

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

NOVEMBER 2012

On “Complete Defeat” and a Sense of Gratitude

In the beginning, it was more like total frustration on where my life was heading rather than complete defeat. Were it not for work and the occasional get together with my two children, most of my life was totally centered on a social life that was tied in with having a drink. Even though my Irish twin brother was taken down by alcohol, I was not convinced that the same could happen to me. But this knucklehead could see that I was sliding down a slippery slope, and the good advice from a member

Thinking back to that first meeting I set out for I can remember being more intrigued than fearful. And believe me, I was prepared to pick it apart should it not meet my expectations. If alcohol as I know it now were by my side that evening and walked right up to that meeting room with me, I would like to think I said, "Wait here for me, I'll be back in a few."

Complete Defeat continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 2 | Step Eleven continued |
| 3 | Experience, Strength & Hope |
| 3 | Tradition Eleven |
| 4 | Complete Defeat continued |
| 4 | What are you Grateful for? |
| 5 | Ask a Work in Progress Alcoholic |
| 5 | Tradition Eleven continued |
| 6 | Editorial Policy, IG Announcements & Question of the Month |
| 7 | Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do |

Two Experiences with Step 11

This month, we received two submissions (for which we are eternally grateful!) about Step Eleven, which is apt since this step is so personal and individual. We decided to publish both pieces together.

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

When attending a meeting where the eleventh step is the topic the discussion can generally center around one or more parts of this step. How to pray? How to Meditate? What is God's will?

When I first came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I knew what prayer was, having grown up in an organized religion and a household where prayer and the discussion of prayer were common. As a child of the seventies the idea of meditation brought to mind the concept of Ravi Shankar, incense and sitars. Though there is nothing wrong with that notion, it was just something I was not familiar with.

It wasn't long before I heard things like "put your shoes under the bed" and "while you are down there pray." Also it was not long before I was attending retreats and it was there where quite time would be set aside for us to meditate. I have to tell you that for this alcoholic the idea of sitting quietly and clearing my mind was not (and still is not) an easy task.

With the passing of time it became more and more difficult to "hit my knees" to pray, and that practice stopped. For a long time I would never share that with anyone or in a meeting, out of fear that I was doing it wrong. Over the years, I am more than happy to share that experience should there be anyone else who might have a similar situation; for you see I think the format for prayer is not nearly as important as the prayers themselves.

With the passing of time it became more and more difficult to "hit my knees" to pray, and that practice stopped. For a long time I would never share that with anyone or in a meeting, out of fear that I was doing it wrong. Over the years, I am

Step Eleven continued on page 2

more than happy to share that experience should there be anyone else who might have a similar situation; for you see I think the format for prayer is not nearly as important as the prayers themselves.

As has been my experience with anything to do with Alcoholics Anonymous, when I need direction or answers I turn to our book. Step Eleven in our Big Book has clear cut directions on "how" to do Step 11, as well as the results if those directions are followed. I think it clearly defines not only how to pray and meditate but defines what "God's will" is for me.

"When we retire at night we constructively review our day" (yes, step Eleven and not Ten as I so often hear it described) - Is this not a form of meditating? It continues this reflective process by asking us a series of question to review our conduct throughout the day. Then it goes on to tell us "After making our review we ask God's...." Isn't asking God the same as talking to God, thus praying?

"On awakening let us think of the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day..." again, is this not a form of meditation? Once again, "Before we begin, we ask God...." Sounds like prayer to me.

Now what about "God's will for me"? I think this too is clearly defined here where it suggests "we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives"... "Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motive"

Now what about "God's will for me"? I think this too is clearly defined here where it suggests "we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives"... "Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motive..."

If I can go through the day and keep these thoughts with me as I go, there is no doubt as to what God would have me do.

And for those times when there is doubt, the Big Book goes on to tell me exactly what to do. See page 86, last paragraph, for your answer.

--Anonymous

Sought Through Prayer and Meditation

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

I have two years of sobriety. Making the choice to have contact with God, as I understand him, was difficult. I have vacillated from one extreme to another, either God is all, or God drops me and walks away, not looking back at my sorry, stubborn ass.

