

# ANONYMOUS

## Fellowship- Things to Do on Back

Let's put politics aside for a moment and talk about what really matters. A couple of well-wrought sentences, or something that shines and opens the world for an instant. I believe in all that stuff the ancient Greeks said that poetry soothes the savage beast. Not necessarily a poem, but anything that stops time and really moves you, like a stoic Gary Cooper staring off into the distance in some nameless Western or Miles Davis's compassion on Blues for Pablo or Johnny Cash asking for water to clear his throat between songs at Folsom and, after his offhand request gets no response, there's a flash of anger ('Can I get some water? The last time I was here I got some water') and he's in the prisoners' shoes and they feel it, too. Then he takes a swig and mutters, 'They must have run this off Luther's boots' (as in Luther Perkins, a member of his band). And the prisoners respond with wild applause and whoops and acknowledge the bond. Yeah, Johnny Cash understands. Empathy is everything.

### On Cultivating Tolerance

BY: DR. BOB | AKRON

*During nine years in AA I have observed that those who follow the AA program with the greatest earnestness and zeal not only maintain sobriety, but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in educational advantages; and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own. **I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes.** We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes. (See page 6)*

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If you wish to be  
gentle with others,  
first be gentle  
with yourself.

# Anger Management

## How the news is destroying us

I've been an avid news consumer for as long as I can remember. Yet I don't recall being this agitated all the time in years past. I watch the news or read the internet for a few hours, and my skin prickles, my blood boils, my spirit withers. But mostly, I'm just angry all the time. Is it me? Is it everyone? How do I make it stop? No, it's not just you. It's something like half the people I know anymore. And more like 90 percent of avid news consumers. I very much count myself among the unfortunates, and I find it cathartic to write. For me, it is better than my usual release valves, like punching the wall or kicking the dog. (JK, fellow dog lovers.)

In my defense, I am half-Sicilian. One of my great grandfathers hailed from Corleone - *Godfather* country. So by blood and temperament, grudge-holding and revenge culture come naturally to me. Therefore, I'm often halfway triggered before anyone pulls mine, willing to find offense, real or imagined, wherever it may lurk. In fact, I find people who are easily offended particularly offensive. So I have my internal work cut out for me these days, since just about everybody is.

But I have some bad news for you about all the bad news you watch that's making you angry: no matter how much of it you consume, they're going to keep making more of it. You'll never catch up. And so, if it's throwing your system off-kilter, you're faced with a dilemma: how many shots of poison can you drink in good health per day?

There's plenty of good news out there as well - acts of kindness and friendship, feats of generosity and sacrifice. But as my friends in the news racket like to say, "Good news is no

news." A hard reality of the news trade is that ratings and clicks don't get generated, for the most part, by telling an audience how you might've stopped on the side of a busy highway to help an old lady change her tire. Now if you hit the old lady with a tire iron, that's news they can use.

And therefore, bad news doesn't just exist, but it so often becomes amplified out of proportion to the frequency with which it actually occurs. Lately, of course, plenty of the bad news has not been fabricated or goosed. It's been real and pervasive. You're not imagining that baby formula has disappeared from supermarket shelves, that you're paying more for gas, that everything everywhere costs more than ever, that a worldwide pandemic completely altered the way we lived and interacted with each other, that a new World War could trip off at any time abroad, and that plenty of our politicians and the death cultists who revere them seem to be itching for civil war here at home.

Such is the rough-and-tumble of life in tumultuous times. (When, precisely, times weren't tumultuous, historians can't specify.) But it's not the whole story. We often come to believe that is the whole story, however, because those who are paid to bring us the stories are also paid, in part, to provoke, to inflame, and to punch our emotional buttons, as all good dramatists do. It's not necessarily their fault or an act of bad faith, so much as it is the law of good storytelling: a story with no tension tends not to be much of one. As George Abbott, the longtime theater producer-director-playwright framed it: "In the first act, you get your hero up a tree. The second act, you throw rocks at him. For the third act you let him down."

Plenty of storytellers, these days, just stop at the second act: let's throw rocks! And such

overstimulation of our aggressive impulses tends to warp our perceptions, the same way Twitter addicts tend to think Twitter is all that matters, because everybody they know uses Twitter. (When in reality, only about 1 out of 5 American adults do.)

