



**The Fifth Step**

*“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature or our wrongs.”*

“ALL OF A.A.'s Twelve Steps ask us to go contrary to our natural desires . . . they all deflate our egos. When it comes to ego deflation, few Steps are harder to take than Five. But scarcely any Step is more necessary to longtime sobriety and peace of mind than this one.”

**The Fifth Tradition**

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

“SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last!”... better do one thing supremely well than many badly. That is the central theme of this Tradition. Around it our Society gathers in unity. The very life of our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.”

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The book says it much better than I.

Hope you are having a wonderful Spring. It's a great time of year to physically and metaphorically clean out closets, dust off books and shelves, and head outside, to meditate?! Yeah, dude!

**We are the fellowship and the fellowship needs ‘we’.**

In service, Judy

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South Jersey AA Contact information

Website: [www.aasj.org](http://www.aasj.org)

AA information: toll free 856-920-1212

AA office: 856-486-4446

Newsletter: [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org)

“When anyone anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be there. For that I am responsible.”

Please see this newsletter, the [aasj.org](http://aasj.org) site, and your local home group for chances to be of service.

## Steering Committee Meeting Highlights

**Answering Svc** Volunteers still needed for overnight Friday and Saturday nights

**Budget and Finance:** Needed: C0-Chair! This is a great way to do service.

**H&I** We had 14 groups show filling 111 out of 139 commitments. We have 3 open speaking commitments for the month of May:

Unity Place 2 (Hammonton) Thurs 1145 am to 1230 pm May 19      Maryville **Women** (Franklinville)  
Mon 8 to 9 pm May 23 & 30

.We would like to thank Justin for taking the 1<sup>st</sup> week hosting commitment for JFK Detox on Thursday. We have 5 open hosting commitments.

1. Unity Wed (Cherry Hill)10:15 am to 10:45 am 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> week
2. Seabrook **Women** Wed 730 to 845 pm 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup> week (starting in June) **NEW**
3. JFK (Cherry Hill) Thurs 8 to 9 p.m. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup> week **NEW**
4. Unity (Hammonton) Thurs 1130 am to 1215 pm 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> week
5. Seabrook **Women** Fri 730 to 845 pm 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> week

*Our next meeting is **June 6, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the Intergroup Office.***

**Literature:** vacancies are Wednesday & Friday: 10 AM – 12 PM, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings 6 – 8 PM. Please announce at all your meetings. If there is no one to sell literature, you will have no way to purchase anything except through the Road Show!

Please consider having the Road Show at your next meeting. See AA approved literature that you didn't even know existed!!!! Just send an email to [literature@aaaj.org](mailto:literature@aaaj.org)!

**Newsletter:** Please send articles!!!! We love to hear from you!!!!

**Public Information:** We are scheduled to go to Gloucester City Jr-Sr High School (1300 Market Street, Gloucester City, NJ 08030) on May 12, 2011 to speak to 250 - 300 kids. On May 16 & May 23, we are scheduled for Delran High School. Haddon Township High School has requested our services, not scheduled yet.

I would like to thank Samantha & Zack for all their help.

The IDRC programs for Burlington and Gloucester Counties continue to operate smoothly. Thanks to all who volunteer their time.

**Unity**—There will be a 24 hour alkathon on Memorial Day, from 6pm the evening before to 6 pm the day of. The place is the same, in Woodbury. Volunteers and speakers are needed.

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Please check the [aaaj.org](http://aaaj.org) website for a complete listing of all service positions available. Your service is important to us all.

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## Pondering the Gift of Monotony

My life has become somewhat predictable. Friends know where to find me, what meetings I will be going to, where I work, what I like to do and eat.....I have the same routine most days, even on the weekends. I heard someone share that they were tired of the same thing, perhaps skipping a meeting wouldn't be so bad. They felt like they were in a rut. I got to thinking about monotony and how it works for me.

I find that on the days I feel like staying put my mantra is "just make the effort." I have found that in the monotony of my day arise the moments I have come to cherish. They are the meeting where I heard an awesome sharing, or the person I was worried about who finally showed up at the meeting again, or the smile on the face of the person who I held a door for, or the thank you from my boss, or the trees in bloom, or the sparkle in your eyes. I would surely miss all this if I was busy trying to spruce up my life!