I sometimes have trouble meditating, I thought the purpose was to empty my mind and sit with myself, waiting for God to give me a clue. I would still be waiting, if I continued on that way. I have since learned, for me, meditation is sitting quietly and letting my thoughts go where they might. I like being outside, nature is a large part of making contact. It's amazing how easy it is for me to shut the world out during this time. I have had a few amazing experiences of profound insight, one would be a lesson in taking it easy.

Once I realized I could develop my own way of starting conversation, it became easier. The slogan, One Day at a Time, opened a new door for me. I only have to rely on him for today, and if I am willing, I have a more peaceful day. I am mindful of tomorrow, but it no longer rules my life. I take it easy, knowing God has my back.

I ask him to go with me everywhere, everyday, especially to work. When I do this, I am made aware of my actions and behaviors.

I ask him to go with me everywhere, everyday, especially to work. When I do this, I am made aware of my actions and behaviors. I can easily get caught up in negative thinking, gossip, and my own self importance. When I ask God to help me, I find I pause, (usually) and almost immediately, I'm shown to see things from another's point of view, and just maybe, that person was trying to be helpful. I am defiant and spiteful, yet keeping an open line with my God, I find I have a voice that can be kind and caring. I see that I am losing some of my selfish motives and am accepting people as they are, where they are. To me, that is what my conscious contact is about at this time in my Sobriety.

I am grateful. I am not so anxious, my skin is fitting me better. This is a result of letting God in.

--Pam A.

Experience, Strength & Hope: Chanting to a Stone Wall

For this prisoner, the endless discussions about various practices in meetings are a luxury he doesn't have. (This article is from the online edition of Grapevine magazine.)

I am in prison trying to clean up the wreckage of my past. I've been in and out of the program for many years. I've been reading issues of Grapevine for a while here. There's not much else to do in a cell for twenty hours a day.

A few things upset me about some of the articles past and present. Specifically, I mean the useless griping about seemingly trivial things like holding hands in meetings, saying the Lord's Prayer, or people who have other addictions.

From where I am sitting, it would be an honor to say any prayer with anyone anywhere for any reason. I don't want to die of this horrible disease and would do anything to be relieved of this nightmare.

From where I am sitting, it would be an honor to say any prayer with anyone anywhere for any reason. I don't want to die of this horrible disease and would do anything to be relieved of this nightmare.

Some people like options, for me there aren't any. If I was told that the only way to sobriety was to chant to a stone wall, I would do it.

I have hit so many bottoms and they have gotten lower and lower until I finally reached down to my coffin and sat on the lid. I figured there that I better either open it and get in or look up at the sky. When you are in that position, everything is better.

Holding hands or not, praying or not, mentioning drugs or not: if I am focused on that, I will lose the way out of this. AA has done fine for a long time so I will leave it alone and just try to help the next sick person that needs it.

—Damon S., Bonne Terre, Mo

South Jersey Intergroup's H&I Committee need your help at JFK Hospital's Psych Unit on Fridays 7:00 - 8:00 PM, at Chapel Avenue and Cooper Landing Road. This is a One Host and One Speaker Commitment. First Opening is Nov 23rd. Interested persons please contact: Scott 215-410-8499 or Becky 609-969-2327

Tradition Eleven: Understanding the A.A. Public Relations Policy

Tradition Eleven – Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film.

Webster defines public relations as “the business of inducing the public to have understanding for and goodwill toward a person, firm or institution.”

What better way to achieve this than to maintain our personal anonymity as it relates to our membership in Alcoholics Anonymous? For the sake of discussion here, let's set aside the personal anonymity members of the fellowship wish to maintain between themselves. That is a decision that each person, on their own, chooses to make and while it does play into this tradition, I believe that if you read any of Bill's writings on this subject he is clearly addressing the need to maintain our membership in Alcoholics Anonymous with respect to public relations.