This warping was driven home to me several years ago when I was reporting a story on Americans fleeing to Canada after George W. Bush's second electoral win. After hanging out with several American expats in the land that Fleet Streeters used to call "the great white waste of time" (sorry Canada, but not my coinage), I hopped back over the border to Bellingham, Washington, about 90 minutes south of Vancouver, where I met up with Christopher Key, who was planning on cashing in his American chips, and fleeing north. If his name rings a bell, it's because he is a direct descendant of Francis Scott Key, writer of our national anthem. Which to me, seemed like an act of infidelity – kind of like Prince Harry quitting the Royals so he could become a podcaster/Oprah groupie.

Key had done more than his part as an American, mind you. He'd served in Vietnam, where he got stitched with shrapnel. And he spent many years kicking into our tax kitty as a dutiful capitalist. But now he seemed angry, thinking that our country had gone into an irreversible tailspin over George W. Bush (the kinder, gentler option many libs now practically pine for in the smashmouth MAGA era). It was Key's impression that we'd become less tolerant, more mean-spirited, and judgmental. He was somewhat sad to go, with all the good friends and neighbors he was leaving behind, but circumstance had taken things out of his hands. When I asked him about those good neighbors, however, he painted an entirely different picture of

the country that he lived in, as opposed to the version that existed in his TV funhouse mirror.

He lived in a mixed neighborhood of Republicans and Democrats. They got together for barbecues and turned out to watch him perform in community theater. Having procured his ordination certification for 25 bucks off the internet, Key had become a Universal Life Church minister on the side, and so had presided over several of their weddings and funerals. They were a tight squad of people who genuinely cared for each other. It sounded ideal. I asked him why on earth he didn't live peaceably in the country he actually inhabited, the one Uncle Francis wrote about, instead of boxing with Talking heads on TV, choosing only to see the polarized, bastardized version that was getting beamed to him from his cable box.

His answer: "I'm tired, and I don't need to rebuild this country. There's a perfectly good one 30 miles away."

It depressed me but didn't surprise me. Because so often, the "reality" we see through our screens feels more real than the reality we actually live. And our country has only grown angrier and more polarized in 2022 than it was in 2005. Plenty of us have had a part in that. And I can't say I know how to stop it, though I do know how, in my own world, I can at least put it to the side and tamp down my own worst instincts.

I go outside, as often as possible. Just as they make a lot of bad news, they make a lot of outdoors, too – conveniently located right outside your indoors. And I use that outdoors to get away to places where algorithms don't try to program me, to feed on my fear and paranoia and rage, so that they can serve me up more of it. Sometimes, to see humanity more charitably, you need to escape it. And for me, nature's

escape hatch puts the world right, because it reminds me of how beautiful the world actually is when vandals aren't defacing it. These are places where I can feel God's rhythms instead of man's, the latter of whom tend to clap on the one and the three<sup>1</sup>. I fish, I paddle, I walk my beloved dog, the purest soul I know, through the woods. I am never sorry when I do these things – even if the strippers want nothing to do with my fly, or an unexpected squall turns my kayak into a water trough, or the deer flies are biting through my shirt. It still beats subjecting myself to the anger-generating machines all the live long day. Because anger is a thief. It will steal everything if you let it: your perspective, your balance, your peace of mind. As the late, great outdoors writer, Nelson Bryant, put it in a letter to his daughters:

### **Anxiety/tension--all Bad?**

*An AA suggests that stress reminds us to plunge deeper into the program.*

SERENITY doesn't mean a lack of any stress or tension. It means, instead, the inner security that enables us to bear these stresses and to use them as occasions for growth. I need not fear or shun anxiety, because there is a certainty at the very core of my being, a certainty that remains unshaken by passing disturbances, If I genuinely turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand Him, I need have no fear of the tensions that are essential to my growth. I can meet anxiety with peace as long as there is a quiet place in my soul where I know that I am a child of God and a worthwhile human being.

