

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

April 2018

Accepting the Reality That I Am an Alcoholic

At first I drank to escape reality, then I had to escape reality to keep drinking.

My alcoholism is something I willfully ignored. It was there; I knew it. But if I acknowledged it, I would have had to stop. And if I had to stop drinking, I would have to deal with reality 24-7.

When I first started drinking, the college environment provided plenty of ready-made rationalizations. Seemingly everyone

drank—after mid-terms and finals to blow off steam and decompress, and at parties and football games just to be social.

“Of course it was OK for me to be drunk at noon,” I would have said if anyone ever challenged me. “I was at a tailgate party.”

After I entered the working world, it was hitting the bar after work; in my case, that was often 9- or 10-o’-clock at night. A drink was a good way to relax after

a long hard day. Then it was, a couple of drinks was a good way to relax, and then it was a few drinks... You get the idea.

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She Said She Was Doing Fine

Her friend Susan knew everyone in AA and seemed to have it all. So what happened?

I first met Susan about three years ago. At the time, I had a little more than two years of sobriety and she had almost five. She seemed like she had it all together. She was very pretty, in her late 20s, with two children and another baby on the way. She also had an adorable husband and a nice house. She seemed to know everyone in AA and she had a lot of sponsees.



I was turning 40 and was just finding my bearings in AA. I had always been socially anxious and was not having an easy time meeting and connecting with people in the program. I’m a banking professional by trade and so was Susan. She also lived close to me. I began seeing her at the

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The Dreaded Step 4

So I’ve admitted I’m powerless, over alcohol, that I need to believe in a Power greater than me, and that I’m to allow that Power to guide my thoughts and actions. Now I’m told that I need to look thoroughly at my past, and write down all those resentments, fears, and misdeeds.

I know that doing that is going to re-stir the ill will and bad feelings I had about those events as they happened. I’m scared. Hey, I’ve got the first line for my “fears” column, fear of doing the 4th Step!

Now, I have to ask myself why I have this fear. Is it because I don’t want to unbury those memories? I already feel bad about my past, why put it all in one place? On paper, no less! What if the cops find it? My wife? My My kids? Who cares, really?

Based on that beginning, I’ve already set myself up to do a half-assed inventory at best.

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Reality

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I told myself it was about reducing stress. And that's important, because too much stress can kill you.

Over time, ignoring my alcoholism required me to reach increasingly high levels of gullibility. In order to believe I was not an alcoholic, I had to ignore these signs:

- Going to play golf and having hangover-induced vertigo on the first tee.
- Going to an afternoon party still severely hung over from the night before and drinking all afternoon.
- Getting so used to being hung over I could convince myself that I could drink until 2 a.m. and feel fine the next morning when I went to work.
- Falling down when I tried to get up off the chair.
- Falling down the steps.
- Getting the shakes.

I could go on.

Basically, I was able to convince myself that getting drunk every night really wasn't a problem.

I never tried to quit drinking altogether, but I would decide to lay-off the booze for, say, a week (and that only applied to the secret drinking I did in my room every night; a beer while watching the

game or a drinking at a party was still OK). I would deal with the shakes and the insomnia long enough for them to go away, and as soon as they did, I would go right back to what I was doing be-



fore. It gave me just enough denial to keep going.

Eventually, my alcoholism grew so loud it could no longer be ignored. It was like it was giving me an ultimatum: Either commit yourself to being an alcoholic no matter how much of a mess it makes out of your life or lose the escape that alcohol provides.

That wasn't an easy decision; the very fact that being a full-blown alcoholic seemed like a reasonable choice shows how insidious this disease is and how gullible I can be. It had been so long since I had to deal with reality on its own terms that the alternative actually seemed preferable.

Once I got sober, I found that I really could handle reality. I may not like what reality has to offer, but

every day I stayed sober reinforced the fact that living life on life's terms is doable.

Over time, reality began to bring its own rewards: My relationship with my wife has never been better; my work performance, which had remained at a high level until the last year or two of my drinking, is the best it's been in a long time; and I have found room for activities that alcohol had taken from me.

As the promises state: "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." Every day I stay sober is proof that I can face the past, that I can live in reality.

I'm not there yet; I still regret the past, but I no longer shut the door on it. And when I feel burdened about those regrets, I think about all of the doors that alcoholism had kept shut for all of those years, and how the rewards of having them open today far outweigh any of the "burdens" that come with sobriety.

