

The Lifeline



October 2020

24-Hour Phone 651.227.5502

Volume 56 Issue 10

STEP TEN

*Continued to take personal inventory
and when we were wrong promptly
admitted it.*

Until someone suggested I write an article about Step Ten, I had not been aware that this is really one of my favorite steps. For one thing it's *daily*.

It's easier to admit powerlessness, to come to believe, to make a decision, to make a list—do some major cleanup on oneself, then move on to bigger and better things like carrying the message and writing instructive articles explaining the program to people who may not be catching all the nuances because they aren't as bright as I am.

It's OK to admit privately, that a lot of one's past behavior was counterproductive to a rich, fulfilling life, and then to confess as much in dramatic or pitiful or numerous cadences. But to go through all this every day! To cast a judicious eye over how you have comported yourself, not in the past, but in the *present*, trying to be honest about what you have done this day!

No wonder this is not a step I've pondered over frequently. It's one thing to be brave about the Fourth Step. After all, that deals with the *past!* The defects that began to loom up out of the alcohol-saturated mists of my history—such as irresponsibility toward duties I had freely accepted, nay, actually sought, insensitivity, not to say blindness, about how my actions were affecting others—well, all those failings were due to the affect alcohol had on my brain. Weren't they?

After awhile, however, this pesky Step makes you wonder a little. One year, five years, ten—and I *still* thought mostly in terms of "Will this course of action interfere with my comfort and pleasure?" rather than, "Am I selfishly

hurting someone else for the sake of an ephemeral few moments of personal ego gratification?"

Because, *now*, it is *me*, not booze, that causes me to conduct myself in ways that leave me feeling ashamed, and, which often rebound to my disadvantage by alienating people with whom I need to be on good terms. Furthermore, there seems to be a consensus in Alcoholics Anonymous that one's own psychological makeup predisposed one toward drinking to excess in the first place and that only by working oneself out of those traits of character can one be reasonably certain never again to have to undergo the horror of waking up debilitated, dehydrated, aching and in despair.

The whole thing was also sometimes complicated by the fine line between faults and virtues. What is necessary and good for my own survival often conflicts with what is necessary to the functioning of whatever group of human beings I happen to be dependent on and without whom I could not survive at all.

When under the influence of alcohol I may have frequently acted as if I believed I could stand apart from the rest of society, catering to and pursuing only my own individual wishes and wants. But even then I was not so stupid that I did not intellectually comprehend the saying "no man is an island." In Alcoholics Anonymous this truth was spelled out for me, not in words and precepts, but in the actual process of changing from a "drinking woman" to a total abstainer.

Not knowing that it was a common remark upon joining AA, in my first week I told a friend, "I've rejoined the human race." You see, I already knew that to survive individually I had to become a functioning part of the rest of humanity. AA was that starting point. So what happens? I learned that being able to live with others without too much discomfort required continuing to take personal inventory and when I was wrong promptly admitting it.

At first I was so confused about my own ethical

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The Lifeline: Purpose Statement

The Lifeline is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Inc. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or St. Paul Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome original cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of A.A. experience.

Please email your article to Lifeline@aastpaul.org or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 33 Wentworth Ave E, Suite 355. W. St. Paul, MN 55118-3431. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday – 9 AM to 6 PM; Saturday 9 AM to Noon

values that I couldn't tell the difference between moral cowardice and kindly forbearance, a need to control born out of insecurity and a healthy protectiveness, between a thorough con job on myself and an honest analysis of my motivations. In fact, many times in looking back at a given day all I could be sure I had done right was not to take a drink.

I had to start cautiously, depending on the source of truth flourishing somehow, somewhere in the cells and molecules of my body to guide me through this labyrinth of "right" and "wrong." "Right" was *always* not taking a drink. "Wrong" was more nebulous, beginning with rather simple "faults," like monopolizing conversations, not listening thoughtfully to the views of others because my brain was so bursting full of my own convictions that there was not room to store *their* erroneous ideas for later judicious consideration, demonstrating audibly and visibly emotions of anger and pain induced by the behavior of my loved ones, regardless of how my performance affected *them*.