-Jude

## Where's the Meeting?

A member wonders if we are being welcoming enough to newcomers and visitors

It's early evening. I'm staying in a motel by myself in a vaguely familiar city. It has long been my custom to go to an AA meeting any night that's not otherwise spoken for. The local answering service provides me with the address of the meeting place, I check my map, allow myself a little extra time to get lost, and I'm off.

After a few minutes, I find the building--there's no identification on it but I can tell from the number next door that I'm in the right place. I park my car and get out. Which door is the right one? Do I knock or just walk in? For a while, I wander around, hoping someone will arrive at the meeting, see me standing there looking pathetic, and help me out. Eventually, my courage returns and my inclination to run away ebbs. I boldly try the door and walk in, hoping to see some evidence of Alcoholics Anonymous. At first I'm not sure, but I ask if there's a meeting tonight. The answer is affirmative; they point out the coffeepot and go back to their own conversation.

By the time the meeting starts, I feel much better, the familiar sounds of the meeting remind me that AA is basically the same everywhere, and my anxieties disappear. I participate in the meeting and go back to the motel feeling fabulous about Alcoholics Anonymous and my continuing sobriety, but faintly uncomfortable about what I experienced in finding the meeting.

Barbara W. Eureka, California

I've been sober for a while, thus, I begin by taking my own inventory. There's no doubt that my own self-centered fear of being in unfamiliar surroundings is at the root of my discomfort. But what about the situation? Suppose I had been a newcomer? Would I have stayed around long enough for the meeting to start? Or would I have wandered around in the parking lot for a few minutes and then run for the nearest barroom or the safety of my own living room?

I'm going back to my home town this week to see its meetings through the eyes of the newcomer. Does the address in the meeting directory tell me exactly in which building or room the meeting is held? Are there signs to follow to the basement, back room, or other obscure location? If this were my first meeting would I find the door and feel welcome when I entered?

Our service workers put a lot of effort into public information, carrying the message into various institutions where alcoholics are confined, and providing twenty-four-hour answering services. None of this means much if the newcomer we attract stands in the parking lot and wonders, "Where's the meeting?"

Barbara W, Eureka CA

Jan 2009 Grapevine

## Fellowship Announcements and Things To Do

**May 12 - 15** - 6th Annual International Seniors in Sobriety Conference. Holiday Inn, Long Island.

Workshops; AA & Alanon Meetings & Speakers; Spiritual Conference; Fellowship & Banquet.

Tour of Stepping Stones (Home of Bill W. & Lois). Contacts: Coni M. [cmot@optonline.net](mailto:cmot@optonline.net) , Nancy O. [nomh@optonline.net](mailto:nomh@optonline.net) , Nancy B. [nblomberg@segalco.com](mailto:nblomberg@segalco.com) .

**Sunday, May 15** - Area 45 Spring Assembly. Elmer Grange Hall off Rt. 40 at Pole Tavern Circle, Pilesgrove Twp. Registration at 8:30 AM. New GSR/DCM Orientation at 9 AM. Assembly Meeting at 10 AM and Committee Meeting at 1PM. Includes continental breakfast and lunch. All are invited. See [www.snjaa.org](http://www.snjaa.org) for further directions and info.

**Sunday, May 15** - Step by Step Group is celebrating it's 21st Anniversary. St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Haddon Ave. & WHP, Oaklyn, NJ. Dessert at 6:00 PM. 2 speakers: Sonny & Claude at 7:00 PM

**Friday, May 20** - Marlton Group (POP) Anniversary. 11:00 AM. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Rt. 70 & Cooper St. ¼ mile east of Rt. 70. 2 Speakers

**Friday, May 20 - Sunday, May 22** - NERF (Northeast Regional Forum), Sturbridge, MA, 01566. Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center, 366 Main St. For more information call G.S.O. at (212) 870-3400 or see [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

**Sunday, May 29 - Monday, May 30** - SJIG Memorial Day Alcathon & Picnic sponsored by the Unity Committee. 6:00 PM - 6:00 PM (24 hour). Christ Episcopal Church, 62 Delaware St., Woodbury, NJ. (basement). Directly behind Courthouse on Broad St. Info: Joey H - 856.534.7619

