

# ANONYMOUS



**SJIG HAS A NEW OFFICE!**

**1000 White Horse Rd #702  
Voorhees Township, NJ 0804**

## South Jersey Intergroup Announcements

*Please check with the Local Clubhouses for Holiday events near you.*

**Mon. Dec. 25**, 8am -8pm, **Millville**, Alkathon at Church of the Nazarene 2201 E Main St.

**Sun. Dec 31**, 7pm on, **Pennsauken**, New Year's Eve Alkathon and Party, 482 Social Hall, 6702 US 130 (Crescent Blvd.) Speakers, Food, Fellowship- Happy, Joyous, and Free For All!

**Tue. Jan. 2**, 7pm, **Sicklerville**, Crossing Serenity, take note -new time, 176 Stagecoach Rd.

**Sat. Jan. 13**, 5pm, **Woodstown** Group 69th Anniv. Catholic Community of Holy Spirit Parish Ctr. Room 124, 2 Lamplighter Dr., dishes welcome

**Mon. Jan. 15**, 6:30 - 9pm, **Collingswood** Group 79th Anniv., Holy Trinity Episcopal , 839 Haddon Ave.

**Mon Jan 15**, 6 - 8pm - **Shiloh** Serenity Grp. Anniv., 116 East Ave.,

**Wed. Jan 17**, 8:00pm, **Cherry Hill**, SJIG Intergroup Meeting: St. Bartholomew's Church, 1989 Rt. 70 E (Marlton Pike East), [See AASJ.org](https://www.aasj.org) for Zoom Meeting info

## LOCAL FELLOWSHIP EVENTS & AA EVENTS OUTSIDE SJIG

**Sat. Dec. 23**, 5pm, **Wildwood**, Primary Purpose, eating meeting -speaker 6:30pm, 113 W Oak Ave.

**Sun. Dec. 31**, 8:30pm on, **Hightstown**, New Year's Dance, First Presbyterian Church, 320 N Main St.

**Sun. Dec 31**, 6:30 on, **Linwood**, New Year's Eve Party, Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 724 Maple Ave.

**Mon. Jan. 1**, 8am- 9pm, **Trenton**, New Year's Day Alkathon, United Presbyterian Church, 12 Yardville Hamilton Square Rd.

**Fri-Sun. Feb. 22-25**, **Hershey, PA**, NERAASA, Hershey Lodge, 325 University Dr., [SNJAA.org](https://www.snjaa.org)- Scholarships, Cary K : 845.490.3292

## INSIDE OUR JANUARY ISSUE

1) Announcements 2) Help Wanted/ Suggestion Box 3) Just for Laughs/ Trivia Question 4) Bridging the Gap/ Convention Committee 4-7) R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y., MEA CULPA AND AU REVOIR 7-10) First Traditions Checklist 10-14) The Three Delusions: The Big Book's Breakdown of Step One 14) Concepts Checklist 14-15) 1940 OLD Preamble 16) Editorial Policy



**Answering Service 12-step list:** More volunteers are need for the 12-step list. Signup sheets available for anyone wishing to take a copy to their home groups. Contact the Answering service. [answeringservice@aasj.org](mailto:answeringservice@aasj.org).

## SUGGESTION BOX

Tells us your Ideas- How can we make SJ Intergroup serve the Groups even better?



[newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org) is always looking for news, flyers and articles and suggestions!

### First Step Prayer

DEAR LORD,  
I ADMIT THAT I AM POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL. I ADMIT THAT MY LIFE IS UN-MANAGEABLE WHEN I TRY TO CONTROL IT. HELP ME THIS DAY TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUE MEANING OF POWERLESSNESS. REMOVE FROM ME THE DELUSION THAT I HAVE POWER THE POWER OF CHOICE OVER ALCOHOL.

Too much self-centered attitude, you see, brings, you see, isolation. Result: loneliness, fear, anger. The extreme self-centered attitude is the source of suffering.

DALAI LAMA

## RULE 62- Just for laughs

### Pumping out the tank:

A military transport aircraft is being prepared for departure at a US Air Force base in Greenland.

The crew's waiting for a truck to arrive so that the aircraft's sewage tank can be pumped out.

Nothing's going quite to plan and the aircraft commander is growing impatient.

When the truck eventually shows up, the airman carrying out the pumping task on the tank is extremely slow and seems to take an age.

Eventually, the commander has had enough and he snaps and threatens to punish the airman for being so slow.

