

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

OCTOBER 2013

Who Does This Jerk Think I Am?

A newcomer gives us an amusing look into her alcoholic mind as she encounters AA for the first time.

(7:00 am) The day started out like any other day with Led Zeppelin blaring in my ears. The loud music set off a staccato of the hangover blues in my brain. It was time to get up and face the day. I flopped over the edge of the bed and grabbed my clothes. I threw them on, stumbling down the dark, narrow hallway to my son's door. I saw the sun shining through the sheer curtains on his cherubic face. A little devil inside of me wanted to wake him up rudely but I stomped the thought down and woke him up gently.

"Come on, David. It is time to wake up."

(7:10 am) David, his face scrubbed and dressed for school, and I had breakfast together. David had his usual bowl of cereal and I had my usual tall glass of ice water with heavy-duty pain killers.

(7:30 am) "Hurry David or you will miss the bus."

(7:35 am) The house was peaceful even if my thoughts were not. Now it was time to make like the good little housewife and clean.

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The Language of Step Ten

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Ten is filled with words that signal immediate strong reactions in this alcoholic--words that hit me like a punch, words that make me sit up and take notice: sober, balance, living to good purpose, admitting, accepting, self-restraint, honesty, anger, fear, jealousy, self-pity, hurt pride, willingness, hate, progress not perfection. That's one heck of a menu to peruse! How does it all fit together, or does it?

Step Ten tells me that, on any given day, I am prey to becoming emotionally 'hung over' by too much anger, fear or jealousy for example. That these "dry benders" can lead straight to the bottle. That, as an alcoholic, I am uniquely ill-equipped to handle these emotions and that I'd better leave them to others better qualified to deal with them than I am.

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It Does Get Easier!

This AA has learned to enjoy social events, even weddings, without picking up a drink.

This month I will celebrate three years of continuous sobriety. That is, of course, as long as I remember that each day is just as important as any anniversary, and don't get overconfident. I do NOT take my sobriety for granted.

When I say "it gets easier" I am talking about taking part in things that in the past involved lots of drinking. For the newcomer, though, I want to say that it's really great advice to avoid those kinds of things unless you have a good reason for being there. In AA, we call it examining our motives. For instance, there is a weekly cocktail thing after work that I've never gone to. Why? Well, because I don't really have any reason for being there. If the president of my company was planning to make an important announcement, I'd go. Since she's so far not chosen that venue to share big news, I stay away. It's just easier, trust me on this!

I tend to go to weddings, however, because they so far have been either sober affairs or the weddings of someone very close to me. I DID white-knuckle it a bit at the wedding where I was seated directly facing the bar. Wow, that was tough. Not so much that I wanted to have a drink, but that it was no fun watching other people tie one on. I ended up leaving that one early. Which is FINE and your sponsor would tell you it's the right thing to do!

Which brings up an important point—please let your sponsor know if you are planning to attend events where alcohol will play a huge part, especially if you sense you'll be uncomfortable. I checked in with my sponsor and other close sober friends at all of the drinking events I've attended in the almost-three years I've been sober, and it really helps. At a wedding in NYC this past spring, I took frequent breaks to walk outside and called a sober friend each time.

I recently attended the wedding of a very close friend from college. I knew there would be drinking there, but my motive in going was to support him and celebrate his marriage. So that was cool. I talked it over with my sponsor beforehand, and checked in with a friend during the evening. It was by far the easiest I've felt at a wedding since getting sober. I danced all night (and yes, that gets easier to do sober eventually) and time flew. But the best moment of the evening came when a civilian (non-AA) friend of mine who knew me well in my drinking days leaned over to whisper in my ear.

"I just wanted to tell you something," she said. "In case you were wondering, you are every bit as fun to be with sober as you ever were when you were drinking."

As I hugged her something occurred to me—I had to stop drinking to realize that I didn't need to drink! Does that make sense? If you were like me, you drank to relax in social situations, and taking them on sober is a challenge. But I can do it without picking up a drink! And if I can do it, anyone can.

—a very grateful Patty H.

