conscience. Some groups actively seek out the still suffering alcoholic by taking and attending commitments for Hospitals and Institutions so that they are the first AA faces to talk alcoholics in treatment. Other groups take speaking commitments at schools or other meetings so that they can spread their message of recovery and hope.

This tradition can be honored in simpler ways too. Groups can assign greeters to welcome newcomers who arrive at the meeting, so that they know they're welcome and among friends. "Open" groups provide an opportunity for the alcoholic who might still be questioning to come and find out what AA is all about. And in other cases groups may make themselves open to visitors from rehabs or sober houses. How an AA group decides to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers isn't important, it's the willingness and decision to do so that matters. Whenever discussions at my home group meeting get heated, we try to ask ourselves, how does this issue help us reach the still suffering alcoholic? Looking to this principle for guidance, no group can go wrong. Frank C.

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NEEDING AND WANTING

"My name is Chrissy & I'm an alcoholic." Lately, I've wanted to add "and a first time mom...during a pandemic...while getting through year 2 in my recovery." Yes, this year has been tough for everyone, some much worse than others. But as we're taught in AA, never downplay your feelings. Just because your year may not have been as rough as others. doesn't mean it wasn't still hard. Becoming a mom when the influx of family and friends can't come around to say hi and help is extremely hard to say the least. So many times, I wanted to reach for the bottle. I wanted to escape reality for just a few hours. I wanted to be "normal" and have a couple glasses of wine and relax. We were first time parents, stuck inside together without much of a break. So as much joy as our little boy brought us, it broke us to pieces, at times. Postpartum depression was hitting me hard, as well.

A couple weeks later, the husband is back to work. This pandemic was not going to hold me back from finally making sure I got some help. I was beyond exhausted and my body just wanted to give out on me some days. Oh how easy it would have been to have a couple airplane bottles in the bedroom, knock a few back and take a two-hour nap while one of our moms were in the living room taking full care of the baby. And I thought about it...wanting it, craving it. But then I realized what I needed...sleep and my program! I was stubborn about it though. I didn't want to sleep. I wanted to get it all done. And if I did start to do what was needed, I wouldn't stick with it. Two years into my recovery and a year in to being a new mom, I've come to realize that wanting and needing are two essential words to define in my vocabulary each and every day. Sounds so simple and what people tell you all your life, right?? Well, for me it wasn't until I reflected back on this year and wrote it out. I realized I wanted to do so much, but what was needed was totally different. Because all of what I wanted led me to my dirty drinking thoughts. What I needed was to accept help in any small area I could. What I needed was to not be hungry, angry, lonely & tired. What I needed was to take care of myself so I wasn't useless for my son (huh...keeping my own self in order to be of use to others...sound big book familiar?). I need to remember I'm not normal...I can't have just a few. I need to be there for my son. I need to do what's right & be clear in my

head. I need to wake up for him when he cries at night. I need to work a program or I become who I do not want to be.

Before I started this journey, I only wanted & needed one thing...alcohol. All day I thought about wanting it & I reached a point to where I needed it. Today I have many wants & needs. It's a matter of prioritizing what I need to do & being patient to those things I want. When I do this, the wants become completely secondary & sometimes even just fall in to my lap if I'm patient enough. I'm not bogged down with the focus of one want & need. Well, I will admit...most days I do only have one want & need. And that is to just play with my son or take him to the swing, without a care in the world about any chores that need to be done! What a wonderful feeling that is!

Chrissy S , Tuesday Night Women's Living Room Meeting

PRACTICING THESE PRINCIPLES

Sometimes I find myself thinking, "We don't have to practice these principles in ALL our affairs, do we?" After all, there are some facets of life where honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness seem like liabilities. In a world of limited resources and opportunities, aren't I at a disadvantage if I put the needs of others first?

But then I am reminded by other AAs about why I practice the steps of this program: practicing these principles opens the channel between me and my Higher Power. Plugged into that Higher Power, like a computer plugged into a wall socket, all sorts of things happen that were difficult for me or impossible without that power: the obsession with drink is removed, intuitive thought comes more readily, my connections to my brothers and sisters are repaired and grow stronger. When I think about it this way, I think, "Why wouldn't I practice these principles in all my affairs?"