☺  
"Sir, I have no stripes, it's twenty-five below zero, I'm stationed in Greenland miles from civilization, and I'm pumping sewage." the airman responds. "What could you possibly do that would punish me further?"

### Trivia Question

What page in the Big Book will you find the words; "The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed!

(Answer is in this issue)



Mary, an attractive lady of 85, was marrying for the fourth time.

Naturally, this was a human-interest story and the local newspaper decided to send a reporter to interview Mary.

The reporter sat with Mary and asked, "Could you tell me about your husbands and how they earned their living?"

Mary smiled and said, "Well, my first husband was a banker, then I married a circus ringmaster, next was a preacher and now at 85, I'm marrying a funeral director."

"Wow," said the reporter, they've all had such diverse careers."

"Yes," said Mary, "I married one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready and four to go."

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

**BUSINESS MEETING**

THIRD SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
10:30 AM

ZOOM MEETING ID:  
264-995-272

PASSWORD: service

3525 Quakerbridge Rd.  
#5000  
Hamilton, NJ 08619



## BTG is looking for volunteers!

Bridging the Gap is a 12 Step commitment designed to help the individual make the transition from the treatment or correction facility to Alcoholics Anonymous. The temporary contact would be responsible to meet/take the new member to 6 meetings to help them learn about our fellowship.

### What Bridging the Gap suggests of the temporary contact:

- AAs who participate should have 1 year of continuous sobriety.
- AAs are asked to meet/take the individual to a minimum of 6 meetings.
- AAs should share their experience with sponsorship, a home group, and the 12 steps.
- An AA's commitment to the BTG program is a minimum of 1-year.
- Bridging the Gap volunteers are encouraged to attend workshops for questions, training and ongoing support.



### If you would like to help. . .

Grab a pamphlet and fill out the back form. Take a pic and send it via email. Please include your home group. Or

Scan the QR Code below fill out and submit. It's that easy. Contact Scott P.- Area 45 Bridging the Gap Coordinator

Email - [Bridgingthegap@snjaa.org](mailto:Bridgingthegap@snjaa.org)



*The Area 45 Convention Needs Your Help!*

Feeling disconnected?      Looking to get involved?  
Wanting to be of service?

## Join the 2024 Convention Committee!!

We meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month @ 9:00 a.m.  
58<sup>th</sup> AREA 45 GENERAL SERVICE CONVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE  
449 Club, 6 Pemberton Street, Pemberton 08068

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday due to Mother's Day)  
June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday due to Convention Date - Packet stuffing)

You can also join us via Zoom:  
Meeting ID: 81018610618  
Password: 5N1AA43

# R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y., MEA CULPA AND AU REVOIR

Our two years of writing the South Jersey AA Newsletter comes to an end with this issue and I speak for both of us when I say, **thank you for the opportunity to serve the fellowship we love.**

While this Newsletter has always been collaborative, this article is being written individually. My primary drives while writing have been to create a Newsletter for both members and newcomers, focusing on AA's positive message. I have tried to be aware that this newsletter might be the only contact an AA member or newcomer has with the officers and active service members of Intergroup and that my words may reflect on them. I wanted to steer clear of anything controversial and I sought to inspire the reader regarding our three legacies: Unity, Service, and Recovery. In looking back over my work on these 24 issues, I'm satisfied but I haven't progressed to the point that all I see is sunshine, rainbows and unicorns. Specifically, this article is addressing one obvious error that only I created.

When completing the October 2023 issue I found extra space at the end that I did not expect. So I went online to find a suitable item to fill the space. I found an acronym or specifically an apronym which is an acronym that spells a word that suits the message (e.g. F.E.A.R. Face Everything and Recover). The word I found was R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y. I completed the Newsletter and emailed it out on September 22 without thoroughly proofreading. Shortly after, I started to review it with a critical eye. When I got to the R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y. mnemonic - I discovered a **massive error**. The second E. stood for "Eating without Regret". **Worse yet**, the second R. stood for "Relapse - Is Going to Happen, Its Inevitable and That's OKAY".

Obviously it's an Overeaters Anonymous message. Relapse may be part of OA, I don't know. What I do know is that people may die relapsing in AA- so including that message was my biggest mistake in the 24 issues. I really don't find excuses useful so, simply, **I apologize to all - for my blunder**. The other member of Newsletter and South Jersey Intergroup members in no way deserve any hostility but they may have already received it for my error or may in the future receive anger through no fault of their own. I apologize for that as well. But I must go further because that poor message is still out there and it should be thoroughly refuted.

