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OUR MEETING IN PRINT

When I was first trying to get sober, I came to Alcoholics Anonymous in desperation. With many of my relationships either damaged, misunderstood, or unavailable; my ability to remain sober tenuous at best; I used AA like a lifeline - clinging to it through and between meetings.

As I worked the steps with a sponsor, I was able to develop more confidence in my sobriety and even begin to develop serenity.

As time went on, I began to develop a “program” of recovery that was specific to me and my experience; through trust in my higher power, consultation with my sponsor and other trusted AAs, and ongoing prayer, I adopted what worked and let go of the rest. What I ended up with was a consistent daily routine. Prayer, meditation, reading, and a most important meeting each morning; then prayer and reflection in the evening (along with a call to my sponsor). Next day, simply repeat. I gradually became more confident in recovery and trust in God. The longer I did what I knew worked, the more effective it seemed. The byproduct of this, however, was a rigidity in my thinking and practice. I became highly dependent on my practice remaining the same from day to day. Any disturbance to my daily routine became annoying, and a perceived threat to peace and serenity.

This March, when the pandemic resulted in major disruption, including the closure of our meeting sites and the move to online meetings, I was seriously shaken. The core of my program - the daily meeting - was no longer available to me. Human connection, which was one of the most important changes realized for me through early recovery, was seriously limited and restricted.

With the reality of my daily routine being unavailable, I was again faced with the challenge of “doing the next right thing” in spite of the limitations that were presented. I (resentfully) began attending my daily AA meeting online. I (reluctantly) picked up the phone and connected with others without seeing them in person. I continued the portions of my routine that

had not been interrupted in spite of it feeling incomplete.

It was also suggested to me to increase my willingness to use literature and reading to supplement my program. I was aware that much of the AA’s magazine, the Grapevine, had been made available online for free. While I have always appreciated the Grapevine in print, I began to use the online version as part of my daily practice.

The Grapevine is sometimes referred to as “The Meeting in Print.” My experience over the past few months deepened my appreciation of this phrase. The structural components of in-person meetings I was used to were all there: the preamble, the traditions, the steps, and the prayers. It turned out the experience, strength, and hope were there in personal stories; as were the struggles and rough times. The more I read, the more I felt as though I were at a meeting of sorts, and got what I needed, albeit in a different way than I was used to. It turned out what I was missing was still available to me, I just had to be willing to look in a different place.

Over the course of the past few months, this has proved a powerful lesson for me. My program is not dependent on any rigid routine, or any singular place. My recovery is not dependent on connection with certain people in specific ways. My spirituality is not dependent on a particular practice. And finally, my serenity is not dependent on the realization of my expectations; in fact quite the opposite. As stated by Dr. Paul O, “my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations.” (Reprinted from The Big Book pg. 223, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

My reading of the Grapevine (online and otherwise) is only one example of how my program has changed this year. I eventually found online meetings to be extremely valuable and fulfilling, once I gave them a chance. Over time I found other ways to connect with my valued friends in the program rather than before and after in-person meetings. It turns out that the program of recovery given to me is flexible in ways that I couldn’t conceive only a few months ago.

Trusting God and doing the next right thing has proved (again) to be the right answer for me, and this is a lesson I will need to continue to learn. Change scares me, and in fear I often forget what I know.

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WHY SHY AWAY FROM SERVICE ?



There are many who shy away from Service Work for any number of excuses. They may feel that they do not have the time or the opportunity to be of Service to others. Perhaps they feel that they have nothing to offer. This, however, is not the case. Every time we come into contact with another human being, we are given the occasion to perform an act of Service, no matter how small. If we see a friend with tears in their eyes, we can make the choice to take time out of our day to inquire as to what is disturbing them. Even if we do not have any advice to offer (or if they do not want to hear the advice we have in mind), we will have performed a Service by simply acting as a sounding board for someone in need.