When I first came into AA, I was thrilled by the concept of serenity. My

*The secret I would have you know.....is that even though the years will steal your fresh beauty, it need only be, in truth, a minor theft. What you must guard against is that jaded state wherein there is nothing new to see or learn. Marvel at the sun, rejoice in the rhythmic wheeling of the stars and learn their names, cry aloud at the swelling beauty of an orchid in the white oak woods, or December's first snow; slide down the wind with a hawk and cherish the smell of woodsmoke and mayflowers, or the caress of a warm wool blanket; tarry by a stream where willows bend and flee tedium's gray embrace. Cherish laughter and whimsy, but battle unrelentingly for what you know is right and be aware that the thieves of wonder can enter any heart.*

life had been so filled with anxiety, often bordering on sheer panic, that it was exciting just to know that things didn't have to be that way- that my life could be peaceful. And, for a while, I was amazed at how much serenity seemed to be coming my way.

A sober life had many fewer fear-provoking aspects than a drunk one! But as time went on, I began to wonder about my peace and serenity. Sometimes I reacted to things with anger, or occasions arose that caused me to experience a great deal of tension. At these times, I was distressed by a fear of losing my newfound serenity. I was constantly taking my emotional temperature, and when I found that I was tense or anxious, I became afraid that I was about to lose all the happiness I had found in AA.

The problem, I think, lay in my understanding of serenity. I thought of it as the condition of a cow, contentedly chewing her cud in a lush pasture; or I thought of it as a perfectly calm, unruffled pond. But I'm not a cow, and I'm not a pond. I am a human being, and difficult situations are a part of human life. A certain amount of tension and anxiety is part of the human condition; why should I have hoped to be exempt? And why should this universal human condition have worried me so much?

I was thinking in a dangerous circle: I was afraid of being afraid! I was creating anxiety by constantly checking my feelings to see whether I was feeling anxious. If I did feel anxious, I began trying to back out of a situation, or I worried that I had somehow missed something in the AA program. If you're really on the program, I thought, you shouldn't feel anxiety. But finally I realized that my fear of anxiety was a major part of the difficulty. It was like being unable to sleep because of fear of insomnia. I found that I was anxious about being anxious, tense about being tense, afraid of being afraid.

Alcoholics have good reason to fear excessive stress, especially in the early days of sobriety, because it has been widely observed that we have a low level of stress-tolerance. We have learned a method of escape: All too often, rather than endure anxiety, we avoid it by drinking. Because we are aware of this tendency in ourselves, we are likely to protect ourselves carefully in our early sobriety, and shun any situation that might lead to tension or uneasiness. As we grow up in our sobriety, however, we find it im-

possible to avoid all unpleasantness. The person who is always comfortable, who never bothered by anything, probably is not growing. Growth, involving change, is painful. Or, perhaps, the completely comfortable fellow is simply refusing to recognize his discomfort, and is pushing his feelings out of his awareness. But denying uneasiness or avoiding it by stagnation are both highly unsatisfactory answers. Basically, there are two ways of dealing with anxiety: We can avoid situations that cause us stress--or we can increase our tolerance, our ability to withstand stress. In our early days in AA, most of us find that we are avoiding much of the stress of our earlier lives. We find that a sober life simply brings fewer panic-producing situations. Our relief from the anxieties of our drinking days sometimes brings that glorious pink-cloud period. But the time arrives when we come down from the pink cloud and face the trials and cares of the world, and then we often feel anxious. When we get a little upset or nervous, sometimes we panic, wondering: Is this a return to the old vicious cycle? Are we about to get drunk again?

As our length of sobriety increases, so does our ability to endure stress. We find that we can live with anxiety, and can use it. Our tension and our discomfort can spur us on to building something better in our lives. Feeling a certain amount of uneasiness in one's situation is essential to improving that situation; after all, the contented cow has no incentive to change or improve! But human beings have a built-in dissatisfaction. We want to be more than we are.

If we fear or deny this dissatisfaction, rather than building on it, we are being less than a fully realized person. The real satisfactions in life come from overcoming obstacles, not avoiding them. Watch a child learning a new skill. As he tries something that is new to him, he will, at first, fail. You

## DR Bob (Continued from page 1)

To say that one **spoke** is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance we might tend to become a bit smug or superior--which of course is not helpful to the person we are trying to help, and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others.