After I discovered my error, I waited for the complaints to pour in. I got a little upset that I hadn't received any. JEEZ doesn't anybody read the Newsletter?

In the end I did receive two complaints expressing this concern and I am in agreement. I have produced them in their entirety below. They express it well - better than I could.

Here's the first:

*"Re: Page 8 - "RECOVERY" mnemonic*

*In the bottom right corner there is a mnemonic in which the second "R" represents, "Relapse---it's going to happen, it's inevitable and that's **okay**."*

*I found that to be unusual, especially the emphasis on the word "okay". That statement basically endorses relapse, which is NOT necessarily going to happen, it's NOT inevitable, and it's NOT okay. Relapse is not a requirement of our program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Relapse is not okay - it's tragic. In my 34 years of recovery in AA, I've witnessed time and time again what can happen when an alcoholic relapses. In fact, prisons, hospitals, and cemeteries are filled with those who CHOSE to relapse. That's right, it's a conscious CHOICE that someone makes when he or she stops attending meetings and eventually picks up that drink. People use our program as if it has a revolving door and that's disturbing enough. But, what's even more disturbing is when our newsletter almost encourages the practice. If I continue to do as I was taught so many years ago - "don't drink, attend meetings, & do service" - then it's not likely that I'm going to relapse. It hasn't happened yet in my first 12,409 days and it won't be "inevitable".*

*Thanks for letting me share. Have a blessed day."*

Here's the second:

*"Good afternoon! First, let me say thank you for your service in putting out the AASJ Newsletter. Having been of service for many years in multiple capacities, I know that it is sometimes a thankless job. I don't want to add to that feeling, but I've been carrying a resentment toward the Newsletter since I read the October issue.*

*I was going to let it go, but I've heard people complaining about it in two different meetings (in the parking lot - not in the meeting itself), and ya'll may not even be aware that people are upset. In the October issue, there was a small piece (I think on the 3rd to last page) that stated "Relapse is inevitable, it WILL happen." This is not AA "speak." This is harm-reduction/rehab "speak."*

*IF someone does relapse, AA will welcome them back (if they make it) with open arms. There will always be a seat for those who relapse, and we will love them until they can love themselves. But relapse is not inevitable, and AA is not a harm-reduction program. The statement "it WILL happen" gives permission to newcomers to go ahead and drink. "It's inevitable." This is not okay!*

*Inside the rooms, we tell people to hold onto their sobriety date. It could save their life. We talk about powerlessness, from which we have a daily reprieve, based upon the fitness of our spiritual condition. Our PRIMARY purpose (at least the first half) is to STAY sober. We have to have the capacity to be honest. We have to pick up the phone if we want to drink. We have to THOROUGHLY follow the path of those who have stayed sober. We need to continue to work the steps to the best of our ability. One day at a time, we have to want to stay sober more than we want to drink.*

*Our job is to share our experience, strength and HOPE. If relapse "WILL" happen, where is the hope? Do we tell every prosecutor, every judge, every suffering family member, that relapse "WILL" happen? Absolutely not. The story "Grounded" on page 544 in the Big Book would have had a drastically different ending if this was what we tell people.*

*I have met someone who relapsed and lost an arm getting hit by a train in a blackout. A man who hit a motorcyclist and then punched a cop and went to jail. A man who killed two innocent people in a relapse. People who have lost their jobs, their spouses, families, homes; ended up in hospitals, homeless, jails after a relapse. One of my sponsees relapsed and then died waiting for a liver transplant that never came.*

*When people come to AA and thoroughly follow directions, clean house, and help others - they CAN stay sober. That's the hope we should share. That's the truth for people who really want what we have and are willing to go to ANY length to have it. Eddie L. just celebrated 61 years of sobriety. Osa just celebrated 52 years. Marie G. just celebrated 50 years. This month I had the privilege of watching 7 people (in just 2 meetings) celebrate over 35 years each. My husband hasn't had a drink in 37 years. My father-in-law died after being sober for 38 years without a relapse. My sponsor has 28 years without a relapse. I have 22 years sober without a relapse - all praise to God and this program.*

*Please, please, please let's not start telling people that "relapse is inevitable and it WILL happen". The bad things that could happen to them in a relapse are too numerous to*

*count. They may never come back. They could die or kill someone else. Let's just keep telling them "don't drink, come to meetings, pick up the phone if you want to drink. Thoroughly follow our path. Continue to enhance your spiritual life. Stay willing to do whatever it takes. Be completely honest. There IS hope. As long as we don't pick up, there IS hope."*

We have posted these concerns anonymously because we didn't get permission from the authors to include their names. So ends the 24 month commitment on the Newsletter. Some may feel that it seems to end on a sour note, but putting ego on a shelf is what AA is all about. Sharing these 2 concerns here is sharing the message of recovery. I'm glad to have had one last opportunity to do so. I am in complete agreement with these writers and thank them for their message. Sincerely - Bill.