The Price of Sobriety

A member reflects on the price of a drink vs. a subscription to the Grapevine

I was in my first few weeks of sobriety and I was sitting in at the Tuesday night meeting in Collingswood. When the time came for AA announcements, a soft spoken woman with what appeared to be a Scottish or English accent talked about Grapevine Magazine, which she held up. She had subscriptions for it and she spoke of how convenient in size it was and that it could even fit in a purse or jacket pocket. During the remainder of the meeting all I was worried about was whether she'd still be there after the meeting. And true as God made apples she signed me up for what was to be my first AA literature purchase. I was even more thrilled when she handed me one to read until my first issue came to me in the mail. Back then it was about \$18 for a year and I thought how cheap this was compared to what my spending habits were prior to coming into the rooms of AA. I can't say I read every issue from front to back every month, but knowing it's there is comforting to me. It's continuous like my sobriety. Sometimes the Twelve and Twelve can be difficult to understand so I'll read the step or tradition in the Grapevine to get the members' feeling.

This brings me to a recent evening when the time came to

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(9:30 am) Everything was all clean. I decided to just sit on the couch, looking at all the neat lines the vacuum had left behind. So I sat and vegetated with ugly thoughts whirling around in my head.

(Is life really worth living? Now where did that come from? I will not deal with that right now! Go away! No! What are you contributing to life, Lorraine? A clean house? Whoopee! Stop this now! Call a friend. What friend, dummy? You don't have any friends. I need a drink.)

The shrill ringing of the phone shut off my unwanted thoughts.

"Hello?" (What the hell do you want?)

"Hi. This is your brother, what's up?"

"Nothing much, just sitting here relaxing." (Thinking of suicide, but I am fine, thanks!)

"What are you doing tonight?"

"Nothing" (Just going to take a whole bottle of pain pills.)

"Why don't you come to an AA meeting with me tonight?"

"Mike you know that Rick is the alcoholic in this family, not me. I need Al-Anon, not Alcoholics Anonymous." (Who does this jerk think I am, anyway?)

"Just come and see what the meetings are like, okay? I'll buy you steak dinner afterwards."

"Okay." (I never could pass up a free meal. Besides, steak sounded better to me than a bottle full of pills.)

"All right. I'll pick you up at seven o'clock. Bye." (Hmmm, he sure sounded happy.)

(12:15 pm) David was all smiles as he hopped off the bus. What was it with this kid anyway? Beautiful day my butt! The sky was clouding up and it looked like rain.

"Let's get home and take a nap before it starts to rain, David."

(2:30 pm) "Sure you can go in the backyard and play, David. No, Mommy doesn't want to play with you. Mommy is going to read a book."

(4:30 pm) "Oh, hi Rick."

"Hi. Where is David?"

"He's out back playing." (Nice to see you too, idiot.) "I'm going out with my brother tonight. What do you want for dinner?"

"Hamburgers sound okay to me."

"David and you can go to get fast food then." (Gee, Hon, the

house looks nice. Where are you going tonight? Do you even care, Rick?)

(5:30 pm) (The stupid idiot wasn't even home for an hour and the place was a mess. The towels were all over the bathroom floor, whiskers in the sink, dirty clothes everywhere and he left the toilet seat up again! Who did he think I was, his maid? A swift kick put the clothes into a corner.)

(7:00 pm) (The harsh buzzing of the doorbell sounded throughout the house. Mikey had arrived. He still looked like death warmed over from his drug abuse. I still wanted to know what that stupid idiot had to smile about.)

"See ya later, Rick. Bye, bye, David." As we drove through the gathering dusk I asked Mike, "What's an A.A. meeting like anyways?" "Wait and see." (That is all he would say.)

(7:15 pm) We had arrived at the meeting. (Hey Mike, wait up. Your sister is scared spitless!)

(7:30 pm) (Who are all these smiling people? They sure don't look like alcoholics or addicts. Opening prayer? I get it now, this is a religious group. Twelve Steps? Not affiliated with any sect or denomination- I'm confused? Will newcomers stand and identify? What's a newcomer? Someone with 30 days or less of sobriety? Not me! I'm not one of them!)