## Need a new Commitment? The 12-Step List is looking for you!

What is the 12 STEP LIST? It's a list of Sober People willing to go a step further, when someone calls the AA Hot Line and needs help. Many times, the Answering Service Volunteers who are answering the "hotline" are receiving phone calls from individuals who may be returning home from a rehab facility and are trying to locate someone to connect with in their home community, or a caller just had a family intervention and is looking for help getting started with the program, often callers need rides to meetings. The Volunteer who is answering the Hotline will take the callers information, then look on the 12 Step List for someone near that caller's home (or at least in the caller's area). The Answering Service Volunteer will reach out to Volunteers on the 12-step list until they have contacted some-

will see him feeling frustrated and reacting with anger and anxiety--the same feelings alcoholics dread so! But watch the sheer delight that comes into the child's face as he masters the new skill. Isn't the joy of achievement worth the moments of frustration?

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered to opinions. In other words it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important--in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire tolerance should be made by each one of us.

one. The Answering Service Volunteer who answered the call will provide the 12-step Volunteer with the caller's information. It's **NEVER the other way around! CALLERS ARE NEVER PROVIDED WITH 12 STEP VOLUNTEERS CONTACT INFORMATION EVER!**

The 12-Step list is restricted to the Current Members of the Answering Service Committee. This list is NOT distributed!

If you are interested in Volunteering for the 12-Step list please send an email to [Answeringservice@asj.org](mailto:Answeringservice@asj.org) Or, if you wish, you can call the current Chairperson for the Answering Committee, Pete, at (609)332-8259. If Pete does not pick up, PLEASE leave your name and number in your message! Pete always calls back!

We need your town, first name, last initial, phone number, and your availability (can be as general as anytime, or as specific as you wish Sat & sun only 5pm-9pm only) Thank you for your service!

## TRADITIONS CHECKLIST from the A.A. Grapevine

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

### Tradition Five:

**Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.**

1. Do I ever cop out by saying, "I'm not a group, so this or that Tradition doesn't apply to me"?
2. Am I willing to explain firmly to a newcomer the *limitations* of AA help, even if he gets mad at me for not giving him a loan?
3. Have I today imposed on any AA member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
4. Am I willing to twelfth-step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
5. Do I help my group in every way I can to fulfill our primary purpose?
6. Do I remember that AA old-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?

## One Primary Purpose

I have been meaning to write to the Grapevine for a long time and I guess the article "Pass the Tissues, I've Got Issues" gave me the motivation to do it. As a recovering alcoholic, who happens to be a gay male, I can't stress enough the importance of gay special-interest meetings, in addition to non-special-interest meetings. This is partly due to some of the very issues brought up in the article. An important part of my recovery has been the ability to tell my story, unabridged. Due to my own character defects and my perception that there are prejudices in the world, I find this difficult to do at non-special-interest groups.

Tradition Five says, "Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." I would like to say that this is true at gay as well as non-special-interest meetings that I attend.

## The Big Hump

**BY: DR. CHARLIE SHEDD**

Editorial by Minister of the First Presbyterian Church, and a nonalcoholic with helpful experience in **Fifth Step work**.

THERE is a mountain in one of our Western states which is not often climbed. Any old veteran of parts thereabouts will give this reason: "The first part goes easy. But about one third of the way up most of 'em turn around and come back. There's sheer walls and jagged rocks, deep crevices and poor footing. Right there most folks quit. Odd thing, too. When you've passed that big hump you've got it made. The rest is a climb, but the worst is over."

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are like that mountain. There's a big hump on the way up--Step Five: "We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." Right here some folks give up.

I must have a 'Fifth-Step face.' As a counselor I have often been asked to be the other human being referred to in this Step. And my date book with its broken engagements is mute testimony that it is easy to approach this part of the mountain and then turn back.

In my work as a minister I have seen good Fifth Steps and bad ones; long Fifth Steps and short ones; Fifth Steps

scribbled on brown wrapping paper and those neatly typed with perfection. In listening to men and women, young and old, some long in AA and some who tackled this part of the mountain before they were ready, I have noticed there's always some things in common among those who were successful.

