



East Central Illinois AA District 12 Newsletter

January 2008



Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?



Twelfth Tradition Checklist

1. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all AA members before individual welfare? What would happen to *me* if AA as a whole disappeared?
2. When I do not trust AA's current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
4. Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to *my* standards, not its own?
5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is *my* part?
6. Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition--or belie it?
7. Do I do all I can do to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
8. Do I complain about certain AAs' behavior--especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made *me* so smart?
9. Do I fulfill all AA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?
10. Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give AA critics real ammunition?
11. Should I keep my AA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help another alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of AA so attractive that other drunks want it?
12. What is the real importance of *me* among 500,000 AAs?

Twelve holidays in a familiar AA pattern . . .

Labor Day . . . Having worked long and hard at becoming alcoholics, we rested from our fruitless labors.

Columbus Day . . . Discovered, in AA, a new world and got a glimpse of new horizons of hope.

Halloween . . . Saw the grotesque masquerade our lives had become and had an honest desire to unmask our true selves.

Election Day . . . Elected to let somebody else govern our wills and try, as best we could, to follow the AA way of life.

Thanksgiving . . . Found we soon had much to be thankful for. We felt gratitude, and it felt good.

Christmas . . . Unable to account for the miracle of our sobriety by mortal means, we began to understand that a Higher Power is indeed at work among us.

New Year's . . . Having had a spiritual awakening, we made no resolutions of self-will; instead, we prayed only for knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.

Lincoln's Birthday . . . Came to understand the power and dignity of humility.

Washington's Birthday . . . Became willing to be honest not only with others, but with ourselves.

Easter . . . Felt, personally, the reality of resurrection. For we, too, had died. And been reborn.

Memorial Day . . . Instead of trying to forget our dead pasts, we learned to honor them. For, through our own experiences, God has made us useful to the next fellow who needs help.

4th of July . . . Experienced our own Declaration of Independence. By the Grace of God, and in His service, we are, at last--free men and women.

New Years Resolution: Back to Basics

The atmosphere is charged with the spirit of resolve as we begin a new year. What has been going through our minds?
Begin a long neglected project.
Improve our relationship with God and my fellows.
Stop doing....
Start doing.....
The list could go on ad infinitum; or, ad nauseam;
or, both. I would like to suggest something.

First, I suggest we don't make any resolution 'for the year'. We, in AA, try to live One-Day-at-a-Time.

As you read this newsletter, perhaps we can say to ourselves, "What can I do today?" What is the 'next right thing' to think, feel and do?

What I suggest is to Admit our Powerlessness over alcohol and that our lives are unmanageable. As the Big Book tells us in Chapter 3: More about alcoholism, "The idea that somehow, someday he will be able to control and enjoy his drinking IS the great obsession of every abnormal drinker." It goes on to say this idea "... has to be SMASHED". This is our daily task, to smash the idea that we are able to drink like other people. We have a disease; they don't.

It has been my observation of my own recovery that if I am having a 'problem' with any of the

activities or attitudes contained in any of the 12 Steps; I am losing my grip on the truth of Step One.

It is only with a 100% conviction that I am Powerless over alcohol, that to drink is to die, that I am willing to take inventory, make amends, pray and meditate or serve others. The entire program is designed to help me face this truth: POWERLESSNESS. I have found I can only do this One-Day-at-a-Time.

Yesterday is history.
Tomorrow is a mystery.
Today is a gift;
that's why it's called the Present.

"When I was young, I prayed for health and strength so I could do great things;
I was given a disease and powerlessness so I could do BETTER things."

Anonymous

Recipe for recovery (half measures avail us nothing): Start with a generous helping of Step One. Add abstinence and let it soak in. Add a power greater than yourself (any brand of your own choosing will do). Divide into Twelve Steps, distribute evenly and thoroughly. Set timer for God's will. Sit back and pray. (Note: do not close mind; closed minds will result in returning to Step One.) Any problems, call 1-800-SPONSOR. Diane F. Stuart, Florida

1st Step

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol. . . that our lives had become unmanageable.

BEFORE I came to AA, I took Step One slowly, over a period of years. It was not AA people who helped me with it. Instead, it was all the non-alcoholics who misunderstood and mistreated both me and my disease. In retrospect, I am grateful for their harshness. It forced me to AA, twenty-five years ago this month.