A person does not have to bear a tearful expression to become the recipient of our service work, nor must they actually know that we are the ones to have performed a Service.

Even if we do not go out of our way to perform Service Work on a daily basis, we should at least be willing to answer the call when an opportunity presents itself. Charity is an act performed, but generosity is a frame of mind. Moreover, those of us who led selfish lives while under the spell of alcohol will find that we gain much more fulfillment from the performance of our Service Work than we ever gained from our previous self-seeking behaviors, "it is in giving that we receive."

Therefore, we should not define Service Work by the specific acts performed, but rather by the quality of our intentions. We may feel a tinge of guilt when our attempts at Service are denied, but pure intentions are their own reward. Moreover, do not be deterred by the concept that good intentions pave the road to Hell; in such cases, self-seeking in one form or another often poisons the intent in question. If our intentions are truly good, then we will learn to channel our empathy and understanding of others toward valuable Service that will improve the lives of others while also improving our image of ourselves. Moreover, as we learn to—as one talented writer puts it—"become the tap instead of the bucket," we will replace the above hellish idiom with a much more apt expression: "Virtue is its own reward."

Why we need Service Work:

The first lesson is that every act has consequences, which inform our future acts. If we are selfish and dishonest, we will ingrain in our minds the lesson that such behavior is acceptable. More importantly, we will learn that we can behave unethically and immorally without reprimand. However, if we choose to do well, we will move through the stages that allow us to learn the value of instrumentalism as we develop a more principled conscience.

The second lesson is a bit more complex. It may appear in the above excerpt as if the speaker is condemning a life of doing as a life in which self-reflection is nearly impossible. One may also see the speaker's words as an indication that there is no more need to worry about who we are. Many of us were lost when

we fell into our addictions. We did not know who or what we were, and we latched onto an identity which was easy to maintain. Because at the end of the day, our identity is largely determined by our actions.

If we accept this as the truth, we will come to realize that we have become useful and charitable individuals through the performance of our Service Work. We will not only know who we are, but we will be at peace with the identity that we have forged through our deeds. In addition, in those moments during which we are able to "stop and simply be," we will discover that we are no longer in a prison of our own sick thoughts. Silence and self-reflection are no longer our enemies, but rather opportunities for us to enjoy our newfound peace of mind.

There is a spiritual component to the disease model of alcoholism, which points to a hole within the innermost being of every alcoholic that must be filled if we are ever to find true contentment in sobriety. Filling this hole through Service work enables us to experience a sense of spiritual awakening that so often eluded us in the past. Conversely, the decision to leave these ourselves empty will deny the world of the gifts we have to offer while also denying ourselves the sense of purpose for which we so desperately yearn.

Almost every human being on Earth will question the meaning of their existence at some point in their lives. Through Service Work, this question is finally given an answer to us.

"A.A. 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.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service."

Bill W., A.A.'s Legacy of Service:

AA' thrive on service work. Without a community of recovering alcoholics willing to reach out and help one another, AA would cease to exist. As such, anyone who has been helped by AA and the Twelve Steps, which act as our foundation, must give to newcomers the same good will that they have received from those who came before them.

As AA founder, Bill Wilson noted in A.A.'s Legacy of Service, service work encompasses any act which serves to keep the program alive so that others may profit from a sense of community and fellowship. The Three Legacies of AA—recovery, unity and service—are forever linked by this very principle. In addition, it is this same principle which brings us to a discussion of the Twelve Concepts.

Alcoholics Anonymous has The Twelve Concepts for World Service. Their purpose is to outline the basic guiding principles under which the Groups are organized and run. Since Groups thrive on Service Work performed by individuals who understand the value of unity for the benefit of our common welfare, it should be no surprise that those who take Service Positions are not compensated.