What are the secrets of a good Fifth Step? Let us take a look at the basic ingredients, then the mechanics, and finally the places where the going is roughest. The following is based entirely on my own experience and observations on the receiving end of the Fifth Step and is intended as a possible guide for those seeking suggestions as to how to go about taking the 5<sup>th</sup> Step.

Three Basic Ingredients;

1. Belief in a forgiving God. Read the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, Verses 11 to 24. Let it sink deep into your heart until you are convinced that God will forgive anything; that He is like a father who goes out each night to the end of the road looking for a boy to come home. When the boy comes there will be no "I told you so," or "It's about time." There will be only rejoicing because you have come. No matter where you have been or what you have done, from out of "riotous living" or from feeding with the swine, your Heavenly Father loves you and wants you home.

In my opinion, forgiving God is needed for a thorough 5<sup>th</sup> Step.

2. One must want to take it. Just as deciding one is powerless over alcohol is necessary in taking the First Step, one must be personally ready for Step Five. Do not take it because someone urges you. You must want it with a passion.

Desire is the only thing which will enable you to endure the anguish which goes with it. Only when you want it bad enough will you know the heaven which follows this particular hell.

Before going further, I want to explain that as a nonalcoholic I have taken this Step myself and I recommend it heartily for those who are not in AA. I have experienced the soul-struggle which it requires. I know the humiliation which accompanies it. I also know the deep peace which follows in its wake.

3. Take the Forth Step. "We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." This Step is a basic preliminary, and may be even rougher than Step Five.

Three Suggestions 1. Determine to make it thorough. We had two rooms in the old farmhouse which were never heated in winter. Most of us have a section like that. Maybe it's only a closet where we locked the door and threw the key away. But the monoxide fumes seep under the sill and poison our whole life. Until you want to find all the keys and open all the locked chambers, you're not ready. Decide that you will make it complete.

2. Take plenty of time. One day an enthusiastic new member of AA came rushing into my study and said, "I've just got twenty minutes before I'm due back at work. I'd like to take my Fifth Step." I did what you would have done. I explained that he had been twenty years getting into this and twenty minutes wasn't adequate. It may take six weeks, six months, or longer--take your time.

3. Write it out. Word for word, page for



page, sentence after horrible sentence, put it all down. Experience has taught me that the best Fifth Steps are written down and many of us who are sought out by AAs as counselors make it a rule to wait until the member has done this. I once participated in this Step with a woman who had forty-seven pages, single spaced, on both sides of the paper. It is no coincidence, it seems to me, that she is today one of the most radiant women in AA. She got rid of all the blockages between herself and God.

Here are some reasons why the best results are obtained when it is written down: (a) More permanent effects. In my experience those who take the Fifth Step this way have not had a slip again. (b) It can be added to. Double or triple-space it. As you recall one old memory another will raise its head to shake its gory locks and say, "Boo! Remember me?" This can be written between the lines. (c) It can be read out loud with the person whom you have chosen. This saves time for both of you. More important, it makes your story orderly and not a hodge-podge. And most important, you actually feel that you are getting it out of your system. (d) It helps you to see in black and white what's troubling you. The voice cannot be seen but the written word can be clearly viewed. (e) It helps you to organize your problem and attach your troubles to particular incidents. Suppose, for instance, you worry a lot about money. Maybe just seeing in black and white the fact that you never had enough as a child will help you to realize that you're worrying about something in the past and not the present. (f) You can burn your paper or give it to your counselor for his disposal. Thus

you feel that you get rid of your past and all the things which have been disturbing you.

Many people suppose that only those things they ever did wrong should enter into Fourth and Fifth Steps. This is a mistake, it seems to me, since other factors go to make us what we are. Here are some areas where you might find your number-one inner enemy.

1. Your early home life. Did you love your parents and did they love you? (Is it only coincidence that a large percentage of the alcoholics I have known are crosswise with one or the other of their parents?) Were you rejected? Spoiled? Sheltered? Shoved out on your own too soon? Do you carry ill will toward a brother or sister? Were you laughed at? Unduly punished?

Put it all down in black and white. Your counselor will help you put it together.