I wish I could say that in the twenty-four years I have been a member of AA I had always recognized and admitted these defects. But I can't. All I can claim is that they don't occur as often as they once did and that when they do, they have moderated.

To someone new to sobriety, let me interpolate a warning here. Don't take the above inadequate list of my surface defects as a reference point for your own faults. It may well be that *you* won't enter a conversation at all, that you rarely have the courage to express an opposing point of view, that you almost never let either loved or disliked persons get a glimpse of how you really feel, good or bad. While I tend to create harm by overdoing on these counts, you may be cheating yourself and others by under-doing self-expression.

Only *you* can really get to know yourself. That's what makes the Tenth Step such a toughie. You have to do it yourself.

Many times I have regretted dragging my feet on Step Ten. I could have saved myself a lot of regrets if I had been more conscientious about it. But, even so, I have been, I think, a more creditable human being than I was before I joined AA.

In fact as I now write it is 1:30 in the afternoon, and I tell you honestly I don't think I've done anything wrong yet today. Of course, I haven't been out of the house yet and so I haven't had a chance to tangle with another flawed human being. However, I hope that at 11:00 this evening, when I turn out the light, I shall still be able to look back at this day without regrets.

*Reprinted from
Bernice M., Los Gatos, CA
AA Coordinator Newsletter
San Diego Intergroup*

STEP TEN IN ACTION!



How anyone can possibly stay married without practicing Step 10 is beyond me. My husband is also in recovery and we often go to our corners fixed on holding out to the death. We are like two rams from the Nature channel. We butt our curled horns together and when our fight is exhausted, we squat on our respective stools with arms folded tight across chests.

I don't know about him, but I am resolutely waiting there until he admits to being utterly ludicrous, and upside-down in his priorities. I feel as tight and immobile as a puffer fish. I am stuffed with righteous indignation, and it is very uncomfortable.

Ironic that I am using so many animal references, but the reason is because I am speaking about instincts. In the 12X12 Bill talks a lot about instincts.

Now, when my husband tells me to put on my seatbelt, and I want to jump from the moving vehicle because he just insulted my autonomy, I pause. I pray.

Our instinct are intended to serve us. They are meant to give us an intuitive response to certain stimuli. In alcoholics these instincts - fueled by fear - slam us straight into brick walls. He says when a man becomes a battle ground for the instincts, he can find no peace. He also says that sick alcoholics are incapable of forming a true partnership with another person. They always need to dominate people or cower beneath them. However, with the help of a higher power, we can experience a different reaction to life and to the people we love.

I know it is time for Step 10 when anger, fear or judgment fills my chest with heat. I use it when I need it, not at prescribed times of morning and night. I practice looking inward when I am about to shut-down, give up or say something I will regret. In the beginning, the best way to step back was simply going for a walk. It gave me just enough time and space to say a short prayer. Usually that prayer



St. Paul Intergroup Contribution Drive!

We must reach NEW contributors to continue to provide vital services!

HOW: We need YOU!! Reach out to your AA Groups and fellow AA members and encourage them to contribute. www.aastpaul.org

- Become a “Faithful Fiver” – call 651-227-5502 to sign up!
- Online Contributions!
- Mail checks to the office!
- Visit the Office or shop online!
- Square Cash App: \$spintergroup

GOAL: \$25-30,000 for expenses through end of the year and another \$30,000 to build our prudent reserve by Jan. 31st, 2021.

WE CAN DO THIS!

We list 800+ meetings! If every meeting contributed \$18.75/month for the next 4 months, we would hit our goal! About ~24% of meetings contributed last year. ***Does your group contribute?***

THANK YOU, CONTRIBUTORS!!!!