I can think of nothing that more clearly defines this tradition than a statement credited to Dr. Bob. In it he states:

"Since our Tradition on anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English language that to maintain anonymity at any other level is definitely a violation of this Tradition. The AA who hides his identity from his fellow AA by using only a given name violates the Tradition just as much as the AA who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matters pertaining to AA. The former is maintaining his anonymity ABOVE the level of press, radio, and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity BELOW the level of press, radio, and films - whereas the Tradition states that we should maintain our anonymity AT the level of press, radio, and films." (Underlining added at the discretion of this author in an effort to stress the differences).

In "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age," Bill goes on to write "...we do have to face the fact that being in the public eye is hazardous, especially for us. By

Tradition Eleven continued on page 5

of the Professional Community set me on my journey.

Thinking back to that first meeting I set out for I can remember being more intrigued than fearful. And believe me, I was prepared to pick it apart should it not meet my expectations. If alcohol as I know it now were by my side that evening and walked right up to that meeting room with me, I would like to think I said, "Wait here for me, I'll be back in a few." But upon entering that meeting I experienced what Bill describes in the Big Book on page 17: "there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful."

And I get that more and more as I frequent these rooms. Today and every day since then I am so grateful for those that welcomed and embraced me "as I was" into this wonderful fellowship.

As for my friend I left waiting for me outside of the meeting room--well I have the utmost respect for him. That friend is still waiting, not like a cold, shivering and unfed dog, but as a playmate if I so choose to play with him. One day at a time, with the help of this fellowship, I can leave him outside.

--Joe C.

What Are You Grateful For This Thanksgiving?

Since this month's newsletter will be published right before Thanksgiving, we thought it would be appropriate to ask members of the fellowship what they are grateful for this year. If you missed our deadline but would still like to send us your thoughts, please do! We are happy to publish gratitude lists all year. – Patty and Angie

"Each night before I lay my head to rest I'm grateful for the steady hand my back surgeon had in performing my back surgery " -- Frank Z.

"For the many Freedoms of choice I have today! For instance, this past Saturday, rather than get involved with trivial drama, I decided to go to the Walnut St. Theater. I would have never dreamed of this in past. " -- Janeen

"That my baby grand-daughter was taken to Children's Hospital recently and we were told that her baby heart was good. And I was present for this." -- Al G.

"Just to be grateful. Yep, just grateful...over four years ago I was not remotely conscious of this." -- Lance

"For the sanity and clarity I have in my life today...and I have a hand in it." – Lois

"I understand now, more than ever, that my liabilities have become my assets." -- John

"There was a baby of maybe five or six months right next to me at a meeting. She chattered away the whole time the speaker was talking. All I could think of were first, that she was able to do so, and second, that I was able to hear her. And for that I am grateful!" – Joe



"AA gave me a second chance at a decent sober life, and for that, I am grateful." - Karen M.

"Of all the things I am grateful, I am most grateful for my relationship with my Higher Power." - Joe K.

"My relationship with God, which I learned through this program." - Adrienne

"I am grateful for the people who tell me the things I do not want to hear." - Arn

"Foremost, I am grateful that Alcoholics Anonymous walked me through the steps that brought me to a spiritual awakening, an understanding, particularly, of the Third Step. Turning my will over to the care of God." - Angie

"I'm grateful that I wake up looking forward to the day, no matter what it might bring, rather than dreading it." – Patty H.

Many, including those above, were quick to tell us that their family was in the forefront; they were grateful for their healthy children and grandchildren (Elaine M. and Frank Z.). They were grateful to regain friendships with family members and friends which they feared would never happen. And when 'pushed' a bit they attribute it to the understanding of a power greater than themselves...in line with the Fellowship of A.A.

Ask a Work in Progress Alcoholic



How often we hear the phrase, "Meeting Makers Make It" during the course of a meeting! Of course, they do. Anyone who has been around AA for a few 24/7s has heard people who have gone out (but had the good fortune of coming back) say that the first element of their "slip" was a reduction in numbers of meetings attended, often followed by a complete stoppage of meetings altogether.