2. Shock. Did you have a bad scare at a tender age? Do you recall vividly some incident where you were sure you would be killed? Your insecurity may date back to a distant day when you suddenly thought all your world was falling apart.

Write it out in great detail. The mere transfer from your harried soul to the paper will do you more good than you can imagine beforehand.

3. Disappointment. This is close kin to shock. Did you want something with all your heart, and then not get it? Was somebody else elected captain of the team or president of the class? Did somebody else get someone you longed to make your own?

Perhaps this is the place where you de-

cided the universe wasn't friendly and God loved somebody else more than you. Maybe those I-feel-sorry-for-me hours go back to this experience, or others like it.

4. Hatred, resentment, grudge. Make a list of those who have done you wrong and how you feel about them. Add to the list those whom you do not like, and why. Both religion and psychology stand by the view that you can't have the love of God flowing into your heart until the pipes from you to others have been cleared of rust and rubbish. No one has ever proved the opposite.

5. Guilt complex. Did you steal something back there in the long-gone years? Did you cheat in class? Did you hurt someone?

How about sex? Among non-alcoholics in my work as counselor I find that at least seventy-five per cent of those who suffer from guilt complex have either an imagined or real sex sin in their background. With alcoholics, in my experience, let me stress, it's 100%. I have never participated in the Fifth Step with anyone who didn't have some moral misdemeanors to relate.

You may attempt to laugh it off and treat it lightly. But we are all moral creatures, and there is something sacred in us which, when tampered with, comes back one day to beat a haunting tattoo on the deep drums of the soul.

This may be the hardest thing you ever did: write it down. Don't be afraid. God, having created us, knows our frailty. He gave us our instincts. It would be against His very nature to equip us with driving impulses and not forgive when we have used them wrongly.

Your counselor will help you here, and you will help yourself if you list them, one-two-three.

6. Selfishness. Are you number one on your agenda? Oddly enough, it may be two opposite ends of the same pole which made you that way. You may have had too much when you were little. Thus you naturally thought that life was designed to please you and when you fared forth on your own you discovered that you were somebody special at home but just another struggler to everyone else. This made you bitter. You set out to please you and that always leads to bitterness.

Or maybe you didn't have the things that all the other kids accepted as commonplace. Therefore you decided that one day you would put yourself in a spot where you could really be nice to you. Thus, without realizing it, you became selfish.

Life is for service, not self-service. When you see yourself on paper you may discover a big flaw in your thinking.

There are many other areas of your background too, will be revealing. Time and space will not permit listing them all. I have suggested a few of those most common. Take your time, be honest, write it all down in great detail.

When you have completed your inventory, make a date with the person you have chosen and do it as soon as possible. It's a good idea to call this person well ahead of time and ask him to save you plenty of time in his schedule.

Select a listener you can trust. Maybe it's your doctor, your priest, your minister. Possibly it's a prominent business-

man or someone nobody notices. It may be a person in a distant city whom you will never see again. Maybe it's just a good friend.

But whoever it is, believe in him completely. Have confidence that he can help you put the pieces together. You should also believe that he has enough of the love of God in his heart to share some of it with you. It also helps if your counselor has been over this rocky pass ahead of you, although there are exceptions to this generalization.

Good climbing! It's a tough mountain but the view is worth it from the top, once you get by The Hump.

## ***Ever Been on a Dry Drunk?***

AFTER ten years of exposure to the AA program, I still experience that periodic phenomenon referred to as the "dry drunk." To my own amazement and everlasting gratitude, the last seven of those years has been a period of uninterrupted sobriety. This fortunate condition has certainly been brought about by a Power infinitely greater than my puny capabilities. I believe that the times of the greatest danger of self-destruction during these years were those when I, consciously or otherwise, attempted egotistically to take over the reins of my life and tried to exercise total control over my own affairs.

This usually resulted in a dry drunk. What is a dry drunk? The following description is based on a personal viewpoint, but is also supported by those ideas which I have heard expressed at many meetings. An alcoholic appears capable of emotional extremes ranging

from feelings of unbounded elation to depths of dark despair. As an imperfect but perhaps helpful analogy, we might compare the personality of an alcoholic with a weather map. A dry drunk is an emotional storm. The emotions of an alcoholic can fluctuate much in the manner of weather fronts.