I've been sober for nearly five years now, and I am finally living the life I expected of myself: not because I'm sober, but because I no longer allow alcohol to keep me from being the man I want to be. That's a reality that I can embrace.

*Steve W.
Masonville*

Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

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Website: www.aasj.org
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

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



Jude, the Alcoholic

This story can be sung to the tune of The Beverly Hillbillies (for those of you who remember!)

I'm gonna tell you a little story about a girl named Jude(y)
Too tall, too skinny, to be taken serious(ly)
Then at 9 she was staring at a glass
Next thing, down goes the bubbling blast.

Whiskey, that is, brown gold, Judy's tea.

She drank like a fish, had a good old wooden leg,
One day the gills closed and the leg became a peg.
She turned that corner where the fun just stopped
And her brain, almost mush, felt like it was gonna pop!

Next thing you know old Jude's an alcohol(ic)
Kin folk said Jude get away from here!
Said Seabrook House is the pace you oughtta be
So she loaded up the car and she moved to rehab at the sea!

No swimming pools, no movie stars. *(To be continued...)*

“Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves”

This is quote a tall order, as we read over this step
Realizing it's time to tell the secrets we've kept.

First of all, how do we fearlessly try
To uncover defects; the deception; the lie?

Approaching this crossroad, we look within
Finding acceptance, we now begin,

To search and find there is good in us,
And finally crack open a door we can trust.

Anonymous

Doing Fine

From page 1

gym after she had her baby and we started to become closer friends. I had lost my banking job after the real estate market crash in 2009 and she lost her job shortly thereafter, so we bonded over that.

One day, I remember working out with her and she very matter-of-factly confided in me that she had been feeling as though she wanted to drink. At the time I thought it was good that she felt comfortable enough with me to be honest about her feelings. But it turned out that allowing herself to entertain that type of dangerous thinking started a ball rolling that to this day has not stopped.

I remember sending her a text message some time later to see how she was doing. She said that she was doing fine but that she had relapsed the day before. I called and talked with her about it. She said she had been offered a drink and she took it. I remember thinking, Maybe she really wasn't an alcoholic; maybe she can handle it. Well, that one drink has started her onto a path of relapses. She goes on binges now and disappears for months, then comes back into the program for 30 days or so, then disappears again. It's now been going on for more than two years.

This time she's been gone for a week. Every time she goes out and comes back, there's less and less of her life waiting for her. She knows where to find me and I just know that, at least right now, she does not want to be found.

It's second nature for thoughts of drinking to come into our heads at certain times. We're alcoholics. But the important thing is what I do with those thoughts. Am I entertaining them or am I working with a sponsor to get to the heart of what's really going on with me?

It does make me very sad that this friend of mine is lost. I worry about what will happen to her. Will she commit a crime and wind up in jail? Or will she turn up dead? It's hard to surrender those thoughts at times and let God take charge. The one valuable lesson that I take from watching what's happened to my friend is that I will never under-estimate the power of that first drink. Every time the thought of one comes to my mind, I think of Susan.

-- Janice H.

Clayton, California, USA

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Step 4

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kids? Who cares, really?

Based on that beginning, I've already set myself up to do a half-assed inventory at best.

I quit for the night, with only the "fear of doing my 4th step" written on the paper. After a call to my pain-in-the-butt sponsor, and a little prayer, I'm reflecting on the real reason I'm doing all this: to put my drinking days behind me. I've heard stories about those who shortchanged themselves at this step, and went back out.

I can remember how bad I looked and felt as I called Ed, and told him I was ready to do this. I remember promising him that I would do what I was told to do so that I could get the results in the promises. That thought process, and the thought of going back out, back to the despair, the guilt, and the shame, give me hope that I can do this, knowing that it will be the basis for my 5th Step talk.

I don't want to go back there, ever **again! I still have the fear, but** start writing anyway. An hour later, I've got 3 pages of resentments down on paper. I move on to the fears. I write the sex sheet, and am feeling pretty badly about my past deeds.

I now go back and begin the second column on my resentments, only to realize that most of them were things I had started in the first place, and that had backfired and bit me. About half are crossed off, and the remainder filled in. The fears are tougher to quantify, because if I really understood the reasons, I wouldn't have the fear in the first place. I move through the sex page and the list of amends keeps growing.

A week later, I'm done, having rewritten the pages three times because the papers were too scribbled.