# FIRST TRADITION CHECKLIST

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity.

MY AA HISTORY consists of two extended slips during an otherwise sober quarter-century. I have not taken or wanted a drink for a couple decades, but I have learned much about alcohol and AA, and a little about myself. For instance, I no longer have quick, simple answers for staying sober, although at times I sound as if I had. For example, at times I had sobriety of the head, not sobriety of the heart, in my first year, and I've been so proud of this eloquence that I was deaf to the vanity revealed: the implication that my own superior ability at rational thinking kept me from drinking. More honest thinking suggests that what kept me sober those first days was not any of my doing at all. Obviously, it was not rules or laws, either, since we have none. The first year I spent dry, sitting around in an AA clubhouse, glum and stiff in one of the musty pews of that barnlike old church building where meetings were held. I made a few mechanical gestures that year, doing my turn at desk or telephone duty, reading the AA publications (very few then), and speaking at meetings. I even typed copy for the Grapevine. But none of this was based on any real desire to change myself.

When I came to AA, I had not wanted sobriety so much as I wanted to stay out of the trouble that came with my drinking. I had been terrorized by blackouts and a searing fear that I was really losing my mind. I had been sick with shame at the way I had treated my family and friends, even if I did think they often deserved it for some of the things they did to poor me. I had been unemployable, hopelessly in debt, and sure that jail or an insane asylum was deserved and inevitable, unless a suicide attempt worked out some time.

The vanity which so often had propped me up had given way to self-loathing. I was a dirty, gaunt, unshaven, quaking wreck. I was no good. The world would be better off without me.

The state of AA dryness I found in that old clubhouse was highly desirable, every precious 24 hours of it. It did not promise any rosy future, but it was beginning to exorcise the past.

I kept going through the AA motions, relieved enormously by the knowledge that I had a disease, that it was not my fault, and that others like me, or worse, were recovering. (Didn't I see hope sitting row on row at every meeting?) I was memorizing AA statements and not drinking, more because AA seemed to expect it (and my family approved) than because I really wanted the AA way of life.

It is, of course, a miracle that I stayed sober at all. Those wonderful AA people, when I first came for help, certainly had far more to do with keeping me sober than my own reluctant efforts. I believe now that those sober members acted out twelve specific ideas of AA behavior, and I want to celebrate in Grapevine ink those twelve ways, because they saved my life and still do, over and over.

The fact that others came before me and were there to help is what made my own recovery possible, simply *sticking together*.

The first AAs fast got the notion that we need each other if we are to survive. As has been said well and often, we may not all like each other, but we have to love each other. Communicate or die! When put into action, the power of that one idea alone can keep a guy sober, to his own surprise, a very long time. It did that for me, I know. Then someone got the idea that AAs ought to put down in writing just how it was they were staying sober. Many agreed; others were fearful. The real crunch was agreeing on what to put into the book. What a miracle that those early members, despite misgivings, disagreements, distrust, and fierce devotion to high principles that were poles apart, could agree, not only on the Twelve Steps, but on enough material to fill a whole book! If the early AAs had not stuck together at that point, if they had broken up in hopeless disagreements, there would be no book, no Twelve Steps, no AA, and no me.

If it weren't for the idea of having a hotline- I wouldn't have known what to do when my turn came. AA members had already decided to have a publicly listed telephone number. The simple act of getting in touch with AA that first time washed out in an instant the dark loneliness that had encompassed my life. When I fearfully crept into that old building that first day, I was greeted with a gentle invitation: "Come on in. Let's talk it over." And everyone assured me I was not alone and *need never be alone again*.