Meeting attendance, however, is an important and integral part of our twelve-step program, but it is only one of our keys to daily sobriety. It is especially important to let newcomers know that a close contact with one's higher authority, sponsorship, service (to the group, the fellowship, and to another suffering alcoholic), and practicing these principles in all our affairs, is the rest of our mission as we trudge the happy road of sobriety daily.

Daily attendance at meetings is, for me, the glue that binds our fellowship into a seamless garment. I am blessed to have been released from the bondage of employment for several years now, so that I am able to attend numerous meeting. It makes me happy to do so. It adds to my serenity; it enhances my humility. When I hear the more serious problems of others, it strengthens my feeling of belonging to a group of people dedicated solely to helping others (while helping themselves by doing so) to find sobriety. It adds to my feelings of self-worth when I engage in helping others, not only by charitable acts, but also by sharing my

experience, strength, and hope with them. It fulfills my need for routine, and morning meetings are a great way to start my day.

For this recovering alcoholic, a meeting is not confined solely to the hour in which we congregate to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other and to learn more about the steps and traditions. I also find a great value in the meeting *before* the meeting, where I may meet folks I know, or encounter and greet those who are as yet friends to be. And, the meeting *after* the meeting (when schedule allows) is a great way to follow up on matters discussed in the formal meeting, and to allow others to share their own personal experiences as they need and care to do so.

Meetings work for me--I ain't special--they can work for you, too.

-- A Work in Progress Alcoholic

Ask a Work in Progress Alcoholic is a column where one alcoholic shares his perspective on recovery, alcoholism, and the Twelve Steps. He takes on topics that come up in the rooms and in his recovery. Tell us what you think, or if you have a question to ask our resident alcoholic, please send your question to newsletter@aaaj.org.

Tradition Eleven continued from page 3

temperament many of us had been irresponsible promoters, and the prospect of a society composed largely of promoters was frightening. We knew we had to exercise self-restraint."

In the years that I have been here, I can tell you at no time has an opportunity presented itself where it has been necessary for me to remember the importance of this tradition. I can also tell you though, should it ever present, it would be very easy for me to feel the need to

use my membership in Alcoholics Anonymous as an opportunity to promote the good my membership has permitted me to do.

Personal ambition has no place in AA, but each of us as members have an obligation to serve as a guardian for that which has God has so freely given us.

In the fellowship of the Spirit

Joe K.

Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey Intergroup (although we welcome readers from other areas!). Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either A.A. or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from A.A. literature are printed with permission from A. A. World Services, Inc., and/or The A. A. 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.

Send your submissions to:
newsletter@asj.org.

Question of the Month

For next month's issue, we'd like to get your response to this question:

What are your resolutions for 2013?

Please email your replies no later than Wednesday, December 12th, to
newsletter@asj.org.

SJ Intergroup Announcements

South Jersey Intergroup has openings for chair of the following committees. Chairs attend the monthly steering committee meeting, held on the second Wednesday of the month at the Intergroup office in Pennsauken, as well as the full SJIG meeting on the third Thursday of the month:

Public Information Committee - The Public Information Committee provides AA speakers to schools and other organizations when requested. (2 years of sobriety required.)

Unity Committee - The Unity Committee shares on AA's 3rd Legacy, supports AA traditions, and invites all AA members into Unity and Service by visiting groups, Alcahons and workshops. (1 year of sobriety required.)

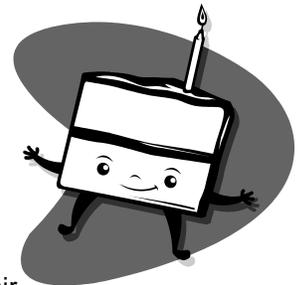
Please contact the chair of Intergroup if you are interested:
chairperson@asj.org

Also, you can call the Intergroup office for more information (see below).

Happy Anniversary, Pass It On!

The home group "Pass It On" was founded on November 4, 1986. The founders started this group to help others maintain sobriety. It is a closed, step and traditions meeting held on Tuesday nights at 8:00 pm at the Woodbury Presbyterian Church (67 South Broad Street).