This is the definition of General Service alluded to earlier. One may act as a General Service Representative for their Home Group, attending District and Intergroup meetings to keep the



Fellowship alive throughout their greater surrounding area. If they do not feel up to the responsibilities of a GSR, they may also consider managing their Home Group's finances as Treasurer, or becoming Secretary and taking down minutes at their home group's business meetings. There are many groups with additional Service Positions as well, depending upon the Group's specific needs and general attendance.

One may also take a position in either Group's Central Service Office or Intergroup, responding to email, letters and phone calls from those who are new to the program and do not know how to locate Groups within their area. Some may even become involved in the organization and planning of local AA Conventions, ensuring that hundreds of attendees are able to go out and meet others. General Service is a great responsibility, but it is also a surefire way of building a strong and sober support group as we are introduced to alcoholics we may not have met otherwise.

Remember that **General Service or World Service are not the only forms of Service Work** within these groups. Personal Service, such as that mandated by Step Twelve of AA, is equally important. Whether Personal Service entails Sponsorship, listening to a Fifth Step, or simply giving a fellow group member rides to and from meetings, there is something to be gained through the direct assistance of another person's sobriety. The newcomer will feel less alone when they come to realize that even a perfect stranger is willing to show them hospitality.

Even attending meetings may be seen as a form of Service Work to the newcomers, as they may be inspired by meeting people with much earlier sobriety dates. The smallest of helpful actions such as making coffee, setting up chairs or cleaning up after the meeting, will ensure that all in attendance are a little more comfortable and are able to focus their attention on the strengthening of their recovery.

There is no shortage of ways to be of service to others in recovery, but it is vital to our sobriety that some form of Service Work be performed with the alcoholic in mind. In this spirit, we close with the Alcoholics Anonymous Responsibility Statement, as published in The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service:

"I am responsible . When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that, I am responsible."(Reprinted from The AA Service Manual with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)



Easy Does It



The Emmett Fox Corner
With Michel J

"I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish." (Reprinted from The Big Book, page 22, with the permission of AA, World services, Inc.)

Bill W reminds us that the main object of the big book is to enable us to develop a faith in a power greater than ourselves and to connect our souls with that Higher Power. For Bill, faith was more than an opinion; it was a transaction; an agreement to open ourselves to the healing power that exists in the twelve steps and to have the same faith in AA that one would have in a doctor who has literally healed millions of patients. For many of us, this is not an easy proposition. As noted in the big book:

"We were bothered with the thought that faith and dependence upon a Power beyond ourselves was somewhat weak, even cowardly. We looked upon this world of warring individuals, warring theological systems, and inexplicable calamity, with deep skepticism. We looked askance at many individuals who claimed to be godly.

Besides a seeming inability to accept much on faith, we often found ourselves handicapped by obstinacy, sensitiveness, and unreasoning prejudice. Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned." (Reprinted from The Big Book, page 40, with the permission of AA, World services, Inc.)

Perhaps our elders and our teachers felt that they should explain and give a reason for everything they wanted us to do. They may have wanted to show us that they were wise, and that it was reasonable to expect an explanation at every step. We may have grown up with the idea that we must take nothing on trust. Despite our childish and imperfect understanding, we developed the opinion that it is our right to know the reason for everything at once; that there can be no mysteries in life.

Regardless of what may have caused our difficulty with matters of faith, the Big Book tells us we must begin to develop a faith in (and ultimately depend) upon a power greater than ourselves. The challenge is just how we are to go about doing this. Emmet Fox notes that it is a great mistake to struggle mentally to try to produce a lively faith within yourself. In matters of spirituality, forced effort is always counterproductive. Instead, what we need to do is to act as if we already had the faith we desire. Anything that we do of our own free will is always the truest expression of what we actually believe. When we pray, we should expect that prayer to be answered and we should act as though we expected it. find work, establish ourselves in our community and retrieve old relationships. It is not enough to simply pray **CNT PG 5**

DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

District Six held its monthly business meeting on June 12th via Zoom. There appeared to be 15 people attending with two non-voting. We began by accepting the minutes from May's meeting and the treasurer's report. Both votes passed without issue. It was noted that the group conscious for the district dictates that funds above prudent reserve be released twice a year and that we had missed one of the distribution dates. With this prompt the treasurer assured that the funds would be distributed by the next district business meeting. We then moved on to committee reports. The Corrections and Bridging the Gap chair reported that Two Bridges facility has been successfully holding meetings since the previous month. To host a meeting you need to have already been cleared to physically enter the jail, but a non-vetted member can co-host. The Newsletter committee reported having held an online meeting, as well as the committee having adopted the same guidelines that are currently used by the area 28 newsletter. Our website chair reported having implemented the SSL certificate and hosting package upgrade that had been approved at the May district meeting.

GSR's report generally held little change. Most if not all meetings are still being held online, with varied success in maintaining attendance and with different approaches to addressing seventh tradition. Overall meetings seem to be holding up well despite the challenges faced by moving online. Meetings returning to in person spaces were discussed in new business, where it was addressed that each group is autonomous and thus the district does not have any specific direction for any one group. It was acknowledged that the district wants first, and foremost, for people to remain healthy, and that in many aspects reopening meetings will be a decision left up to landlords and meeting spaces even before being brought to a group conscious. Some groups are electing to meet outside when possible. The district is moving to create an adhoc committee to look into what way the district committee might be of service if and when meetings begin to transition away from online platforms.

During old business, we voted on the amended motion to increase the grapevine committee's budget. We reviewed many previously voiced opinions and thoughts during discussion and ultimately passed the budget increase bringing it from 30.00\$ to 150.00\$. We also discussed the motions that had been voted on at the area level. The motion to purchase grapevine subscriptions for all corrections facilities in the Area passed. The motion increasing delegate budgets to cover cost of gifts failed, as did the motion to create a position that delegates automatically move into at the end of their term. The motion addressing explorations around New Brunswick being a part of area 28 was withdrawn. Further information and more language that is exact can be produced upon request.

The next business meeting will be held on July 10th at 6:00pm,

online unless otherwise specified.

HELP WANTED:

The following positions are open at the District level:

ARCHIVES

The right person for this position would be willing and able to maintain files and documents that are historic for the district and the districts meetings, as well as attend the monthly business meetings for district six and area. There is a recommended guideline of 2 or more years of sobriety and proficiency with computers. Further information can be found at the district six website or the monthly business meeting.

FUNCTIONS CHAIR

Looking for self-motivated person, willing and able to serve a 2 year term running a committee responsible for planning and throwing events for AA's in district 6. The role includes managing seed money, proposing events to the district committee and working with a team to throw each event as well as attending the monthly district meeting. More information can be found on the district website or the at the monthly business meeting.

HOTLINE

The hotline coordinator is responsible for attending monthly business meetings, maintaining and updating the phone list and connecting with CSO to share information. This will include reaching out to meetings and AA's in our District to get contact information so that we can continue to be actively involved in supporting those AA's in need who turn to the hotline for support. More information available on district six website and at the business meeting.

MEETING LIST

This position is a two-year commitment to maintain a list of all meetings, times and locations in the district and to share said list with district secretary and webmaster so that it may be printed and distributed in the district. This position also updates this information with CSO. Further information can be found at the business meeting and on the district six website.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Many of these positions are held with the intention of working with a larger committee. Current chairs seeking committee members include: The Website, The Grapevine and The Newsletter. If interested in pursuing more work in service at the district level this might be an excellent way to dive in without the commitment of a chair position. Please seek more information at the district business meeting.