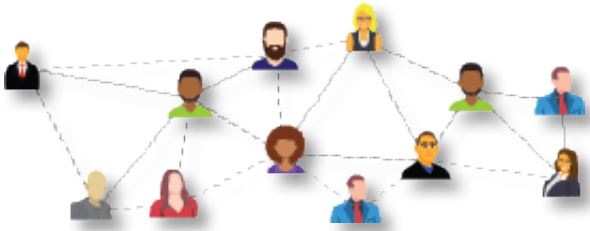


REMINDER: How does St Paul Intergroup serve the still suffering alcoholic, the AA Fellowship, and Groups? ***Intergroup is who people reach when they look up AA.***

- Answers phone 24 hours a day.
- Publishes a Meeting Directory.
- Provides guidance about finding a sponsor to newcomers.
- Sells AA literature and medallions.
- Maintains the website with meeting and event information.
- Maintains a list of Speakers and those willing to do 12 Step work.
- Publishes the *Lifeline* newsletter!

NEED MORE INFORMATION? Email the Outreach Committee at outreach@aastpaul.org or contact Dennis B., Office Manager, (651) 227-5502, email: manager@aastpaul.org, Office location: 33 Wentworth Ave E., West Saint Paul MN 55118

Meeting Without Meeting



These uncertain times have left many with the dilemma of questioning the safety of making it out to meetings. In addition to regular conversations with my sponsor and sponsee, meetings play a very important part of my recovery.

My profession requires me to travel very frequently, and when not traveling, I'm a fully remote employee. While most business is preferred to be done in person, the ability to conduct meetings remotely is vital to success.

The first day where it did not seem appropriate to gather in a large group, even for an AA, the solution seemed simple; use a remote meeting for recovery.

Our first remote AA meeting was conducted via Zoom. There were about 6 members in attendance. This was a good amount of people to work through some initial kinks. We came to a few quick conclusions; having the video turned on give an important personal touch, saying prayers or other readings in unison can provide challenges, it worked better to have a person assigned to pray or read for the group, and opting for "popcorn style" shares (where the person sharing calls on the next share) is an efficient way to prevent the confusion of several people speaking up at once. Our group implemented these strategies for our next larger zoom meeting of around 20 members, and it was conducted very smoothly. Generally, we all came to a similar conclusion of longing for the interpersonal connection of a physical meeting space, but being grateful for having something more substantial than a telephone call.

If you, or your group are looking into ways to conduct remote meetings, there are a wide variety of resources to explore. Here is a quick list of platforms to look at; Zoom, Google Hangouts, Group FaceTimes, Microsoft Teams, Join.Me, GoToMeeting, Skype, WebEx, Team Viewer, ezTalks Meetings, and Apache OpenMeetings. These platforms all have different offerings, some are free, some have free and paid features, some offer free trials, etc. My employer was generous enough

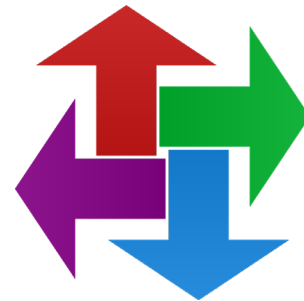
to allow meetings to be conducted outside of business hours on our corporate Zoom account, without a corporate account, we would be limited to 40 minute meetings on the zoom platform. You may have some members that have access to these platforms and permission to use them for the purposes of a meeting.

While nothing can replace sitting in a circle of chairs sharing face-to-face with one another, I am very grateful for modern technology and the ability to spend time with my best friends and fellow alcoholics remotely. Stay safe out there!

There by the grace of God go I,

*Reprinted from:
Eric E - Outside the Bottle
District 16 Newsletter
Area 33 - SE Michigan*

Doing Things Differently



I first came to AA when I was 20 years old through the courts. I never had an open mind and didn't feel I needed to make the change into sobriety. Fast forward eleven years through misery and insanity...I decided to finally try to change my life and give sobriety a try.