My whirling chaotic thoughts were interrupted as people around me began to stand up and introduce themselves. Suddenly I heard a voice inside my head,

("STAND UP!") I shot up off the couch as if I had been fired out of a gun. "My name is Lorraine and I am an alcoholic." Once I had said that and sat back down, I had felt an overwhelming sense of relief. I wouldn't have to carry my burdens alone anymore. Those people were there to help me in any way they could.

The next day everything seemed different.

(7:00 am) The Doors were merrily playing on the radio as I opened my eyes. I hopped out of bed and got dressed quickly. Breathlessly I hurried down to my son's room. I couldn't wait to see my son's sleeping face. "Hey sleepyhead, open your eyes. Come on David, it's a brand new day. Look it is raining! Maybe you and I can play in the puddles when you get home from school. Come on David, It's a beautiful day."

—Lorraine K., Sparks, Nev.

(from the March 2011 online edition of *Grapevine*)

We Have No Opinion

The Tenth Tradition: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Whether you realize it or not, we say it at every meeting, in our preamble:

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

And most of us realize this and appreciate the notion that we belong to something just because of who we are, and that no matter what religious, political or other belief, our organization does not voice an opinion on such matters. We can belong. There is a sense of comfort in that. In that case, we can all rest assured that AA is not going to take a position for, or against, our personal beliefs.

However, with our individual comfort along comes a responsibility – for each individual member. Take a look at the long form of this tradition:

No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

The long form not only focuses on AA as a whole, but compels both the group and the individual member to stay out of controversy. In other words, an AA group cannot advocate for or against gun control nor can an individual member declare that AA supports Obamacare. If we took sides on an issue, we would be dividing the fellowship – people would stand with us and others would stand against us and that is contrary to our First Tradition in which “personal recovery depends upon AA unity.” Tradition 10 applies to everyone in AA and we all need to be responsible for ensuring that AA continues to focus its attention on its primary purpose - to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

— Andrew P - *Daily Reflections, Haddonfield, NJ*

Recently, I attended an outdoor fair with my sponsee. As we wandered from booth to booth, my sponsee noticed that, at times, I was behaving quite arrogantly (and sometimes insultingly) to the various vendors or exhibitors (fear, jealousy). He pointed this out to me and caught me up extremely short. My first reaction was just as arrogant and defensive as I was being towards the vendors: how dare my sponsee criticize me (anger)? When I calmed down (self-restraint), I realized he was right: I was being rude and arrogant to others (honesty, admitting and accepting what I found). I sulked for awhile (self-pity) and then, with some degree of effort (these disciplines are not easy) I sat down with my sponsee to talk about my behavior. I asked for his help in dealing with it and trying to correct it.

In this display of negative behavior, I had played the ‘big-shot.’ I had forgotten that the only reason I was out there enjoying this beautiful day (and not laying in some jail cell or insane asylum) was through God’s grace and the fellowship of AA. That night, before retiring, I pledged to try and correct my behavior and do better with others. This has not been easy and the same behavior has repeated itself (in somewhat milder form) on several occasions since then. It is getting better though, and I need to remember that it is progress, not perfection that counts here.

Step Ten is my daily check-up on myself, as an alcoholic. It is the medicine I need to stay sober, balanced and living to good purpose. It all does fit together and when I see that, it doesn’t need to be a morbid exercise. It can be the key to freedom for me in each day’s march.

– *Masonville Marty*

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renew my subscription. Yes, for a moment – and it was fleeting -- I actually thought of the cost and if was it manageable! I said to myself, “Holy Cow, pain does have a short term memory,” and at that moment I sent in my renewal and paid extra for access to the Grapevine’s online archive. The price of a magazine has gone up as has the price of a drink and everything else. I pass my magazines on to our H&I Committee and I know that they get them into the hands of those who welcome and need them. One monthly issue is as cheap as a large coffee, but the magazines keeps going and going and going. Such a small price to pay for what AA has given me today. I like that saying "give until it feels good"! A special Thank You to Maggie S.! -- *Anonymous*

Help Wanted: South Jersey Intergroup

SJIG seeks service-minded individuals to fill volunteer positions at the board and committee levels. Sobriety required, but perfection is optional.