All the suggestions I heard then were based on our sticking together. "Come to meetings" meant that I would be with other AAs, fulfilling the purpose for which meetings had been started in the first place. "Don't get lonely; telephone before you take a drink; talk to another member and get your troubles off your chest." All these powerful tools of sobriety assured me that *together* we could get well and stay well. There are so many meetings in the Area that those of us who answered the telephone have difficulty remembering which groups met which nights and where. So we have a typed up a list we could refer to. Where would I be now without my meeting list and South Jersey Intergroup that publishes it? These two things are absolutely necessary if we AAs want to stick together. To remove the last traces of loneliness, there is the *World Directory*, assuring me that we are now a worldwide fellowship



with the shared strength of hundreds of thousands. And now the General Service Conference, many GSO bulletins, and the treasured Grapevine, of course, make it easier for all of us to keep in touch.

About five years after my last drink, I found myself pretty sick one day with an illness not related to alcohol. At home alone, scared, I needed help. The natural thing was to call an AA friend, right? Who else would come to help? To whom else could I unashamedly admit I was afraid? Who else knew the inside of fear?

But the only nearby AA member I could reach on the telephone at that time of day was a fellow I did not like. Never had, and the feeling was mutual; he had no use for me, either. Yet he came at once and helped me through the day with incredible, tactful kindness.

That is not an unusual AA story, I know. Almost always, when the chips are down, we forget our differences and observe our First Tradition. We may not quote its words very often, but apparently each AA realizes, deep down, that if it were not for the "we" of AA, there would be no "I."

The Tradition has also made a difference in the quality of my AA life beyond sobriety. One sleepless night some years ago, I was again feeling lonely and isolated, although I had been as regular as ever in going to meetings and participating in other AA actions. I felt surrounded by AA, but insulated against it. Somehow, I was wrapped in a cool cocoon that kept the warm AA spirit from getting to me.

Again, it took the experience of earnestly asking another AA member for help to melt away the chilly walls. This time I reached a dear AA friend, and the help I got was anything but tactful. I was told bluntly where the trouble was. It was self-importance again! It seemed that I had subtly and unconsciously come to think of myself as somewhat of an example of AA wisdom. In discussion meetings I never asked questions; I just answered them. I overflowed with AA know-how, and insidiously it put me out of touch. Secretly, I did not mind at all when someone once referred to me as an oracle.

True, I was sharing my experience, and what I revealed was honest. But it was not the whole truth. I kept hidden from others the yet-unsolved problems, the shameful secrets of today, admitting them fully to no one.

I was furious at the old AA friend who punctured the vanity balloon, but she was right. I had been so busy giving fellowship that I had forgotten to accept any. And she finally goaded me into doing something about it. I began to spill it all out, at last sharing the other parts of my total experience, including the bad and the embarrassing. Believe me, it was a liberating experience, and the help was enormously strengthening.

I no longer feel like an insulated wire set apart from all around me by the protective, concealing, non-conducting sheath of plastic egotism which can keep me out of touch. As an early Grapevine correspondent once wrote, "AAs, unlike some other people, do not reach down to help us; they reach out."

I still marvel that our Loners who hardly ever get to meetings, stay beautifully sober. But I also remember that originally the Grapevine began as a message from the AAs back home to the AAs overseas in World War II. And I recall a letter from a private,

who wrote from Normandy, "Even thousands of miles away, I know I am not alone, since all of you are always with me in spirit."

Maybe those isolated members--perhaps because they have to dig so deep into our literature--sense better than some meeting-goers like me the meanings and values of fellowship. They are constantly reminded that the Twelve Steps say *we* admitted, *we* came to believe, *we* made a decision, and *we* tried to carry the message.

This beautiful *we*, this sticking together in our fellowship--which can heal my individual sick soul, as well as cementing together our Fellowship--is set forth for all of us in the words "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity."

## First Tradition Checklist

*My sobriety depends on unity with you. What am I doing to help build that unity?*

*Here are some questions I ask myself when I take my First Tradition inventory:*

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into arguments?
3. Am I gentle with alcoholics who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

## The Three Delusions: The Big Book's Breakdown of Step One

What Are The Three Delusions of Alcoholics Anonymous?

**If you have experience with 'the rooms' you're likely familiar with the prayers, the promises, the musts, the bedevilments, and the like.**

However, there is a critical component of Step One that I noticed is often overlooked and forgotten. They are aptly called the ‘three delusions.’

### **A Break Down Of The Three Delusions**

Technically there are only two delusions and one illusion – this is how they are specifically written in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

At any rate, the delusions wrestle with the two components of the first step, powerlessness and unmanageability.