**June 3 - 5** - Matt Talbot Retreat Group #114 Serenity Weekend for Recovering Alcoholic Men. Marianist Family Retreat Center, 417 Yale Ave. Cape May Point, NJ 08212. Cost: \$150/pp. More info: [hunter42@ptd.net](mailto:hunter42@ptd.net) or Scott: 570-234-7698. [www.capemaymarianists.org](http://www.capemaymarianists.org)

**June 10-12** - Akron, Ohio will celebrate Founder's Day with a convention. If you would like to go, we will be taking a bus to Akron. Total cost for bus, room and registration is \$400 + many surprises. For more info call Wayne : 856-534-0104

**Saturday, June 11** - Founder's Day Picnic, Subaru Pavilion at Cooper River Park, N. Park Drive. Cherry Hill, NJ. 12:00 - 5:00 PM. Bbq & Refreshments. Speaker: Al B. at 2:00 PM.

**Friday, July 22** - Baseball Game. Phillies vs San Diego Padres. 7:05 PM. Information & tickets call: Jack W. 856-768-1039 (cell)

**Saturday, July 23** - Back Bay afternoon fishing charter aboard the Duke O' Fluke out of Somers Point, NJ. Sponsored by SJIG Social Committee. 1:00 - 5:00 PM. \$25.00/pp includes rod, tackle, bait & mate's tip. Contact Mike Lore: 856-779-1830 or [mikelore@voicenet.com](mailto:mikelore@voicenet.com) Directions: <http://www.dukeofluke.com/directions.htm>

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### On the Lighter Side....

A computer lets you make mistakes faster than any other invention--with the possible exception of tequila.

Terry B, Albany NY

A few friends were playing a trivia game one night. It was a very drunk lady's turn and she got a science question: "If you are in a vacuum and someone calls your name, can you hear it?"

She thought for a minute or two, and then asked, "Is it on or off?"

Richard M, Golden CO

## What Meeting Are You Going To Tomorrow?

When the sheriff came to help my terrified wife grab a few of her belongings from our house, so she could leave me, I was passed out in a drunken stupor on the bed. That day I had drunk more than I had in the decade we'd been together. I turned into an insane, infantile, terrorizing, and abusive beast that last day of drinking. I'm sure I had come close before but I was in rare form that day. It culminated with me trying to wrench a set of car keys out of her hand. She was gripping them too tightly for my liking, so I bit her arm with vigor. She screamed and called for the police, and I made a cowardly escape, bribing some stranger at an ATM for a quick ride out of Forestville to avoid arrest.

I threw up for four hours the next morning. Back at my house, I barely noticed that anything was missing. Her toothbrush? Hair brush? Where was she? She was gone. I lay down in the throbbing of my misery and wished to die. This is where the first of the prayers went up. In the past, all of my prayers had been the barter variety: "Get me out of this situation and I'll be a good boy forever and ever, amen." This one was much more simple and I meant it with all my heart: "God, please help me."

I was alone on the floor of my house for three days. I drank only water. I was terrified to leave for fear of drinking. Finally I called the AA hotline and learned that there was a meeting in Graton on Thursday night. I had visited three AA meetings back in 1992, just long enough to learn that I wasn't one of them and could get on with my drinking. It was now May of 1998, and I waited for the meeting secretary to ask if there were any newcomers. He did. I said, "My name is Chris and I'm an alcoholic." A trickle of tears became a river then. I let go. I was tired of fighting it and I let go.

The tears didn't stop throughout that meeting. During the discussion part of the meeting, one goodlooking and nicely dressed lady motioned to me and said to the group, "He's why we're here. He's here to remind me where I came from. I've left that misery." In that moment I knew they had all been where I was; I didn't have any words for this place. They did. They called it "pitiful, incomprehensible demoralization."

After that meeting, a stranger walked over to me and put his arm across my shoulders and kindly asked, "How are you doing?" It was a moment of kindness I had not expected. I knew I was the scum of the earth. I had wounded my wife and she had left me and I was alone and jobless and didn't know what to do. We talked for a while and what I remember him saying as he gave me his business card is this, "You hang in there. Take it one day at a time and call me if you need to talk to someone." I felt like I existed. I felt like I was cared for. His name was David and today he's my sponsor.