This month I'm pulling out the Big Guns to ask that you consider one of the following positions. On page 13 of As Bill Sees It Bill W. writes: "AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die." -- Patty H., newsletter chair

CHAIR: (Five Years Continuous Sobriety) The Chair is responsible for running the monthly meeting of Intergroup reps, coordinating the efforts of the various service committees and the ongoing functioning of the Intergroup.

VICE CHAIR: (Five Years Continuous Sobriety) Like any other organization, the Vice Chair steps in for the Chair in his/her absence. He/She also runs the Steering Committee meetings.

SECRETARY (Three Years Continuous Sobriety) Intergroup elects two Secretaries: the Recording Secretary takes the minutes of the Steering Committee meetings, and the Reporting Secretary takes the minutes of the monthly IG meeting and combines notes from the two meetings (along with other information) and distributes them every month.

TREASURER: (Three Years Continuous Sobriety) The Treasurer is the controller of all funds coming and going into SJIG. He/she pays all bills, receives and accounts for all Group contributions and disburses budget monies to the various committees. The Treasurer also prepares SJIG tax returns and handles the payroll of the Office Manager.

TRUSTEES: Five Trustees are elected with staggered terms. A Trustee must have ten years sobriety, belong to a home group in SJIG and have a history of AA service. Trustees form a board who advise the regular Intergroup panel on matters related to Traditions and AA operations.

All of the **SERVICE COMMITTEES** require two years of continuous sobriety. For the sake of space, we won't reprint the descriptions of these committees (see the October newsletter). But please talk to the current committee chair if you're interested—we are all willing to help you make a smooth transition, and all our names are on the minutes distributed at Intergroup meetings. Some of these committees require more of your time than others. Also, committee chairs must prepare a monthly report and are encouraged to attend Steering Committee meetings, held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm at the SJIG office.

Service Committee Positions (chair and co-chair):

<i>Answering Service</i>	<i>Meeting List</i>
<i>Archives</i>	<i>Newsletter</i>
<i>Bookers</i>	<i>Public Information</i>
<i>Budget and Finance</i>	<i>Social Events</i>
<i>Hospitals & Institutions</i>	<i>Unity</i>
<i>Literature</i>	<i>Website</i>

Volunteer Opportunity

The Unity Committee will meet at the Intergroup office on Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 7 pm to welcome and train new committee members. Chair Joe T. says they have five group commitments that need to be scheduled before the end of the year. Anyone interested should attend. He says the presentations they've been making are lengthy and include props—so they're looking for AA Group members who are comfortable speaking before others. If you'd like more information, contact Joe at Unity@aasj.org.

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 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@asj.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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Email: info@asj.org

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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

Happy Anniversary!

The "Blackwood Tuesday Night Women's Living Sober" home group was founded on October 7, 2003. This is a closed, women's Step/Living Sober meeting held on Tuesday evenings at 7:00pm at the Lakeland Complex, Ann Mullen Building on Woodbury-Turnersville Road in Blackwood. This women's group originally held their meetings at the home of one of the group founders.

Here are some AA "fun facts" for this month from the Archives page on the Intergroup website: www.aasj.org:

October 13, 1947: "The Melbourne Group" held its first meeting in Australia

October 10, 1970: Lois reads "Bill's last message" at annual dinner in NY

October 24, 1973: Trustees Archives Committee of AA held their first meeting

--Jenn C., Archives Chair

Announcements

The chair and co-chair of the newsletter committee (and many others) will be rotating out at the end of the year. Now is your chance to get involved in service at the Intergroup level. If you think you might be interested in taking over the newsletter, we're happy to help you make a smooth transition. Please contact Patty or Angie at newsletter@asj.org for more information.

Question of the Month

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

What is your favorite quote from the Big Book and why?