When all seems to be comparatively well for the recovered alcoholic, his general feeling of well being is like a "high pressure" weather area. This is a large mass of cool, dry air, usually accompanied by clear, blue skies and lots of pleasant sunshine. As long as we try to carry the message to others, attend meetings regularly, and seek God's guidance every day, we are frequently gifted with a sunny, love-filled spirit--our own inner high-pressure area.

You know, of course, that the weather changes: day by day, little by little, the cool, stimulating air may be replaced with uncomfortable, oppressive, moisture-laden air. There develops a turbulence and confusion in the atmosphere, similar to the turbulence and confusion in the mental atmosphere of an alcoholic on a dry emotional jag.

This is why we are cautioned against fatigue. Take a particularly difficult day with a sufficient number of negative events, mix in normal amounts of twentieth-century stress, give this dose to a fatigued alcoholic and you have a nice dry drunk in the making. Of course we can help it along by skipping lunch, rushing at a double-time pace all day long, and engaging in the doubtful luxury of such emotions as anger and worry.

I learned that, in my own case, I was more apt to become irritable and confused toward the end of the work week, when accumulated tensions and lack of rest were at their worst. Things looked darker on Friday than they did on Monday morning. In time, I was able to realize that the things which seemed so important on Friday were really minor, and that such an outlook was due mostly to my failings and not to circumstances.

We all realize that there are ways of modifying or preventing dry drunks. A dry drunk is basically an illustration that we have much progress to make in our application of the AA program.

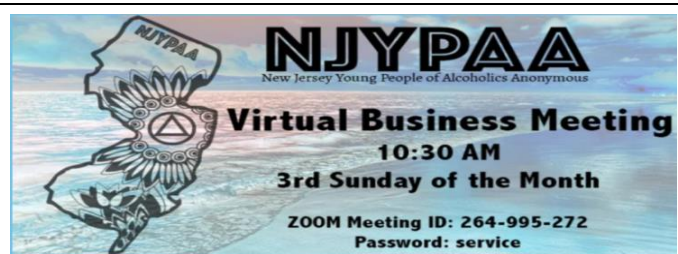
The antidote is contained in the Twelve Steps. We should attend more meetings; we should seek ways to help other members--even a simple telephone call to inquire about a fellow member can shake us loose from our exaggerated self-concern. No one can express love and self-pity at the same moment; showing concern for others helps us to see how foolish we have been, how we have literally trapped ourselves in the familiar mental "squirrel cage."

When nothing else avails, we can say, "Today I am sick." Of course, not physically sick, but a spiritual disorder--a separateness from God as we understand Him. During an emotional bender, the admission that we are powerless over our own rampant thoughts, and that our

lives are even more unmanageable than usual, is an act which equates with Step One. I believe a dry drunk is a period of temporary insanity for the sober alcoholic. Step Two says: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." A dry drunk is a self-imposed separation from others and from God. We try to run on our own current, like a battery without a generator, which soon runs down and becomes quite dead.

Step Ten--the Step of continuing personal inventory--should certainly be emphasized following a dry drunk. We should attempt, in a spirit of humility and deep reflection, to see clearly where we were wrong. It helps to discuss these failures with other members, in order to crystallize our mistakes and prevent their recurrence. A series of unexpected conditions may have helped to bring about our emotional upheaval; this does not justify it, but only indicates that we are in definite need of further spiritual development.

Perhaps, in the last analysis, a dry drunk is mostly a childish tantrum, an interval of immaturity, a regression to those frantic drinking days of self-will run riot. Nevertheless, it can still be a perilous period for the alcoholic struggling for recovery. I know that there have been dark days when a will infinitely greater than my own has been responsible for my sobriety.



