

T H E COURIER

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God of my understanding ... Excerpts from editorial by Bill W, AA Grapevine, January 1948

Sooner or later, every AAer comes to depend upon a Power greater than himself. He finds that the God of his understanding is not only a source of strength, but also a source of positive direction

Every AA group follows this same cycle of development. We are coming to realize that each group, as well as each individual, is a special entity, not quite like any other. Though AA groups are basically the same, each group does have its own special atmosphere, its own peculiar state of development. We believe that every AA group has a conscience. It is the collective conscience of its own membership. Daily experience informs and instructs his conscience. The group begins to recognize its own defects of character and, one by one, these are removed or lessened. As this process continues, the group becomes better able to receive right direction for its own affairs. Trial and error produces group experience and out of corrected experience comes custom. When a customary way of doing things is definitely proved to be best, then that custom forms into AA Tradition. The Greater Power is then working through a clear group conscience.

We humbly hope and believe that our growing AA Tradition will prove to be the will of God for us.

Many people are coming to think that Alcoholics Anonymous is, to some extent, a new form of human society. ...Despite the fact that we do veer off at times on tangents, we are becoming more able to depend absolutely on the long-term stability of the AA group itself. With respect to its own affairs, the collective conscience of the group will, given time, almost surely demonstrate its perfect dependability. The group conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member, however good or wise he may be. This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous. Hence we can safely dispense with those exhortations and punishments seemingly so necessary to other societies. And we need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere. In this respect, we may be, to a large degree, unique.

Therefore, we of Alcoholics Anonymous are certain that there is but one ultimate authority, "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."

Excerpts from editorial by Bill W., A.A. Grapevine, January 1948

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PREAMBLE:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people 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 AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA 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 achieve sobriety. (AA Grapevine, Inc.)



March ... The Third Month Of Alcoholics Anonymous

STEP THREE: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him”

TRADITION THREE: “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking”

TRADITION THREE (Long Form) : “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation”

CONCEPT THREE: “The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs”

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!

TRADITIONS—CHECKLIST

This is a Checklist for Tradition Three
Reprinted with permission from Service Material from the General Service

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I over impressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he had been to AA before? What his other problems are?

If you've spent any time in Alcoholics Anonymous, you've probably heard the Serenity Prayer more times than you can count. Many meetings open or close with it. Some members say it quietly to themselves during the day. Others keep it on a card in a wallet or taped to a refrigerator.

The words are simple and familiar:

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..

For many of us, this prayer becomes more than something we say at the end of a meeting. It becomes a way to live.

A Prayer That Found Its Way Into AA

The Serenity Prayer was written in the early 1930s by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. In the early 1940s, a member of AA came across the prayer in print and shared it with others in the fellowship.

The message struck a chord right away. Here was something that captured an important spiritual idea in just a few lines. Soon, copies were being printed and shared among groups, and before long the prayer became a regular part of AA meetings.

Over time, it simply became part of the fabric of the fellowship.

Why It Means So Much in Recovery

Many alcoholics spent years trying to control everything—other people, circumstances, and the way life unfolded. When things didn't go our way, we reacted with anger, resentment, or despair.

The Serenity Prayer offers a different way.

Serenity reminds us that some things are simply beyond our control. The past cannot be changed. Other people will do what they do. Learning acceptance brings a kind of peace many of us never knew before coming to AA.

Courage reminds us that recovery is not passive. We can change our attitudes, our actions, and the direction of our lives. The Twelve Steps ask us to look honestly at ourselves and make changes where needed.

Wisdom helps us learn the difference between the two. That difference can be hard to see sometimes, but over time—through meetings, sponsorship, and the Steps—it becomes clearer.

A Prayer for Everyday Life

Many members find themselves turning to the Serenity Prayer outside of meetings as well.

It might come up when facing a difficult conversation, dealing with a problem at work, or feeling overwhelmed by something that can't be fixed right away. Sometimes simply pausing and remembering those words can change the way we approach a situation.

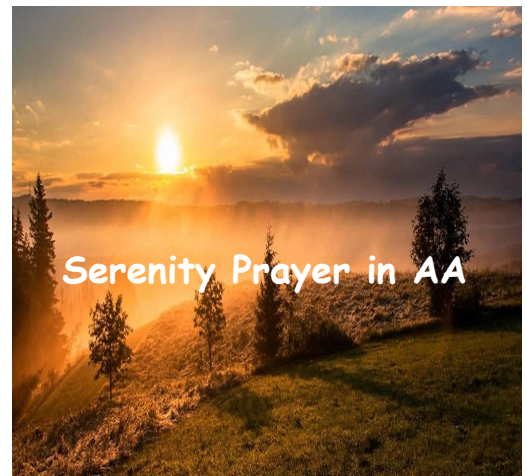
Instead of reacting, we take a moment to ask:
Is this something I need to accept, or something I can change?

That small pause can make a big difference.

One Day at a Time

The Serenity Prayer continues to be one of the most widely shared parts of the AA program. It's short, easy to remember, and speaks to something at the heart of recovery: learning to live life on life's terms.

For many of us, it becomes a daily reminder that we don't have to fight everything anymore. With a little serenity, some courage, and a bit of wisdom, we can face whatever the day brings—**One Day At A Time**.



Step Three Decision

I think of the first three Steps in AA as: I can't. (Step One). God can! (Step Two).

I have decided to ask Him to help me. (Step Three).
I no longer consider that saying the Third Step Prayer was when I decided to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. It is obvious that my decision to do so had to come before.