But what about those pesky facets of life where spiritual principles seem like a liability? My intuition is that even there, the issue might be that I need to lean into spiritual principles even more. Should I volunteer the information at my work, for instance, that I'm a recovered alcoholic? Honesty seems to suggest I should. Willingness seems to suggest so, too. But open-mindedness suggests that I

consider all the possible ramifications of that action, both for myself and my fellows. And don't honesty and willingness also entail sharing my potential decision with another AA and being open to their suggestions? All of which is to say that often, when I see spiritual principles as a liability in my life, it's because I'm not really considering those principles closely enough.

The principles of this program, principles you can find throughout history in cultures far and wide, have proven for me to be the best way to connect with my Higher Power, a source of serenity and joy and connectedness. Thankfully, I have a fellowship of like-minded people around me who are willing to remind me of how great that relationship with my Higher Power can be. So I guess I'll try practicing these principles--in the rooms, or on the highway, at my job, or with my family.

Andy P., Collingswood Monday Night

UPCOMING EVENTS

Springtime Serenity Bonfire - When: Saturday May 22, 2021 - Where: 620 Chatsworth Rd., Tabernacle, NJ - Time: 6:30pm - 10:00pm meeting will begin at 7:00pm - (adults only please) - feel free to bring your favorite snack or dessert & chair. - rain date June 5. - sponsored by District 27.

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

Social Committee is currently planning a Golf Outing on Thursday, August 12th at Renault National Golf Course. Cost is \$65/per player, which covers cart and greens fees.

Social Committee is also planning a kayak trip towards the end of June. Stay tuned for more information...

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.



SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

So, this is how I remember it.

On a nice fall day in 1990, when sitting on a bench in Rittenhouse Park, downtown Philly, roughly between 2.30 and 4pm, while savoring downtime between my two food service jobs, enjoying the newfound awareness and appreciation of “sober living”, the early afternoon hustle and bustle the park and a conversation still fresh in my brain since earlier that morning, when I spoke with Ms. Rachel.

She is a wonderful, kind, spiritual, Alcoholics Anonymous, elder stateswoman at our early morning home group; The Friends of Bill W and Doctor Bob meeting @ 4th & Race. She talked to me that day after the meeting about meditation, which she is a big fan of, telling me that it was incredible and practically effortless. She spoke so passionately about a deeply personal relationship she has developed with God, largely due to meditation that it was infectious.

At some level I yearned for that type of intimate contact with the source of all creation, this creative energy responsible for life, healing, balance and order in the universe, but alas, it was sadly lacking for me and had been for a long time. Even with significant first hand experience of organized religion, specifically Catholicism, I felt totally separate and removed from any kind of God and knew nothing really of meditation.

Carrying a couple of decades of mixed messages about God, along with some guilt, shame and remorse, while I listened to Ms Rachel talk about The God of her own understanding, or her “Higher Power” as she called it, peaked my curiosity, especially when she said that it was easily accessible to anyone and everyone, at any time. What this sweet, kind and lovely lady said was that if I was earnest in my desire to know God and I was willing to set some time aside to explore or honor that, then I absolutely would not be disappointed!! She said that there is not a spot where God is not, that it’s in every single one of us and in every atom and particle of the air that we breathe.

Focus on your breathing, she told me, turn your attention inward, be aware of this loving, healing energy that bind us all together, as part of it. Try not to be distracted by your mind but let your breath be your guiding focus in this experience. When your mind wanders, as it often does for me and probably everybody, just bring your conscious awareness back to the involuntary action of your lungs filling with air. Breath, just breathe in the life force, that’s always with us, breathing in peace, love, healing, compassion and understanding and then as you breathe out, let go of all fear, insecurity or concerns.