When I was in treatment, they had this line "you need to change everything about your life." It never actually clicked for me until I was over one year sober. I was in a meeting and a gentleman said, "We are not here to do the same things better, we are here to do things different." I reflected on my sobriety and looked at the things I was still trying to do better like, "do I follow through on the things I say I will? Do I only practice the principles of this program when they are easy to do? When I have free time do I try and make myself available to

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St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes,
August 18th 2020 7:30pm.

1. Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.
2. Last month minutes reviewed, motioned by Jesse. and seconded by Mary, motion approved.
3. Treasurer's Report, Mark J – Total Contributions: \$7,864 *See Treasurer's Report for full financial details.*
4. Office Report, Dennis – Zoom training for Night Owl *Please email lifeline@aastpaul.org for further information.*
5. Night Owl Report, Frank N – *Please contact Frank N at NightOwl@aastpaul.org or leave a message at the Intergroup Office.*
6. Website Report, Jonathan L – 823 meetings, and 29 groups. There is a Virtual meeting search option in the meeting directory *Contact Jonathan & Sergey at webservant@aastpaul.org.*
7. Outreach Program, – *Please contact outreach@aastpaul.org.*
8. Update from the Board, Rachel P – Ice cream social cancelled
9. Liaison Reports: District 8: – No report.
District 15: Jennifer G - Thanks for the website! Still Zoom, maybe in person soon. Maybe a virtual workshop
District 19: – No report..
10. Intergroup Events:
 - a. Recap - All upcoming events currently cancelled
11. Old Business:
12. New Business: Virtual meeting page on website requested - A huge undertaking, needing web designers with bootstrap experience and php developers to execute. There is an option to select meetings tagged as virtual in the search. Adding a link to the Meeting Guide perhaps.
13. Group AA Announcements: Uptown House - Updated and increased number of meetings!
14. Suggestions for next month's agenda: None
15. Grapevine Report, Dennis ; Volunteer for September, Jennifer.
16. Concept VII review. Nancy; Volunteer for Concept VIII for September Jesse O..
17. Mock Rep Report, Stephanie; Volunteer for September, Katherine..
18. Closed with the Responsibility Statement

Attendance:

Mary S. Uptown House
Stephanie H. Women's Basic Text
Nancy R Mendota 10:30 AA
Jesse O Basic Text
Lauren D. Fireside Women's Big Book
Emily H
Katherine A Pocketing Our Pride
Joseph J Uptown House
Jennifer G DCM Dist. 15
Renee B
Nancy F Como Park Big Book
Greg S
Ryan R Basic Text
Anne J New Brighton Big Book
Rosemary F White Bear Lake Women's Big Book
Peter M One More Was Added to the Fellowship

Next Meeting: September 15th 2020, 7:30pm
Zoom

help another alcoholic?" I would like to say yes, and I would also like to be perfect with my program, but I know that's an unreasonable expectation. But when I do things differently, I get different results from what I've been doing my whole life, and that helps me grow with my Higher Power and in turn helps me be of service to other people.

An example of doing things differently is my current work situation. I started working in the automotive industry at the age of 16. I quickly grew to like the job and at the age of 18 was a floor manager and was on the right path. I was someone who could answer most of the questions and someone that was able to get the job done. My ego loved that and soon enough, I thought this was the field I was going to retire in. My life revolved around drugs and alcohol, therefore so did my work. It was exhausting to try and keep up with everything I had to do while still fueling my alcoholism. I was fired from my previous job of building prototype battery packs, and had another job in the industry after I got sober. But I soon found myself on the market not due to any fault of my own for once. A friend in the program mentioned to me that his job was looking for a project manager in the food-service industry. I knew absolutely nothing about what that job would be and that was scary for me. The alcoholic in me wanted to run away. Talking with my sponsor and other alcoholics eased my mind and I decided to give it a try. I went to the interview and was honest. I didn't get that job, but landed another position

within the same company. On Friday I was in the automotive industry and by Monday I was in the food-service industry. Every aspect of my job is entirely different from all my previous jobs. Any scenario that requires me to humble myself and try something different, is scary. My sponsor and I talk often about me feeling that I'm not "getting it" and maybe this isn't something I want to do. He told me off the bat, "give it one year and see how you feel."