An understanding of the delusions can enrich one’s understanding of the first step and therefore enable one to effectively work the remaining steps.

I like to think of it as: **Psychotic Wishful Thinking.**

#### **The First Delusion:**

The first delusion is in the chapter entitled “More About Alcoholism.”

*“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.”*

For the real alcoholic this illusion can completely block all attempts at recovery.

Why?

**Because recovery requires a drastic transformation of attitude and conduct.**

Something that is unlikely to occur if one believes it isn’t necessary.

Makes sense.

The craving for alcohol will completely override any positive intentions one may have for recovery.

In The Doctor’s Opinion we read:

*“We believe . . . that the action of alcohol on . . . chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all, and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.”*

A true alcoholic “can never safely use alcohol in any form at all.”

#### **The Second Delusion:**

The second delusion is also in “More About Alcoholism.”

*“We learned that we had to concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.”*

There is an old saying in A.A. that once a cucumber becomes a pickle it can never become a cucumber again.

This is illustrated by the story of the man who quit drinking at age thirty, only to retire and commence drinking again at age fifty.

Within two months of doing so he was promptly hospitalized for alcoholism.

His story illustrates how the physical allergy never goes away and, so it seems, in our experience the untreated obsession for alcohol only grows worse with time and never better.

**This is the first delusion on steroids.**

The first states that many fall prey to super irrational thinking.

The second states that if you do and do not change it, you will fall into the “gates of insanity and death” category.

This delusion also emphasizes the unmanageability in our lives.

The very fact it needs to be stated implies how many of us fall victim to this damn delusion. The following passage from the [Big Book](#) pointedly demonstrates the folly of our internal dialogue. *The first requirement is that you see that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision~ with something or somebody, even though our motives may be good.*

*Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show: is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wishes, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits. What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself some more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble?*

*Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things he wants? And do not his actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony? Our actor is self-centered – ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. He is like the retired business man who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the preacher who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safecracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever their protestations, are not these people mostly concerned with themselves, their resentments, or their self-pity? Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly, without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self, which later placed us in a position to be hurt. So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is almost the most extreme example that could be found of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!*

The Drama Of The Delusions

I believe that regarding Step One the “drama” of unmanageability is being stressed here, and it’s not necessarily just as the concluding factor regarding the “powerlessness” component.

Let me explain...

**Inner unmanageability demands inner manageability.**

It will find it one way or another...

For example, if loneliness is a form of inner unmanageability, then that loneliness will register as an unmet need and the brain will do whatever it can to satisfy that need, even if the warm embrace of companionship comes from heroin or a few too many pints at the pub, it cannot tell the difference between the artificial and authentic, it merely observes results.

Sure, the usual suspects of unemployment, inability to sustain a relationship, constant incarceration, and riding the institutional circuit may appear as unmanageability – and it is, but only inasmuch as it reflects or is indicative of inner unmanageability

The [Big Book](#) at least implicitly states that the drink is a vehicle for producing inner manageability, or inner peace and quiet.

In other words, alcohol ‘creates’ inner manageability aka “sanity,” through whatever substance/act pulls off the deed.

**It creates the feeling that one can finally come out and play.**

Some addicts have aptly described it as a spiritual experience and I suppose that is an unbelievably fitting description.

Oddly enough, this is precisely the same language offered in Step Two, only in this dimension, God is this “restorer of sanity” – pretty incredible, right.

In other words, in this particular context, the second delusion distorts alcohol into Higher Power of sorts.

**The Third Delusion:**

The ‘third delusion’ was actually already stated. I’ll note it again just in case you missed it:

“What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of the world if only he manages well?”

Let’s be real.

Life appears inherently unmanageable. It seems predetermined, and we are just a dog tied to a cart along for the ride.

We can’t change our circumstances or conditions when they befall us.

We can’t modify our genetic constitution.

We can turn back time on our cultural conditioning.

Can we really shape how other people act and react to our circumstances?

Nope!

The bottom line is that alcoholics are stuck in an assumption that the uncontrollable must be controlled in order to find even a modicum of happiness.

**The truth is we cannot find happiness by managing our conditions. This eventually breaks us all because we can only change ourselves to meet conditions.**

Until this insight is understood, turning our will and our lives over to God, which is an internal job, will never occur.

Why?

Because we have been focusing all our energy on external jobs!