I went to the Friday night Occidental meeting the next day. At the end of that meeting, I was still in a fog. Two clean-cut guys about my age, late twenties or early thirties I guessed, came up to me and started asking questions. "How many days sober are you?" "How is it going?" "Feeling better?" I didn't have any time to dwell on the fact that I had lost the love of my life and my prospects were pitiful. This was Matt and Aaron. They held out their hands to me and pulled me into the boat of AA. And Aaron asked me what I believe is the most important question a newcomer needs to be asked during his first few weeks of sobriety, "Where are you going tomorrow?"

"What do you mean?" I asked back.

"What meeting are you going to tomorrow?" he clarified.

"Oh, I didn't know there was a meeting tomorrow," I said.

Aaron laughed and put a meeting schedule in my hand. I am fortunate to live in a county that has many different meetings each and every day. Aaron stood next to me and circled all the meetings that he found worked for him. He was still concerned about where I was going to go tomorrow and he said, "Saturday night, Forestville. It's a great meeting. I'll see you there."

I went. Aaron was there. So were a bunch of the same people I had seen in Graton, and Occidental the two previous nights. I had already heard the drill: read the Big Book, go to meetings, get a sponsor, and work the Steps, and if you are

serious, go to ninety meetings in ninety days. I was nothing but serious and the fact that these same faces were showing up at meetings each and every day made me feel all right going to meetings each and every day. During my first ninety days, I usually went to both a morning meeting and an evening meeting.

At meetings they said, "Grab the phone list and call someone if you start craving a drink or if you get lonely." This seemed like about the stupidest thing in the world to me. How could I possibly call a stranger? I'm a real man. I don't need help from other people. They had a word for this kind of thinking: stinking. So I called people on the phone list. Strangers. They were kind to me. I called Matt. Kind. Aaron. Kind. Maria. Kind. Each conversation ended with, "I'll see you at the meeting."

I had a particularly grueling day just a couple months into sobriety. They had all promised that things would start to get better. Well, it wasn't happening for me! There was this guy named Tim fixing his coffee next to me right before the Tuesday night meeting in Sebastopol. He had always seemed kind of aloof to me and I had avoided him. He asked me, "How are you doing?"

I answered, "Pretty poorly. When does it start to get better?"

"It does get better," he said.

He went and sat down to lead the meeting. When his harrowing share was complete, he said this to the group, "Someone just asked me a really good question: when does it start to get better? That's what I'd like to hear about tonight."

When my concern that day became the topic of that meeting I felt like I went from being a sober visitor to AA meetings to being a member of AA. I stood with Tim outside that meeting and thanked him for doing that.

I meet Tim at a lot of meetings now, and I always stay after and talk with him. He has helped me through the darkest periods of sobriety. We talked about the restraining order my wife brought against me. We talked about the hearing. We talked about the two telephone conversations when she insisted that divorce was the only course of action. Tim always said, "Just listen to her."

I whined about the pain of her leaving me. I whined to David, to Tim, to Matt, to any AA that would stand still long enough for me to rip from my pocket one of the printed-out E-mails she had sent me. Invariably, all my AA friends told me, "Don't do anything. Just listen."

I didn't do anything. I just listened. When I started listening to my wife, our conversations started to get better. (Imagine that.) When I started listening to my wife, I was amazed by all she had to say. The more I listened to my wife the better things got. Now I get to listen to her in a new house that we are sharing as equal partners in a completely new marriage to each other. Our separation lasted over eight months. She began to work the Al-Anon program during those eight months and we suddenly have more in common than ever: faith in a Higher Power and prayer. We read AA and Al-Anon literature to one another. We pray and meditate together. We are both profoundly grateful for the lessons about God, communication, and recovery that we have learned in the rooms of AA and Al-Anon.

My life has improved so much since that last awful day of drinking that I am truly amazed before I am halfway through. My recovery relies on the hands of many people being extended to me. The welcome I received was more than a word. It was a word followed by actions. I am never alone in AA. I have played tennis with alcoholics. Had many lunches and dinners with AAs. Gone on drives to forests and beaches with AAs. AAs, especially my sponsor, have helped me many times. They have helped me move. Helped me fix my car.

And most importantly they have taught me to pray. When I go to meetings and see tough, world-ravaged men and women turning their lives over to the care of a Higher Power, I am reminded that God is my director.

This is the Alcoholics Anonymous that helped me rebuild my life after I had torn it down with booze. This is the Alcoholics Anonymous that I owe to each trembling and shaky-footed newcomer who gets fed up with his life enough to look for something new.