At one year employed I got a raise, I'm more confident in my abilities and feel better about my position. It's a constant reminder for me to keep going and keep growing. All this would not be possible if I wasn't sober. AA has given me a new outlook on life so I try and continue to trust my higher power, doing the basics and keep doing things differently.

*Reprinted from:
Andy A. - Outside the Bottle
District 16 Newsletter
Area 33 - SE Michigan*

**God grant me the
Serenity to accept the things
I cannot change...
Courage to change the things I can...
and Wisdom to know the difference.**



12th Step Calls

2



Website Visits

7,641



Night Owl Calls

282



Meeting Info Calls

116



Speakers Provided

0



Literature Purchased

207 Books

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS, MEMBERS AND FAITHFUL FIVER MEMBERS MADE THE ABOVE SERVICES POSSIBLE:

- Bridge To Shore
- Children of Chaos
- Firing Line
- Forest Lake Alano
- Gloria Dei AA
- Happy, Joyous & Free - Mahtomedi
- Highland Park
- Lakeview Group
- Macalester Group AA
- Mahtomedi Happy Hour 12 & 12
- Mendota 1030 AA Group
- Midway Club
- OMD
- Pages of Wisdom
- Stepsisters of Northfield Group
- Summit Hill
- Third Tradition Group
- Tuesday Night Friends Group
- Uptown Club
- USR-STB Tuesday Night
- White Bear 96 Group
- White Bear SAT AM Women's Grp
- Woodbury Primary Purpose

- 23 A.A. Groups contributed \$3,502
- 13 Gratitude Contributions totaled \$649
- 22 Faithful Fivers contributed \$1,861
- 14 Digital Store Revenue for \$1,584

THANK YOU !!!!

Many groups and individuals listed are continuing to send us more than their usual contribution. We are most grateful to all who have done this! This goes a long way in helping to overcome the shortfall from groups who have stopped contributing.

was something like this:

“Whatever Grace has brought me this far...please take this away. I know this emotion is no one else’s fault. This rage has been with me as long as I can remember, and it always defeats me. I can’t do this alone. Please help me. I don’t know what to do.”

Now, when my husband tells me to put on my seatbelt, and I want to jump from the moving vehicle because he just insulted my autonomy, I pause. I pray. I recognize that I am simply afraid he does not respect me because he is telling me what to do. The problem is not his direction to put on my seatbelt. It is my fear of what his statement means. So I ask Grace to sit with me while I let the wave pass. I ask for my fear to be removed, and my attention turned to what a higher power would have me be in that moment. Would it have me punish my partner and pout in silence? Probably not. However, I can ask to be softened and for the ability to tell the truth. When I am ready I say, “Can you *ask* me instead of *telling* me? I feel afraid you don’t respect me when you tell me.” To which he responds with a smile to let me know I am being both ridiculous and cute, “Sure. Sarah, will you please put on your seatbelt?” To which I respond: “Yes. Of course I will.”

Problem solved. We don’t have to get divorced. Thank you Grace.

*Reprinted from:
Sarah K.
Lifeline Newsletter
Salt Lake City Intergroup*

Now and Then



Social networking in the 1970’s

The following article was created for the Sara-Mana Intergroup in Sarasota, FL. They interviewed an AA member who would have 50 years of sobriety this year, if she is still alive. we are reprinting from the 2014 issue of that newsletter.

“There’s a definite contrast from the 1970 A.A. to the 2014 A.A.:

Then: There were ashtrays to clean.

Now: No ashtrays, Terrible loss of a service job!

Then: There were not “cross talk police.” Members helped newcomers to understand the program with comments, sometimes during the meeting, sometimes afterward.