Let’s do a quick recap:

- Unless we see through the ‘first delusion’ we cannot stay sober.

- Unless we smash the ‘second delusion’ we may stay sober, but we will remain trapped within the insanity of our old ways of thinking.
- Once we accept and see through all ‘three delusions’ we can – and will – find God producing within us a blossoming inner manageability.

## CONCEPTS CHECKLIST

### A Service piece from the General Service Office

Some of these questions were originally developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees’ Literature Committee. It is their hope that A.A. groups, districts and area can use them as a basis for wider discussion. Useful information on the Concepts can be found in Conference-approved literature: *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service* by Bill W. and “The Twelve Concepts Illustrated” pamphlet. (The Concepts stated here are in the short form.)

#### **Concept I: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world service should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.**

- Does my group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)? Do I feel that my home group is a part of A.A. as a whole?
- When did my group last hold a group conscience meeting? When appropriate, does that conscience get passed to the district, the area, or the local intergroup?
- How do A.A.’s who are not active members of a group get their point of view into the collective conscience?
- At my group business meetings, do we stay alert for any decisions that might affect A.A. as a whole?
- What is meant by the “collective conscience” of Alcoholics Anonymous? Is it at work in my home group? In my area?
- Define the upside-down pyramid of A.A. How does it work?
- Why is it said that Concept I is rooted in Tradition Two?

**What other people think of me is none of my business.**

**I have found that the process of discovering who I really am begins with knowing who I really don’t want to be.**

**Humility is not thinking less of myself, but thinking of myself less.**

**It’s simple, not necessarily easy but the rewards are endless.**

**May I always remember that God within me is far greater than any fear before me.**

It must never be forgotten that the purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous is to sober up alcoholics. There is no religious or spiritual requirement for membership. No demands are made on anyone. An experience is offered which members may accept or reject. That is up to them.

— Bill W. —

## AA Old Preamble – 1940

We are gathered here because we are faced with the fact that we are powerless over alcohol and unable to do anything about it without the help of a Power greater than ourselves.

We feel that each person’s religious views, if any, are his own affair. The simple purpose of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is to show what may be done

to enlist the aid of a Power greater than ourselves regardless of what our individual conception of that Power may be.

In order to form a habit of depending upon and referring all we do to that Power, we must at first apply ourselves with some diligence. By often repeating these acts, they become habitual and the help rendered becomes natural to us. We have all come to know that as alcoholics we are suffering from a serious illness for which medicine has no cure.

Our condition may be the result of an allergy which makes us different from other people. It has never been by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently cured. The only relief we have to offer is absolute abstinence, the second meaning of A.A.

There are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Each member squares his debt by helping others to recover. An Alcoholics Anonymous is an alcoholic who through application and adherence to the A.A. program has forsworn the use of any and all alcoholic beverage in any form.

The moment he takes so much as one drop of beer, wine, spirits or any other alcoholic beverage he automatically loses all status as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A.A. is not interested in sobering up drunks who are not sincere in their desire to remain sober for all time. Not being reformers, we offer our experience only to those who want it.

We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree and on which we can join in harmonious action. Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our program. Those who do not recover are people who will not or simply cannot give themselves to this simple program. Now you may like this program or you may not, but the fact remains, it works. It is our only chance to recover.

There is a vast amount of fun in the A.A. fellowship. Some people might be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity but just underneath there lies a deadly earnestness and a full realization that we must put first things first and with each of us the first thing is our alcoholic problem. To drink is to die. Faith must work twenty-four hours a day in and through us or we perish.

In order to set our tone for this meeting I ask that we bow our heads in a few moments of silent prayer and meditation. I wish to remind you that whatever is said at this meeting expresses our own individual opinion as of today and as of up to this moment.

We do not speak for A.A. as a whole and you are free to agree or disagree as you see fit, in fact, it is suggested that you pay no attention to anything which might not be reconciled with what is in the A.A. Big Book.

If you don't have a Big Book, it's time you bought you one. Read it, study it, live with it, loan it, scatter it, and then learn from it what it means to be an A.A.

## 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. Trivia answer on page 30. 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).

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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

**InterGroup Steering Committee:** consists of the panel of elected InterGroup Officers, InterGroup Committee Chairpersons/Co-Chairpersons, and a Representative from the Board of Trustees.

Our monthly meeting is held on the second Wednesday of each month at the InterGroup Office in Pennsauken and is open to all members of the A.A. Fellowship.

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