Please email your replies no later than Friday, November 15, to newsletter@asj.org.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

November, Step and Tradition 11

Friday, November 15

December, Step and Tradition 12

Friday, December 13

For each month, we'd love to get your submissions on the step or tradition that corresponds. We are always looking for AAs to share their Experience, Strength and Hope (ESH) in print.

Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do

October-November 2013

Saturday, October 19 - Day of Sharing, 8:30 am to Noon at Carslake Community Center, 209 Crosswicks Rd. Bordentown, NJ. The three Intergroups & Area 45 will join to discuss common problems, issues, and solutions. Please come out and share your experience, strength, and hope as it relates to AA service. Continental breakfast is provided.

Saturday, October 19 – Last Stop Halloween Party. Starts after 8:00 PM anniversary meeting for Eddie Z. Last Stop Clubhouse, 2440 Kensington Ave., Philadelphia, PA. Prize for best costume. \$5.00 Donation. Contact Chris M: 215-634-3564

Sunday, October 20 - District 13 Meeting. 10:30AM: Area 45 Delegate Report. Food/Fun/Fellowship. High Kickers Group, 69 Spruce St., Pennsville Senior Community Center.

Each Weekend in October – Book-Toberfest. Stepping Stones, 4945 Friendship St., Philadelphia, PA 19135. Questions? Call: Rick D. 267-210-6486

Saturday, October 26 - District 3 "Stump the Drunk" Service Event. 9:30 AM. St Stephen's Episcopal Church, 158 Warren Street, Beverly, NJ.

Saturday, October 26 – Kiss Club Halloween Dance. 8:00 PM. \$10 at the door will include food and beverages. Prizes will be given for the best costumes! 818 N. Broad St. Woodbury, NJ. 856-848-5477

Saturday, October 26 - Halloween Costume Ball. 8:00PM - 12:00AM. 12 Step House, North Wildwood Community Center, 10th & Central Ave. F-F-F. Music. Volunteers & Food Donations Welcome. 609-602-3951

Sunday, October 27 - "Live and Let Live" 28th Group Anniversary. Food and fellowship @ 6:30 PM, Meeting to follow. Virtua Memorial Hospital Conference Room, 175 Madison Ave., Mt. Holly, NJ.

Monday, October 28 – Audubon Last Mile 21st Anniversary. United Methodist Church, 314 W. Graisbury St, Audubon, NJ 08106. 7:00 PM: Desserts. 7:30 PM: 2 Speakers: Steve O & Laurie E.

Tuesday, October 29 – "Acceptance Group" 37th Anniversary. 8:00 PM. Christ Our Light RC Church, Resurrection School, 402 King's Hwy (Rt. 41) Food and two speakers. Halloween Theme if you want to wear a costume.

Friday, November 1 – "Lawnside Group" 36th Anniversary. 8:00 PM. Lawnside Borough Hall, 2nd floor, Warwick & Douglas Rds. Desserts and great speakers.

Saturday, November 2 – 3rd Annual Freedom Fire. Old Cedar Campground, 274 Richwood Rd., Monroeville, NJ. (GPS: 39.64019 x 75.17577) Food and fellowship 5:00 – 6:30 PM, 2 Speakers & Bonfire – 6:30 – 9:00 PM. Bring chair or blanket. Call: Rich – 856.904.3534. Donation: \$5.00.

Wednesday, November 6 – "Hemingway Group" Anniversary Meeting. 7:00 – 9:00 PM. An Eating Meeting with speakers. Tuckerton Rd, Marlton, NJ (at the Gibson House, turn in at the Indian Springs Driving Range)

Thursday, November 7 – "Pass It On Group" celebrates 3 years. Meet and eat will start @ 5:30PM, and meeting @ 6:00 PM. KISS Club, 818 N. Broad St. Woodbury, NJ. 856.848.5477.

Tues. Nov 12 - The Maple Shade Group will be celebrating its 51st Anniversary at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Forklanding Road and Helen St., Maple Shade. This is an eating meeting, with food served beginning at 7:00 p.m., and the meeting to start promptly at 8:00. As always we will feature a mystery guest speaker, and other fun stuff.