Now: Today’s crosstalk police were born of a posse of patients newly released from early ‘70s burgeoning rehab business. Patients were not allowed to crosstalk during group therapy sessions in the rehab or psychiatrists office, and they brought that concept to A.A. meetings, exuberantly yelling “no crosstalk” when someone was addressed directly.

.....

Then: We closed with the Lord’s Prayer with our hands at our side, or perhaps resting on the back of a chair as we stood behind it. We did not hold hands.

Now: we hold hands, and at the end of the prayer, or Responsibility Pledge, or the Serenity Prayer, pump our hands up and down while chanting “Keep coming back; it works if you work it, so work it because your worth it.”

.....

Then: We didn’t hug. In 1970 we were cautious because we felt we didn’t know someone’s background, especially women, to know if they had been abused. The exception I remember was during the time I was the A.A. sponsor of an Alateen group where the “warm fuzzies” hugs were a staple. I don’t know what they do today with all the children’s issues of which we have to be aware.

Now: We hug. I’m a discriminate hugger and like to reserve hugs for people I know well.

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Then: Where I grew up in the program, all meetings were closed meetings except for the open District Speaker meeting every Tuesday nights; all groups were expected to attend the open meeting, and groups took turns chairing and providing speakers.

Now: Most meetings in our district are open.

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Then: We didn’t have the Blue Card, “Singleness of Purpose,” because the people at the closed meetings were there because of Tradition 3: “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Now: We have the “Singleness of Purpose” card because most meetings are open.

.....

Then: We found meetings by calling our central office

THOUGHTS FROM THE BOARD

DISTRICT SERVICE MEETINGS

District 8 (Ramsey Co.)
Fairview Community Center
1910 Cty. Rd B West, Rm 108
Roseville
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM
Email: dist8@area36.org

District 15 (Wash. Co.)
Christ Lutheran Church
11194 N. 36th St.
Lake Elmo
4th Mon., 7:00 PM
Email: dist15@area36.org

District 19 (Dakota Co.)
Rosemount Community Center
13885 South Robert Trail
Rosemount
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM
dist19@area36.org
Email: dist19@area36.org

District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)
Grace Lutheran Church
1730 Old Hudson Rd.
St. Paul
2nd Sun., 7:00PM
Email: dist26-area36.org

Greetings from your new Alt Treasurer! I just came on board this summer, so am still getting situated and learning the ropes. But this position came along at just the right time...I had been finding it challenging find service commitments at my meetings; being on zoom there just aren't the roles available that come with in person meetings. So, like we do...I asked the ol' HP to show me where I might be of service. Pretty much right away, I get the call...and here I am!

I have many years of continuous 24 hours but have never thought much about General Service work. I pictured uncomfortable meetings with lots of egos jockeying for control, and just didn't think it was "my deal". What I have found is different: a motley group of very patient givers just doing what they can to keep thing humming along! People really depend on these local AA offices to always be there, connecting us to resources, and they do not run by themselves. Many volunteers dedicate time and energy so that "when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help" the hand of AA will always be there. It is in our responsibility statement, and now it's my turn to step up. The work is important and our Intergroup is often someone's first call to AA.

Our St Paul Intergroup is always here for us, and I know I've just kind of taken it for granted. As I learn more about our budget, I can say that during these challenging times, we still need all the financial support we can get. Fewer contributions are coming in from our area groups, as "passing the basket for the 7th tradition" looks quite different these days in virtual meetings. Plus, we are also not having our usual events to raise funds. So, expect to see more outreach efforts in the coming weeks, as we work to generate the dollars needed so our St Paul Intergroup can continue to fulfill its important role.

Glad to be here and thank you for allowing me to be of service!

Lisa LL, Alternate Treasurer



Now and Then — continued from page 7

and getting a meeting list, sometimes through the Central Office, sometimes available at meetings. We had the telephone and letter writing to communicate.