--Jenn C., Archives Chair



CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.
PO Box 2514

Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446

Email: info@asj.org

Website: www.asj.org

24 Hour Hotline: 1-856-486-4444

Toll Free Hotline: 1-866-920-1212

SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8pm

at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church
989 Route 70 East
Cherry Hill, NJ

Fellowship Announcements November-December 2012

November 21- 22 – South Jersey Intergroup's Thanksgiving Alcathon. Hosted by the KISS Club. 818 N. Broad St., Woodbury, NJ. 10:00 PM: Wednesday - 10:00 PM: Thursday. One speaker every hour.

Saturday, November 24 - Magnolia will celebrate their 41st Anniversary starting at 8:30 PM with desserts and fellowship followed by 2 speakers. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (bldg in rear) Evesham & Warwick Rd. Dessert contributions welcomed.

Saturday, November 24 - New Chester's 41st Anniversary. 8:00 PM @ Blessed Katharine Drexel Church - between 2nd & 3rd on Norris St., Chester, PA F-F-F AA/AI-anon speakers.

Tuesday, November 27 – The Stairway to Recovery Women's Step and Tradition Group will celebrate their 22nd anniversary at First Baptist Church of Pitman (30 North Broadway, Pitman, NJ). Light refreshments at 7pm, followed by a speaker at 7:30 pm.

Saturday, December 1 – Social/Dance for friends of Bill W. at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Mt. Holly (121 High Street, Mt. Holly). 7pm to Midnight. \$5 at the door includes admission, food and fun! Soda/water for \$1. Food donations are welcome. Music by DJ Big Al!

Sunday, December 2 - Central Jersey Intergroup Annual Gratitude Breakfast. Carslake Community Center, Crosswicks Rd, Bordentown, NJ. 9:00 AM. Food: All you can eat. Speaker: Connie Y. with 21 years of sobriety from the 1-2-3 Beginner's Step Meeting & CJ Intergroup Trustee. \$15.00/pp.

Monday, December 3 -Churchtown Group 66th Anniversary, Pennsville Assembly of God, 328 N. Broadway (Rt 49 W.) Pennsville, NJ. 7PM: Eat / 8PM: Speaker.

Wednesday, December 5 - 15th Annual "Friends of Bill" Men's Christmas Dinner. 6:00 PM. Nicolosi Catering, 1 Hessian Ave. & Rt. 45, West Deptford, NJ. \$40.00 p/p. Proceeds support the Hope Hall VOA Children's Christmas Party & The Last Stop Mission. Men are encouraged to bring new toys. Tickets: Jack H. - 856.456.5909, Kevin W. - 609.760.7337 or Frank H. - 215.280.5733.

Thursday, December 6 – “Grace Into Action” 3rd Anniversary at First Baptist Church, 19 West Main Street, Moorestown, NJ. In Fellowship Hall, located downstairs. Two speakers at 6pm, followed by desserts and coffee at 7pm.

Saturday, December 8 - (Collingswood) A Daily Reprieve will have their 11th Anniversary @ St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 18 White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights. (Enter from White Horse Pike) starting at 9:00 AM with continental breakfast followed by speakers.

Thursday, December 13 – Woodbury Thursday Night will celebrate its 59th Anniversary at Presbyterian Church, Broad and Center Streets, in Woodbury, NJ. Food at 7pm, followed by two speakers at 8pm.

Friday, December 14 – How Important Is It? Group's annual candlelight dinner and meeting at St. Charles Borromeo School, Johnson and Stagecoach Roads, Washington Township. Meeting at 7pm, followed by a holiday meal.

Friday, December 14 - Somers Point "Unity Night" Spaghetti Dinner (5:30 - 6:45) Talk on Steps (6:45 - 7:15) Game time (7:15 - 7:45) Talk on Tradition 12 (7:45 - 8:15) "ask it" basket 8:15 - 8:30. United Methodist Church of Somers Point - Bethel Rd. & Doran Ave. Somers Point, NJ THIS IS A FREE EVENT.