That first faltering step I took to AA recovery was not placed exactly in the First of the twelve footprints left us as a guide by the earliest AA members. But before I came to AA I had begun to realize that my drinking was causing me trouble. This, of course, was hard to believe; so many other people who drank did not get into trouble. My life presented a tough sequence of problems, yes; but I argued (with myself) that drinking surely was not the cause. Fate had just handed me unfair breaks: my family,

my love life, my bosses and jobs, my unsteady finances, my friends, my insomnia, my nervousness.

So I desperately kept trying to prove that drinking was not one of my problems. If I was a failure at drinking, rather than a success, it wasn't for lack of trying! Looking back, it is not so hard to understand now why it was difficult for me, as it has been for others, to accept this inability to drink (for which pharmacological addiction provides a simple explanation). The rewards, pleasures, and gratifications of drinking were so overpoweringly great. Drinking was easy to do, and it worked almost instantaneously, anesthetizing any discomfort as if by magic. It was socially acceptable; my whole social life, all the activities I considered fun, were accompanied by drinking.

The idea of *not* drinking was so unfamiliar to me that it was frightening. If I thought of a non-drinking life at all, I thought of it as a cheerless existence devoid of grace and charm. To give up drinking would mean turning into the blue nosed, narrow-minded, Puritan type.

It is important now for me to remember that my entire style of life was at stake, not just the apparent benefits of alcohol. Lying to people and sinking into gloomy self-pity were habits neither unfamiliar to me nor frightening. I was thoroughly comfortable with them--even, in a way, found them enjoyable. Besides, "I was drunk at the time" was a marvelous excuse to have when I did shameful things.

Giving up drinking, then, looked like an unpleasant, unendurable long-term proposition. Anyhow, it wouldn't be necessary, would it, *if* other people would just change?

But they didn't. They got worse. My family, in their displeasure with me, pointed clearly to drinking as the source of my troubles. Friends who expressed concern and bosses who fired me helped drive home that truth. Kind strangers and bartenders who shook their beads while being helpful all said, in effect, "You should not drink." A cop who jailed me for being drunk and disorderly, a doctor who scolded me for drinking too much, a grocer who wanted his money, and a bouncer who shoved me out a tavern door all reinforced the lesson.

My repeated solo failures to "do better" kept building an interior despair which finally crushed my false reasoning and false pride. Hung there at the edge of madness, I read a newspaper story about AA.

And so, on the day I first telephoned AA, I was not struggling too hard against the mountains of undeniable proof that my life was one awful mess because of my

drinking. I had also already admitted, unwillingly, that I could not handle alcohol.

Those admissions of mine are not necessarily identical to scientific diagnosis of the disease of alcoholism, of course. Any well-trained physician, alcoholism counselor, or other professional familiar with Dr. Jellinek's classic list of the symptoms of alcoholism, can correctly determine whether or not a given drinker has the symptoms.

But such diagnosis by another person is not a step toward recovery for the drinker--until he himself takes the First Step. I took it blindly at the start, and that was not the best way for me, although any beginning is better than none. In subsequent AA years, through conscious, systematic efforts to understand and practice all the Steps, I have found that they repeatedly come to have new and surprising values.

For me, the hardest part of that First Step has been in the implications of the statement that my life had become unmanageable. With the effects of booze a bit behind me, I could see more plainly than ever what a mess my life was, what a job lay before me. And it became clearer than ever that, in order to stay sober, I had to undertake a mammoth overhaul of myself in many aspects which, at first, seemed unrelated to drinking.

In short, stepping into the first footprint that led from the dismal swamp of alcoholism toward the sunlight of sobriety would not take me far enough. Would I muddle along on some little trail of my own in the weeds, vaguely paralleling the clearly marked AA road? Or would I choose to follow in the exact footsteps of the AAs who had preceded? The choice was up to me. I could do either, but I had to cover the whole trail if I wanted to get where the others were. Since I had already taken Step One, I could decide to stop right there. I could just dry up, period. I could survive like a raisin the rest of my life.

Going the whole route looked too hard--until someone said to me, "One step at a time." So I looked ahead, along the path marked by the footprints of hope, commitment, and action. All around me were many happy, sober people who had walked that path. Listening intently to their stories, I heard some more horrifying than mine, others less so. But it was plain that all these alcoholics had once *felt* the same hopelessness, fear, pain, and anger I had experienced. It was also obvious that people with drinking troubles like mine could come out of them and--unbelievable as it seemed at first--laugh at them! It was evident, too, that these people had much knowledge of alcoholism that I did not have. They knew that it was an illness, that it could deceive its victims that the danger lay in the first drink.