Now: We have all the electronics which make contact with each other, locating meetings, etc. so easy.

.....

Then: Chanting — we didn't.

Now: Chanting at the end of the meeting and through various paragraphs in How It Works, e.g., "What's the point?" One person I know recites How It Works from memory, Stopping mid sentence at intervals, for the rest of the attendees to finish the sentence.

.....

Then: We had AA conference approved literature, the Big Book, 12 x 12, and i don't remember anything else because the information in those books was the subject of most meetings. My home group used

Now and Then — continued from page 9

TRADITION TEN

“Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

WHEN we study the world history around the time that Alcoholics Anonymous began, it begins to make perfect sense that this would be one of the tenets that would be easily adopted by our society. Matter of fact, if it hadn't become part of our traditions, that would be extremely unusual.

The generation of men and women who were the first members of Alcoholics Anonymous had seen close hand what the impact of not following this approach could do. They had lived through two wars, World War I and World War II, the Spanish Flu and the Depression. Each and every one of those incredible events contained elements of the chaos and controversy that can be created when bodies of people attempt to influence the activities, lives and livelihoods of others outside their own society. Bill, research will show you, was very attuned to and concerned about this rearing its ugly head within Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bill also knew full well how much we drunks love to controvert. After all, he had done, and would do in his lifetime, much of that himself. But he was wise enough to realize that it was impossible to completely eliminate that urge within the individual alcoholic, who is a great example of an extremist. There appears to be something within each of us, that runs very deep, that is attracted to the excitement of chaos. So the challenge he faced was how to allow our society some expression of disagreement, in the form of controversy, without giving it free reign to disrupt and destroy Alcoholics Anonymous.

Again, research of our history will show that Bill was surrounded by wise people who could provide the best insights into how to face this dilemma. A dilemma that other world leaders of a wide variety of societies had often failed to find a solution for. He had the people connected to the Rockefeller family and their enterprise as well as persons of deep spiritual conviction from the religious realm in the form of Sam Shoemaker and Father Ed Dowling. All, no doubt, played a essential part in how Bill fashioned the tool that would allow us to find a calm within our self-created storms.

Today we continue stand in the face of this challenge. More and more we read, see and hear about expanding controversies which tug at various parts of our makeup; our religions, our ethnicity, our political affiliations, our social structures, etc. Serious, sensitive and highly volatile issues that could easily find their way into an AA

meeting.

There isn't a week that goes by in which our Intergroup office doesn't get calls either from someone who wants to decide for all the world who should wear masks, or from someone who wants to point out that nobody can make them wear a mask. Issues that are being argued and discussed worldwide. Thank God for Tradition Ten!

We are able to share with these folks that several of our Twelve Traditions come into play here. For example, we can remind them that any group has the right and authority to decide for itself (Tradition Four) whether or not to abide by local governmental mandates regarding whether their members must wear a mask (or any other item) to attend its meetings. By the same token, each individual is free to seek out those groups who believe as they do regarding this issue. To quote a very old adage; “Birds of a feather (are encouraged to) flock together.” Wonderfully, our Intergroup office has no opinion on that groups operational requirements, and can therefore share that with the caller (who often doesn't find that to their liking).

It is quite amazing how the ‘autonomy’ in our Traditions is often claimed by an individual who withholds that same autonomy from others. Tradition Ten ensures the proper utiization of that autonomy.

But most critically of all, it keeps our ‘free-ranging’ minds from engaging in anything other than our focus on getting and staying sober. That, of and by itself, is a great enough challenge for any marginally sane person (which is the most some of us can claim). *At least that is what our experience has taught us!*

GRACIAS ㊦㊦ ㊦㊦
THANK YOU
ありがとうございまして **MERCI**
DANKE धन्यवाद
شُكْرًا **OBRIGADO**

Office Volunteers:

Pat S., Neilla M., David D., Andy H.,
William, Jimmy D., Chris, Jodie, Lynn
E., Katie, Colin J., Caleb A., Steve R.

