

**A.A.
MEETING
IN A
POCKET**

Central Service Committee
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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.

A.A. Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery:

THE TWELVE STEPS OF A.A.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscience contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress.

We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- c) That God could and would if He were sought.

Big Book p. 58-60

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF A.A.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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3rd STEP PRAYER:

God, I offer myself to thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always. Amen

Big Book p. 63

4th STEP PRAYER:

God, please help me show those I resent the same tolerance, pity and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. Help me to see that this is a sick man. Father, please show me how I can be helpful to him and save me from being angry. Lord, help me to avoid retaliation or argument. I know I can't be helpful to all people, but at least show me how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Thy will be done. Amen.

Big Book p. 67

5th STEP PRAYER:

God, please remove my fear and help me to be completely honest in what I am about to do. Please give me the courage, faith and strength I need to share with this person my whole truth, especially the things I swore I'd take with me to the grave. Amen

Big Book p. 73

6th STEP PRAYER:

God, thank you for removing my fear and for showing me the truth about myself. I need your help to become willing to let go of the things in me which continue to block me off from you. Please grant me your grace and remove these objectionable characteristics, defects and shortcomings from me. Amen

Big Book p. 76

7th STEP PRAYER:

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

Big Book p. 76

8th STEP PRAYER:

God, please remove my fears and show me your truth. Show me ALL the harms I have caused with my behavior. Lord, make me willing to make amends to one and all. Amen

Big Book p. 76

9th STEP PRAYER:

God, with regard to this amend, please remove my fear and give me strength, courage and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. Amen

Big Book p. 79

10th STEP PRAYER:

God, please help me watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up in me, help me to immediately ask you to remove them from me and help me discuss these feelings with someone. Help me to quickly make amends if I harmed anyone and help me to resolutely turn my thoughts to someone I can help. Help me to be loving and tolerant of everyone today. Amen

Big Book p. 84

MORNING PRAYER:

God, please direct my thinking and keep my thoughts divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self seeking motives. Please keep my thought life clear from wrong motives and help me employ my mental faculties, that my thought-life might be placed on a higher plane, the plane of inspiration. Amen

Big Book, p. 86

FEAR PRAYER:

God, thank you for helping me be honest enough to see this truth about myself and now that you have shown me the truth about my fears, please remove these fears from me. Please help me outgrow my fears and direct my attention to what you would have me be. Lord, demonstrate through me and help me become that which you would have me be. Help me do thy will always. Amen

Big Book

NIGHTLY PRAYER:

God, please forgive me for my failings today. Please help me live thy will better tomorrow. Show me how to correct my errors. Guide me and direct me. Remove my arrogance and fear. Grant me the humility and strength to do thy will. Amen

ABC OF MEETING TOPICS

- A. Acceptance, Amends, Anonymity
- B. Behavior, Belonging, Blackouts
- C. Conscience, Complacency, Complex
- D. Desire, Decisions, Depression
- E. Easy-does-it, Emotions, Egos
- F. Faith, Fear, Fellowship, Fatigue
- G. Gratitude, Gossip, Guilt, Grace
- H. Humility, Hope, Honesty, Happiness
- I. Inferiority, Illness, Immaturity, Inside
- J. Jealousy, Joy, Judging
- K. Kindness, Knowledge
- L. Love, Loneliness, Live-Let Live
- M. Meetings, Morals, Meditation
- N. New Life, Ninth Step, Newcomers
- O. Obligations, One day-at-a-time
- P. Prayer, Personalities, Principles
- Q. Quality vs. Quantity, Quiet Time
- R. Resentments, Recovery, Remorse
- S. Surrender, Serenity, Spirituality
- T. Temper, Tolerance, Truth, Today
- U. Unselfish, Unity, Understanding
- V. Vanity, Values, Virtues, Vulgarity
- W. Worry, Way of Life, Willingness
- XYZ Yesterday, Youth, Zest for Sobriety

11th Step Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace; that where there is hatred, I may bring love; that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness; that where there is discord, I may bring harmony; that where there is error, I may bring truth; that where there is doubt, I may bring faith; that where there is despair, I may bring hope; that where there are shadows, I may bring light; that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted; to understand, than to be understood; to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life. Amen

Twelve & Twelve, p. 99

THE PROMISES

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Big Book p. 83, 84

It Works-It Really Does

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

Big Book p. 87, 88

Resentment

If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks, and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love.

Big Book p. 552

Doing God's Will?

We cannot get along without prayer and meditation. On awakening, let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking. Our thought lives will be placed on a much higher plane when we start the day with prayer and meditation. We conclude this period of meditation with a prayer that we will be shown through the day what our next step is to be. The basis of all our prayers is: Thy will be done in me and through me today.

Big Book p. 86

Sobriety Insurance

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. Carry the message to other alcoholics. You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Life will take on a new meaning for you: To watch people recover, to see them help others in turn, to watch loneliness vanish, to have a host of friends, this is an experience you must not miss.

Big Book p. 89

Live and Let Live

We must be tolerant of people who think differently than we do, whether they are in A.A. or outside of A.A.

A VISION FOR YOU

For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination.

It means release from care, boredom and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt—and one more failure.

The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subjects of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval.

A VISION FOR YOU cont'd

Momentarily we did — then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen— Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand!

Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, "I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time." As ex-problem drinkers we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn't happy about his sobriety. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. He will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.

Big Book p. 151, 152

JUST FOR TODAY...

Just for today, I will try to live through this day only, not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do things for twelve hours that would appall me if I had to keep them up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will be happy. This assumes that what Abraham Lincoln said is true, that "most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Happiness is from within; it is not a matter of externals.

Just for today I will try to adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my family, my business, and my licks as they come and fit myself to them.

Just for today I will take care of my body. I will exercise it, care for it, nourish it, not abuse it or neglect it, so that it will be a perfect machine for my bidding.

Just for today, I will try to strengthen my mind. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; I will do at least two things I don't want to do, as William James suggests, just for exercise.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress as becomingly as possible, talk low, act courteously, be liberal with praise,

JUST FOR TODAY cont'd

criticize not at all, nor find fault with anything and not try to regulate or improve anyone.

Just for today I will have a program. I will write down what I expect to do every hour. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. It will eliminate two pests — hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. In this half hour sometimes I will thank God, so as to get a little more perspective to my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid, especially I will not be afraid to be happy, to enjoy what is beautiful, to love and believe that those I love, love me.

Acceptance

“Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life—unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God’s world by mistake. *Big Book p. 417, 4th Ed.*”

SURRENDER TO WIN

When we sincerely took such a position (let God direct our lives), all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we become less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we become interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

Big Book p. 63

#1 OFFENDER

Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up."

Big Book p. 64

WITHOUT DEFENSE

The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.

Big Book p. 24

The Doctor's Opinion

Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks-drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

On the other hand-and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand-once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.

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Business

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