



DISTRICT SIX

OCTOBER 2019

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Box 459

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Disruptive Members at A.A. Meetings

In the Big Book, the chapter "Working with others," lists some possibilities that may occur when an A.A. adopts the attitude that "Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery." Helping a drunk may mean ". . . innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions." (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 97) In short, during the course of laying the foundation stone of recovery and helping others, an A.A. may find him or herself with a troublesome member. In meetings, where A.A.'s find other drunks to work with, the possibilities described in helping drunks are also present, and occasionally, members disrupt meetings.

Although A.A.s strive to adopt certain attitudes and behaviors, such as "Love and Tolerance of others is our code" (ibid, p. 84), members sometimes find that a troublesome individual's behavior is so violent or threatening that it has become difficult or impossible for the group to fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message. Furthermore, Tradition One reminds the group that "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 189) How a group handles disruptive and/or threatening members can

cause conflict and controversy, so many group members rely upon the shared experience of others who have successfully dealt with a similar situation.

Often, groups or group members contact the General Service Office regarding disruptive members at A.A. meetings. G.S.O., in addition to upholding actions of our Conference and board, also functions as a repository for the shared experience of A.A. groups.

Some groups have shared suggestions on how to handle disruptive behavior. One group recommends that a member first approach the individual, informally and one-on-one, in order to discuss the problem and look for solutions. This group reminds one another to let the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions guide all communication, striving always to place principles before personalities and to treat all with kindness, patience, compassion, tolerance, and love.

In another example, one group shared how they dealt with disruptive and/or threatening members who did not respond to polite requests or one-on-one approaches: The group set up a group conscience/business meeting and, prior to all discussion, agreed to the following format: 1.) Each member can speak only twice on each topic, and 2.) Each member can share for only two minutes at a time.

Further, the group also found it helpful to define a disruptive/threatening member as anyone who interrupts the good orderly direction of the meeting so that the message of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be carried. A disruptive and/or threatening member was also defined as one whose actions intimidates or frightens newcomers so that they cannot hear the A.A. message.

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The Emmet Fox Corner

With Michael G

Who was Emmet Fox?

Emmet Fox was born in Ireland in 1886. He moved to the United States in the early 1930's, where he began lecturing on spirituality in New York City. He was a major inspiration for Bill W. and Dr. Bob, the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Fox's lectures were held at Carnegie Hall and were attended by several thousand people, including Bill, and many of New York City's AA members. Dr. Bob recommended Fox's writings to those he worked with in the Midwest

Emmet Fox's writings formed the basis for many of the ideas found in the Big Book. Fox encouraged his readers to spend some time each day in prayer, to turn their backs on the past and to live one moment at a time. He urged forgiveness and a life of service. His most popular work is entitled: "The Sermon on the Mount"

In each issue, this column will provide a brief excerpt from Emmet Fox's writings with an attempt to relate this material to the spiritual journey experienced by AA members. Questions and comments are heartily encouraged.

Today's excerpt:

"A foolish man built his house upon the sand: and the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell and great was the fall."

This parable warns us of the vanity of precept without practice; of the deadly peril of those who know the Truth, or at least know about it, without honestly trying as well as they can to put it into practice. One could almost say, better never to have heard of the Truth at all, than to know of it and not try to live it."

There are four cornerstones to the house each one of us is building in A A, Going to meetings, getting a sponsor, working the steps, daily prayer and meditation.

Why is it different this time?

It is hard to believe how different my life is today! It has only been a little over 5 months since my last drink and things are going so well. It is all thanks to this program and my higher power, which I call God. I have been in and out of the halls of AA for a number of years. I would be one of the last ones in the door and one of the first ones out. I thought that as long as I was attending the meetings that that was all I needed. So I

never got a sponsor, I did not work any steps and I did not believe in a higher power. I was raised to be tough, self-sufficient, to not trust anyone and by NO means let outsiders know what was going on in my life. I was living in misery, hopelessness and fear. I was unraveling! My life had taken a huge turn and left me feeling like I was no longer important or needed. I had no idea who I was or what my purpose in life was anymore. I was not living, I just existed. Most of my drinking was to black out stages. Something had to change. On April 23, 2019 sitting on my couch alone and crying something happened to me. At the time I did not know what it was; I now know it was God leading me back to AA. I looked up the closest meeting and headed out the door. Although I had been to many meetings in the past this time felt different I was open to the idea of actually working the program and taking the suggestions. I was afraid to get my white chip when they offered it in the meeting. I managed to get the courage to ask for one after the meeting ended. I was approached by several people, one of them ended up being my sponsor. They gave me numbers, books, welcoming words, smiles and hugs!

So why is it different this time? Because I got a sponsor the day after that meeting and I talk with her every morning. I have a higher power and I know that he will lead me by the right road thought I may know nothing about it. I have been to a meeting almost every day since, I listen to what others share and can identify with a lot of it. I am doing my steps, I read and pray every day, I have a home group and I am involved. I get to most meetings early and stay late. I keep myself in the middle of the pack because I know that if I do not\ do that I will get go back out!

That's why it is different,

Denise R

Leo's Prayer

Dear God,

I thank you because today I have not been resentful, angry, jealous, self-centered, arrogant or afraid.

But I think I still need your help.

Because soon I will have to get out of bed!

AMEN

Meditation Read

When I got sober I had little understanding of meditation. Not only that, the word meditation bothered me more than the word God. At least the word God gave me a memory of things past. And, you told me that I could have my own understanding of God but not meditation. I had worked the steps and still my understanding of meditation was limited, no one asked me to meditate but they asked me to voice my third step prayer.