They had some magic or information, secrets or power which I lacked, but which might get me out of the fix I was in. I had to believe what I saw: that some power wiser, stronger, or greater than mine could restore me to health. Next came a decision I did not even notice making at the time: to try this AA plan of theirs, even though I did not understand it. Some said it was God doing the good work, but I saw unbelievers like me being helped, too. So what had I to lose by going along?

Beginning with the First Step, I have found the following Steps out of alcoholism to be true and benevolent. I still know of no other suggestions more effective as a program of recovery. *B. L. Manhattan, New York*

SPEAKER MEETINGS / EVENTS

Friday 1/05/08

1st Friday FOOD & FELLOWSHIP 6:30-?

Serenity Shack 117 N. Ohio St. Rantoul

Saturday 1/12/08

AS BILL SEES IT Speaker-Amy C-P. 8pm

718 S. Randolph, Champaign (every 2nd saturday)

Saturday 1/19 /08

Serenity Shack Speaker-Brenda N. 8pm

117 N. Ohio St. Rantoul

Sunday 1/20/08

District 12 Traditions Panel - 10 am

718 S. Randolph, Champaign

District 12 meeting - 2pm

718 S. Randolph, Champaign (every 3rd Sunday)

Thursday 1/24/08

HOW group Speaker- Doris S. 8pm

718 S. Randolph, C (every 4th Thursday)

F.I.N.E.

[I'm] **F**rustrated, **I**nsecure, **N**eurotic, **E**motional

F.E.A.R.

Face **E**verything **A**nd **R**ecover

N.U.T.S.

Not **U**sing **T**he **S**teps

E.G.O.

Edging **G**od **O**ut.

D.E.N.I.A.L.

Don't **E**ven **N**otice **I** **A**m **L**ying.

H.A.L.T.

[Don't get too] **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, **T**ired.

H.O.P.E.

Happy **O**ur **P**rogram **E**xists

H.O.W.

Honesty, **O**pen-mindedness, **W**illingness

S.P.O.N.S.O.R.

Sober **P**erson **O**ffering **N**ewcomers **S**uggestions **O**n **R**ecovery

G.O.D.

Good **O**rdery **D**irection

B.I.G. B.O.O.K.

Believing **I**n **G**od **B**eats **O**ur **O**ld **K**nowledge

F.R.O.G.

Fully **R**ely **O**n **G**od

S.L.I.P.

Sobriety **L**osing **I**ts **P**riority

A.C.T.I.O.N.

Any **C**hange **T**o **I**mprove **O**ur **N**ature

P.R.O.G.R.A.M.

People **R**elying **O**n **G**od **R**elaying **A** **M**essage

S.T.E.P.S.

Solutions **T**o **E**very **P**roblem **S**ober

K.I.S.S.

Keep **I**t **S**imple, **S**weetheart

Ambition and Gratitude. . . I don't see any particular conflict between ambition and gratitude. I think you should be terribly grateful that you are able to be ambitious--ambitious, I mean, in the best sense of the word. You wish to get along in the world, and I see that you are taking steps to do so. Just follow the rules of the game as you have learned them in AA. We are expected to be citizens of the world as well as AA members. . . **Bill W.**

2008 Southern Illinois Area -21 AA Spring Conference

Hosted by SLA-21 & District 7

March 7 - 9, 2008

"Communication and Participation - The Key to Unity and Self Support"

Friday: 4:00pm Registration Opens
7:45pm Opening of the Conference
8:00pm Chuck A. - Evansville, IN

Saturday: 8:00am Panels begin
1:30pm Joe O. - St. Louis, MO (Al-Anon)
6:00pm Banquet
7:30pm Program begins
8:00pm Don M. - Louisville, KY.
10:00pm Dance/Band - Sullivan Drive

Sunday: 10:00am Bill H. - Mt. Vernon, IL.

*1 - 4 per room
\$70.00 + tax per night
You must reserve by Feb. 15th
and mention SLA Spring
Conference for special rate.
Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn
222 Potomac Blvd.
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
800-243-7171 / 618-244-7100*



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For More Information Contact:

Doug H. (618) 292-1854 or Yvonne F. (618) 967-8174

Area21.2008springconference@yahoo.com

Registration Form

One person per form please
may be copied

Pre-registration \$20.00
Banquet \$19.00

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Please Check Only One

AA _____ Al-Anon _____ Alateen _____ Guest _____

Make Checks Payable and Mail to
2008 SLA-21 Spring Conference
PO Box 42
Nashville, IL 62263

Deadline for Mail Registration is: March 1st 2008
Must Reserve Banquet by March 1st, 2008