RIDING THE WAVE

In a recent meeting, the topic revolved around the different interpretations of the word *Acceptance* as alcoholics matured in sobriety. Newcomers sometimes described *Acceptance* as almost a white-knuckle experience. “I have to accept it. I have to endure it.” These words, sobbingly shared and borne out of a desperate need to release the pain but not yet having the tools to do it were more a pleading cry than a true statement. *Acceptance* was in the infancy stage of realizing that life had careened out of control with the alcoholic at the center of the destruction. “I’ve hurt everyone. I’ve let everyone down. I’ve lost everything. My family has disowned me,” or some variation of the remorse that is found when the bottom is finally hit with a huge thud.

Then, as the honest self-appraisal begins, the alcoholic within the first year of the Program may turn his eye toward acceptance of the consequences of *his* drinking but still be unable to practice acceptance toward those who have hurt him. When told to release the resentments of person who have caused real emotional or physical pain, the new alcoholic struggles mightily.

“WHATEVER” may be the word that masquerades as acceptance. The word reminds me of a teenager’s dismissal of a parent’s rules and the consequences about to be meted out for noncompliance. That WHATEVER usually meant disgust and lacked true understanding of the requirements and expectations. Submission of behavioral restrictions were grudgingly endured but the inward self still seethed in stubbornness for being made to submit when the submitter thinks he is not being heard or understood.

Without the full knowledge of how the Program works and the inexplicable freedom that an alcoholic feels when finally releasing pent up drudges and repeated replays of painful scenarios, the “whatever” *acceptance* lacks the momentum and joyfulness that is felt when true forgiveness replaces the resentments for good.

Another alcoholic, still mired in self-pity, described his definition of *Acceptance* as a grim and terrible reality. Like being stranded in the ocean on a life raft, parched and weak with thoughts of the futility of prolonging the inevitable, suicidal thoughts began to terrorize his subconscious. The marooned individual toys with ending the agony, cutting loose the raft

and stoically jump in, breathing in the water and giving up life, certain that there would be no rescue and that prolonging the agony was a self-inflicted torture quickly ended by the individual’s own great gulps of sea water.

As I listened to that alcoholic’s comment, I recalled another water scene featuring Tom Hanks in the movie *Castaway*. He was nearly dead and was powerless over the merciless helplessness of the ocean, but his *Acceptance* took quite a different form. He had deliberately placed himself into the unknown future of the ocean in order to leave his lonely island life behind. He recognized that there were only two outcomes—life and death—and that death was most probable. Yet he took the chance and spent months formulating his plan to enter the ocean currents, believing in the slightest chance that he might be rescued from the bleakness of his circumstances.

His *acceptance* was the willingness to go with the current. Not to battle it but to float in it. To take the situation a minute, or an hour at a time without panicking or entertaining thoughts that might feed his fears and sap his strength. *Acceptance* was to give up all semblance of control and be mindful that “what will be, will be.” It wasn’t the sarcastic “whatever” or the choice of taking matters in hand and snuff out the glimmer of hope. It was to be aware of existence as a part of a bigger picture without picking up the eraser and snuffing out life in order to snuff out the difficulties.

Today, even with several years of sobriety, my *Acceptance* can still take any of these forms on any given day, depending on my spiritual fitness. The closer I stay to my Higher Power the more I am able to forgive and release resentments, as I recall the way that others released me from reminders of my past mistakes. The more I attend AA meetings, the more I can help the new person who sees no way past the resentments. I have been there. I seethed inwardly for years. And then, through willingness to surrender resentments, I was able to gradually release the mental obsession to hold onto them. Relationships that once seemed hopelessly irreparably damaged have been miraculously restored.

Trust the Program. It works, if we truly seek to reframe hurts so that we can live with them and leave them in the past for good. It doesn’t excuse the wrongs. But it makes a way through them so that we can heal and then help someone else. May you find the shore at the the end of your journey!

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