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In the above instance, the member is not being “thrown out” of A.A., just asked not to attend the meeting. The First Tradition assures A.A.s that no member “can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled.” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 129) It is always hoped that the individual member will see the difficulty as an opportunity for personal growth and will attend other meetings in the area in order to maintain his or her sobriety. Usually, this sort of action is taken as a last resort—after an individual has been asked to change his or her behavior.

Bill W., who always emphasized the loving, helpful, and tolerant attitude A.A. members should show each other, wrote in a letter in 1969: “This amount of charity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb meetings or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere, or, to come back when they are better able to participate.”

Indeed, Bill W. was no stranger to tumult, controversy, or disturbances at A.A. meetings. He also had faith that growth and good could come out of trouble. In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, he writes, “Within A.A., I suppose, we shall always quarrel a good bit. Mostly, I think, about how to do the greatest good for the greatest number of drunks Surmounting such problems, in A.A.’s rather rugged school of life, is a healthy exercise.” (p. 233)

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It wasn't until I met Ed H. at a Sunday meeting and heard him say, “I was talking with Jesus this morning when Budha told me...”. I knew then that I needed to talk with him.

I met him the following Wednesday at 6AM. He told me don't be late. A lot of folks want this. I showed up at 5:30AM. Ed had gotten sober in 1941, in New York city. We sat in big Ez-boy chairs. Ed announced that we were going to meditate were-upon he started a tape. It started with a body relaxation followed by the Our Father and then an affirmation, “If every day is a day in which I must begin again I am as successful person”. After that day I no longer had the fear and misunderstanding about meditation.

~~~Bill G~~~

Alcoholics Anonymous' (AA) 12-step program as described in the "The Big Book," AA's guide for recovering from alcoholism, has many references to God and religious themes, and step 11 is no different. In a nutshell, step 11 says to discover the plan God, as you understand him, has for your life and find the power to carry it out. AA states it is non-religious but rather spiritual in design, and as its cornerstone, members should find a higher purpose or higher power. God can be described as a religious being, or for atheists and agnostics, it can simply mean the group dynamic experienced as a member at an AA meeting or even another individual.

## Step

11

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

## Spiritual Rather Than Religious

For many in recovery, whether it is Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon Family Groups, the concept of spirituality can be unfamiliar, lost or rejected. If you seek solace in a bottle or in bars, you may have other problems going such as a broken relationship or crumbling marriage, a criminal history or generally, a life in turmoil. Even for those who have had an upbringing in a church, you may find that your experience was more "religious" and prescriptive rather than spiritual. For most who are earnest in working the 12 steps, by the time you arrive at step 11 you may discover a measure of spirituality at work in your life. For many AA members, they say they have discovered their higher power and form a better understanding of that power.

## Prayer or Meditation for Guidance

The approaches and methods of prayer and meditation suggested in step 11 vary, but the purpose of the step is to connect with that higher power. Some prefer to call the higher power "God," others avoid the G-word altogether. The point is AA members discover through participation in the program that there is a power greater than themselves, and they have seen that power at work.

As members accept the "serenity" principle that "Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake"

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### **Seventh Tradition Corner: Meeting Our Obligations**

“Fiscal responsibility” is not a term too many active alcoholics would have been able to apply to themselves before finding recovery. Yet, once sober and in A.A., many have undergone a transformation where money and responsibility are concerned and have come to recognize the importance of self-support in providing ongoing Twelfth Step services, particularly at the group level.

Rents must be paid, literature purchased, local meeting lists published. Without some money, these basic services — and others — would go unfulfilled, and alcoholics, searching for recovery, might never make their way to A.A.

As Bill W. put it, “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility — one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.” (The Language of the Heart, p. 221)

Says Cathy B., Southeast regional trustee and current chairperson of the A.A.W.S. Board, it’s important for members to make the spiritual connection between their contributed dollars and helping the alcoholic they might never meet. “When you give that money, you give it on faith,” she notes. “It’s based on the principle of self-support, of accepting responsibility and giving back beyond the commitment of time.”

“It all takes money,” she adds. “I was concerned with having enough money to go to the bar and buy a drink. Now, in order to give back, I want to provide access to another alcoholic.”

“Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible,” wrote Bill W. (The Language of the Heart, p. 350), “whether it be a group

meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe.

“Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to a recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength — and that, under our Tradition of self-support, we are all going to foot the bill.”

Many questions related to A.A. finances are covered in the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” (F-3). The A.A. Guidelines on Finance (MG-15) and the service piece “The A.A. Group Treasurer” (F-96) provide detailed information on group financial matters, such as opening bank accounts, procuring tax I.D. numbers, and obtaining insurance coverage for the group. These items are all available from G.S.O. at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

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### **Crypto quote**

LR LH O HBLSLRGOV OQLFT RUOR KXKSN RLTK AK OSK  
ZLHRGSIKZ, MF TORRKS AUOR RUK YOGHK, RUKSK LH  
HFTKRULMJ ASFMJ ALRU GH

### **And here is your hint: F = O**

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### **Last Months Crossword Puzzle Answers:**

Across - 2. Amazed 6. Unity 7. Saints 8. A new peace  
10. Extravagant 12. Bill W 13. Progress 15. Phone

Down - 1. Humility 3. Trudge 4. First step 5. Higher  
9. White 11. Anonymity 14. Smith

Create a caption for the  
graphic and send email to:

[editor@aamainedistrict6.org](mailto:editor@aamainedistrict6.org)