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April Service Opportunities

Area 45:

Your vote is needed at the Area 45 Mini-conference on April 7, 2018 at 9-12 noon. Location is Ocean Acres Community Center 489 Nautilus Drive, Manahawkin NJ. Please try to attend. We will be voting on issues to take back to New York. This is how our voice is heard!

Answering Service:

Currently we have an open shifts on Sunday 10AM-12PM, 2-4PM. Monday 10AM-12PM, Tuesday 8-10PM, O/N(10PM-7AM), Wednesday 10AM-12PM, 4-6PM, Thursday 8-10AM, 10AM-12PM, 8-10PM, O/N(10PM-7AM), Friday 2-4PM, Saturday 2-4PM, 4-6PM. Please contact answeringservice@aaaj.org to sign up.

We will be moving onto updating the 12 step call list in the near future and ask that anyone who may be interested in being of service in that capacity contact us via answeringservice@aaaj.org.

Archives:

We are continuing to ask for any Old timers with 30 or more years of sobriety willing to complete a questionnaire to reach out to us at archives@aaaj.org

Bookers:

If you or your group are interested in filling any of these Bookers commitments, please contact Beverly at bookers@aaaj.org:

- Tuesday, May 1, Fellowship Group, St. Stephens, Beverly 8 PM
- Tuesday, May 15, Fellowship Group, St. Stephens, Beverly 8 PM
- Tuesday, May 22, Happy Hour, 449 Club, Pemberton, 5:30 PM

Literature:

We are in need of a volunteer for the Thursday AM (10 to 12) shift. Please e-mail literature@aaaj.org

Newsletter:

We would love any and all contributions - articles, poetry, things of interest heard in the rooms, anything that has helped you in recovery. Please submit by Friday, April 13th for the May newsletter.

Unity:

The Unity committee is accepting any and all help as we move forward and invite "rep-less" groups to Intergroup! If you go to any meetings that do not currently have an Intergroup rep, please invite them to our next meeting on April 18!

Public Info is looking for young people to speak at local high schools during the day. Please contact publicinfo@aaaj.org if you are interested.

(Speaking commitments on next page)

Speaking Commitments

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:

Monday

Ancora - Hammonton NJ April 16, 23, 30 7-8pm 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton, NJ

JFK Hospital - MICA Unit - April 9, 16 12-1pm 2201 Chapel Ave W, Cherry Hill NJ

Wednesday

Unity Place I - Cherry Hill NJ March 21,28 April 4, 18, 25 12:40-1:30pm 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill, NJ

Camden VOA - Camden NJ April 4, 18, 25 510 Liberty Street, Camden NJ

Solstice Counseling - Lumberton NJ April 4, 18 12-1pm 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton, NJ

Northbrook Behavioral Health - Blackwood NJ April 25 8-9pm

Thursday

Ancora - Hammonton NJ March 29 April 19, 26 7-8pm 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton, NJ

Unity Place II - Hammonton NJ March 29 April 5, 19 2-3 pm 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton, NJ

Daybreak - Atco NJ - March 22, 29 April 12, 19, 26 10:30-12:00 noon 368 White Horse Pike, Atco, NJ

Saturday

Cooper Psych Unit - Camden NJ April 7, 28 10:30-11:30am 1 Cooper Plaza, Camden NJ

Please contact Frank or Debbie at handi@asaj.org if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Step 4

From page 4

-bled up to read. I actually feel better about myself now that I've accomplished this daunting task.

In rereading the finished product, I begin to realize the common threads, the recurring mistakes I aimlessly repeated over and over. Now I'm beginning to understand why I had to do this to begin with. Only with it all on paper, in front of us do we see what we've been denying all these years. We always had an excuse for our behavior at the time, but now looking at it from where we stand today, sober, feeling the hurt, do we see what we need to do.

I'm beginning to understand the honesty part of the Program. I call Ed, and ask about when we can do that 5th Step. It's all fresh in my mind right now, and I want to get it over with!

Anonymous

Trivia Question

April 2018 Trivia: Where do you send your group's contributions?

Answer to last month's question, How do you request a meeting list change?

Use the "Online Update Form" (which is located in the MEETING SECTION of the website) to request any changes for the meeting listing. Please be sure to select "New Meeting" or "Change Existing Meeting" and include your phone number before submitting the form. All requests should be submitted by a home-group member.

The Meeting List committee asks that change requests be submitted online whenever possible. Paper requests will still be accepted but may take longer to process.