Focusing my attention on my connection and relationship with God as I consciously and mindfully breathe in through my nose, as directed by Rachel, and slowly out through my mouth. I took several nice long slow healing breaths. Just being aware and in the moment, as she said, and I was tingling with an intense joy. Here it was, right here, right now, I feel different, like the cells in my body are tingling with delight, love and gratitude. God and I are one. A whole new experiential relationship and understanding for me. It’s intense and as I breathe in I’m aware that I’m breathing in the essence of this indescribable life force, commonly known as God. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it! Thank You God.

As I was in this zone I felt so in tune with this precious life-transforming experience, that the breath of God was using me to express it, that I could hardly contain myself. Blew my mind. Holding this precious, life force energy for a moment or two in my chest before slowly exhaling through my mouth. All the time being mindful of the effortless action of my lungs filling with air, feeding every atom and cell in my body. This, oh so precious process, was abundantly supplying me with all that I need, in the moment. I felt safe, loved and absolutely connected, blissfully at one with everything. And so it was and can still be art any given time, that I had a heightened sense that I was breathing in Gods air, that God and I are one. Rachel reminded me to be aware of and consciously breathe in this awesome energy of unconditional love, life, healing, balance, order, grace, mercy, abundance and joy and as I breathe out to release any kind of negativity that may be an obstacle to this ever unfolding spiritual adventure that is life. Focusing on long, deep, rejuvenating breaths, mindfulness breathing in that zone for about 10 or 15 minutes, I had this unbelievable, undeniable experience which felt so precious and intimate, made possible, in part, I believe, by my sincere desire to seek and a willingness to be open.

Thank You Father/ Mother God. I’m blessed and I’m so grateful for this experience that absolutely satisfied my desire then to be close to God and can do so at any given time. So intense was it, that I thing that it would be impossible to hold on to, maintain or manage. I tried. I think I was graced, as indeed any of us can be, as we are open and relate ourselves to it.

Micael O.





We recently lost John K., who died three days before he would have celebrated 36 years of sobriety. His death hit us all hard, including me—because I was privileged to be his friend as well as a fellow alcoholic.

John was a member of my home group and after I chaired one night, he told me that I “run a good meeting”. Oh my gosh, it was like Bill W. himself had said it—it was the best compliment I think I’ve ever received!

Our group will miss John’s trips to the back of the room for cookies—he had a notorious sweet tooth— and whenever I baked them at home, I sent some over to John and his wife. Their good reviews of my treats always made my day.

One of my fondest memories of John is about the man, not the recovering alcoholic. My husband and I were having dinner with John and his wife and they told the story of their courtship—how they met on a blind date and how it all progressed. It was very romantic, with overseas locations and beautiful love letters. They took turns telling the story and I felt the love they had for each other fill the room. I will never forget it.

When I was Chair of the Newsletter Committee for South Jersey Intergroup, I interviewed John K. for the newsletter. I think I spent two hours with him and learned for the first time just how much service he had done over the years. Here is that original interview, reprinted in tribute to a man we will all miss but who will continue to inspire us for all time. Rest in Peace, John.

Patty H., Audubon Last Mile Step and Tradition Group

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

Events In AA History in May

May 11, 1935 – Bill W. called Walter Tunks from the Mayflower Hotel, and was referred to Henrietta Seiberling who set up a meeting with Dr. Bob.

May 12, 1935 – Mother's Day, Bill and Dr. Bob met for the first time, at the home of Henrietta Seiberling.

May 31, 1938 – Bill W. and other A.A.s began writing the Big Book.

May 1, 1939 – Lois and Bill W. left their home at 182 Clinton St., Brooklyn.

May 6, 1939 – Clarence S. of Cleveland told Dr. Bob, his sponsor, he would not be back to Oxford Group meetings in Akron and would start an "AA" meeting in Cleveland.

May, 1940 – Rollie H., Cleveland Indians, anonymity break occurred.

May 8, 1943 – Akron AA Group celebrates 8th anniversary with 500 present and sober.

May 7, 1956 – The first English AA Convention was held in Cheltenham, England.

May, 1971 – Bill W. was buried in private ceremony, in East Dorset, Vermont. Dr. Jack Norris gave the eulogy.

May 2, 1980 – "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers" was published.

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

Iir 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

"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."

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.