Editor's Note:
Complete Information
Unavailable At Press Time



Aly, Newsletter Reporter

and then sit down and wait for something dramatic to happen. We should also remember that faith and common sense are never at odds with each other. Although we must have the faith that we will ultimately be relieved of our obsession to drink through the grace of our higher power, we should always take all of the ordinary normal necessary to reclaim our lives. As Emmet Fox writes:

“Wise action must be added to prayer. Pray about your difficulty but also claim Divine Guidance, and then take any steps that common sense dictates. We cannot remind ourselves too often that what we call common sense is itself an expression of Divine Wisdom. It is foolish to pray for help while neglecting some obvious and handy stepping-stone. We all know that an action is but the outer expression of a thought, and that a wise action is the expression of a wise or true thought, and so to take wise steps is but the proof that one is thinking rightly, and is, indeed, a part of the prayer itself.”

The use of Common Sense is one of the primary reasons why the AA program relies so heavily on sponsorship. The role of the sponsor is to test the weak spots in what we believe to be our common sense. We need to separate rationalization from reality and we should never expect prayer to compensate for foolishness.

Finally, as The Big Book points out:

“We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try.” (Reprinted from The Big Book, page 28, with the permission of AA, World services, Inc.)

For she said within herself, “If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.” But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said gently: “Daughter be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” Matthew 9:22

More Will Be Revealed

I was a sick and suffering soul without a solution when I came to Alcoholics Anonymous. My history, what we share as ‘our experience’ or ‘what it was like was like’ was only beginning to come out in pieces and parts. Wendy gave me a Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve and As Bill Sees It. ‘

As I started to read the Big Book, the Foreword To The First Edition grabbed my attention. We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics *precisely how we have* recovered (Reprinted from The Big Book with the permission of AA, World services, Inc.) is the main purpose of this book. Words like precisely catch my attention I am also easily distracted and led astray) I wanted to know more about who came up with

the Big Book idea and how it came to be. I began collecting a library of AA literature including Pass It On, Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers and the Joe and Charlie CDs. The history is fascinating and drew me deeper into Alcoholics Anonymous. I read about another drunk, Ebby Thatcher, an old school friend of Bill’s, who went to Bill’s house in November 1934. I could certainly identify with Bill’s thought ‘of recapturing the spirit of other days’ and “drinking openly with Ebby’. I had the same thought as Bill when reconnecting with people of my past. Bills’ surprise was Ebby was sober. Ebby talked about all 12 steps of Alcoholic Anonymous (BB pgs 12-13). For whatever reason I became very fond of Ebby Thatcher and that was the last reference I saw of Ebby until June 21, 2020.

Each morning I have 3 small books I read from, Daily Reflections, In God’s Care and The Twelve Step Prayer Book. June 21 directed me to page 135, prayer 182 in The Twelve Step Prayer Book. There I found Searcy W’s Prayer.

**I pray today to:
Trust God,
Clean house,
Help others.**

I once again got led astray and googled Searcy W, AA. Lo’ and behold I read that Searcy Whalen (3/30/10-9/30/03) who had 57 years sobriety, was Ebby’s sponsor and I learned the rest of Ebby’s story. Six months after Ebby left Bill he went back out in the Bowery in NYC and stayed drunk on and off for 18 years. Bill Wilson flew to Dallas in 1953 and met Searcy. They talked about Ebby and a couple friends found him in the Bowery, dried him up a bit, put him on a plane with a pint of whiskey to Dallas. Ebby got sober again after cussing Bill & Searcy out and stayed that way for 5 years. Ebby went back to NYC and he fell off the wagon again. Bill got him into a halfway house in 1963 and he died in 1966. It saddened me. It also drove home that feeling of hopelessness, which is exactly what I felt when I walked through the doors of AA May 10, 2015.

One Day at A Time more is revealed and I pray that I remain willing, honest and open to stay in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Anne L

CNT FR P 1

The Grapevine, “The Meeting In Print,” was a meeting when I needed a meeting; and helped me to recognize the flexibility of my program when circumstances demanded it. I will take this lesson with me as life continues to flex and change, and the copy of the Grapevine on my coffee table or computer desktop will serve as an ongoing reminder.

Geoff G



Requested by Audrey,
Newsletter Reporter