**NJYPAA**  
New Jersey Young People of Alcoholics Anonymous

**Virtual Business Meeting**  
10:30 AM  
3rd Sunday of the Month

ZOOM Meeting ID: 264-995-272  
Password: service



**NJYPAA**  
New Jersey Young People of Alcoholics Anonymous

Every 3rd Sunday of the Month  
10:30 AM  
Bradley Beach Recreation Center  
39, 1/2 Main Street  
Bradley Beach, NJ 07720

Entrance is behind home plate of the softball field  
For more information please go to  
[www.NJYPAA.org](http://www.NJYPAA.org) or contact [NJYPAA@gmail.com](mailto:NJYPAA@gmail.com)

## Editorial Policy

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

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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Website: [www.aasj.org](http://www.aasj.org)  
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

and via Zoom see **Website** above for info

**Monday 5:30pm, Cherry Hill, Unity Group- New Beginning, Kings Highway, Unitarian Church, Needs support!**



**Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.**

**THOUSANDS**  
of candles can be lighted from a single  
**CANDLE**



the life of the candle will not be shortened.  
**HAPPINESS**  
never decreases by being shared

*the Fifth Concept states:*

*“Throughout our world services structure, a traditional 'Right of Appeal' ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.”*

# Fellowship- Things to Do- LOCAL

**Fri.- Sun.** April 21-23, Atlantic City, SEPIA Roundup, "Serenity By the Sea" Showboat Casino, 801 Boardwalk Ave. <https://store.aasepia.org/events/round-up-2023/#em-event-booking-form>

**Sat April 22**, 3pm -5pm, **Pemberton**, Happy Hour 31st Anniversary, 449 Club, 6 Pemberton St.

**Sat April 22**, 7pm -9pm, **Millville**, Sassafras Group Anniv., Church of the Nazarene, 2101 E. Main St.

**Sat April 22** 7pm, Ewing, Sat. Night Live 40<sup>th</sup> Anniv., W. Trenton Presbyterian Chch, 490 Grand Ave.

**Sun April 23**, 9am -11am, **Evesham**, Gratitude Breakfast, The Gibson House, 535 E Main Street  
Adults only please, Sponsored by District 27

**Mon April 24**, 7PM, **Pennsauken**, Hospitals & Institutions Mtg, Intergroup Office, 5090 Central Ave.

**Sat Apr. 29** - **Woodstown** Group Parish Center - 2 Lamplighter Dr. rm. 224 all GSR's & DCM's invited.

**Sat. April 29**, Noon to 1pm, Yardville, St. Vincent de Paul, 555 Yardville-Allentown Rd., Service 101  
Presentation, learn how the different levels of AA work and how to get involved!

**Sun. Apr. 30** 10AM, **Tansboro** Spiritual Group 33rd anniversary guest speaker at 10am - luncheon starts at 11am Local Winslow Twp. Senior Ctr. 33 Cooper Folly Rd. ( off Rte. 73) Atco, NJ

**Thur. May 4**, 8pm- 9pm, **Cherry Hill**, Bookers' Meetings, St. Bartholomew's Church (St. Bart's), 1989 Rt. 70 E (Marlton Pike East)

**Thur. May 4**, 7PM, **Audubon**, How It Works Group 36<sup>th</sup> Anniv., Logan Presbyterian Ch, 18 W Merchant St.

**Sat. May 13** 8:30pm till ?, **Clementon**, 400 Club Open Mike Night, 42 Berlin Rd., donations welcome

**Sat May 13**, 7:30pm till ?, Mountain Lakes, NJYPAA Killer Comedy Night, Mountain Lakes Community Church, 48 Briarcliff Rd., Book Ahead at NJYPAA.org, \$25 suggested Donation

**Wed. May 17**, 8pm- 9pm, **Cherry Hill**, SJIG Intergroup Meeting: St. Bartholomew's Church, 1989 Rt. 70 E (Marlton Pike East), See AASJ.org for Zoom Meeting info

**Sun., May 21**, 10AM -1PM, **Elmer**, Spring Assembly Area 45, Elmer Grange, 532 Daretown Road,  
All members of A.A. are encouraged to participate. Hybrid. Zoom ID: 890 6412 2331 PW: SNJAA45

**Mon May 22** 6PM, **Mount Laurel** Masonville Anniv., United Methodist Ch., 200 Masonville/Centerton Rd.

**Sat. May 27** -11am -3PM, Wildwood Spring Fling Speaker Jam BBQ @ the 12 Step House, 113 W Oak Ave. Speakers start at 1pm, BBQ lunch to follow till 2pm then 2 more speakers. FFF.