My decision to ask for God's help was made, according to the Big Book, at the bottom paragraph on page 62: "Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was to be our Director." The asking took place when I prayed the Third Step Prayer on page 63. But my decision was well thought out before asking God for help through that prayer.

I believe this distinction is important because we are told: "We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him." Time to think well between the decision and the prayer is important.

It would be tempting to haphazardly repeat this watershed prayer, denying the process of its needed substance and weight. Personally, having several months of sobriety before this sequence, I had already made a sincere decision before praying this prayer with a sponsor.

We are told: "The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation." (p. 63) My sponsor had me read each sentence of the prayer separately and use my own words to explain what it meant to me.

When finished, we both prayed the Third Step Prayer verbatim. I was immediately launched into the following Steps and have not had to drink since.

By Bob S. (Alcoholics Anonymous Cleveland)



Introduction to *THE LORD's PRAYER*

when closing a meeting.

Mary Pat B., Naples, Florida

The reason we join hands as we say the LORD's PRAYER ... is to remind us of the truth ... that we are not alone ... our prayer is for the still suffering alcoholic ... those who are with us ... and, those who are still searching for us. Hold on to the hand of the person next to you like your life depends on it ... **someday, it may.**

“Whenever things get hard, or I don’t want to follow through with a suggestion, I simply humble myself to my Higher Power and say, ‘Just for today.’ That helps me live in the moment.”

“Teen Nightmare,” San José, California, October 2011, Young & Sober: Stories By Those Who Found AA Early



YOUNG & SOBER

Stories from
AA Grapevine



“The amount of reality I turn my back on is the amount I lose.”

“Surrender—Not Self-Improvement,” Atlanta, Georgia, February 1990, Best of the Grapevine, Volume 3

Step Three: God as He May Express Himself

God of Our Own Understanding

Rick R. – San Diego, California

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) came into existence in 1935 when much of our society was centered around the churches in the communities where we lived. As a child in my hometown, on Sunday morning I could look out the window and see a vast majority of my neighbors walking to church. That was the way it was in the early 1940's.

The book, Alcoholics Anonymous was published in 1939, and it was highly influenced by many early members of the program at that time. A.A. could have, very easily become a religious program, but fortunately, the elders of that time realized, by the mistakes of the Oxford Group, and the Washingtonians, that they had to make it clear that, *a desire to stop drinking was the only requirement for membership*, and that the individual members could choose their own concept of a power greater than themselves, i.e. God as we understand him.

In Tradition Two it says, "As He may express Himself in our group conscience" When the word God is used in the remainder of the book, it is not always followed by the "as we understand him" qualifier, and I believe that many members get the idea that somehow, they are trying to push religion on them.

That is understandable. When I was faced with that possibility, I personally found it easy enough to read the black part of the pages in the book and to not let myself become distracted by what I now recognized as a cultural norm at the time. I had no problem setting aside my religious bias and recognizing the parts of the Big Book and the 12&12 that clearly state all the options available when it comes to finding a "Power Greater Than Myself". I can name three (3) right off top of my head: 1) Alcohol itself was my higher power for a long time and still would be if had not gotten into the program; 2) My EGO ran my life for quite a while until I got serious about Real life Issues; and 3) The A.A. program itself.

I found myself spiritually lost when I entered the program and when faced with the need to come to terms with the Higher Power issue. I now realize why it took so long to settle this subject. After years of drinking and an underdeveloped thinking process, it was hard to get up to speed right away.

As I got more familiar with the Big Book, and the 12&12, I started to uncover all the evidence that debunked the idea that I had to conform to any religious doctrine. In the 12&12 I read on page 26: *"alcoholics anonymous does not demand that you to believe anything."* On belief, *"to acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could."* (Pg.27)

Also, on page 26, it states: "Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think... A one-time vice-president of the American Atheist Society ... got through with room to spare." Then on page 33 of the 12&12 it says: "Therefore, Step Two is the rallying point for all of us. Whether agnostic, atheist, or former believer, we can stand together on this step."

Today I am comfortable with my own concept of a Higher Power, and I use the word God only to put a name on a concept that has no physical form; and, I might say that it expresses itself in the collective conscience of the world we live in.

Are you Spiritually Fit?

Donald W. - Fort Myers, Florida

OK, so you have been a member of our fellowship for a while, and you are grateful for the gifts that you have received as a result of your sobriety. Your step work with your sponsor has led to remarkable changes in your life. Steps 2 and 3 have enabled you to open the door to a new relationship with your Higher Power. Steps 4, 5, 6 and 7 have given you a new understanding of yourself. And Steps 8 and 9 provide you with a way to get right with the people that you have harmed in the past.

You are cruising along on the Sea of Serenity, not a cloud in the sky ... isn't life grand? You probably can't remember the last time you even thought about taking a drink, right? As they tell us in the book on page 84, "*We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame.*" Exactly! I am good to go! Oh, wait. There is that last sentence in that paragraph, "*That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.*"

Truth be told, perhaps we are not as committed to the daily maintenance of our spiritual condition as perhaps we once were when "we needed it". Resting on our laurels perhaps? No matter how long ago alcohol was removed from your life, maybe it is time for a "check-up" of your spiritual fitness. It is probably not necessary to Google it; let's just go with the tools that are available in our Big Book. Specifically, let's reference what the book calls the "Bedevilments" on page 52, and then we will move to what is often called "The Promises" starting on page 83.

Let's start with the bedevilments. A dictionary definition of the word 'bedevil' is, "*To torment or harass maliciously or diabolically, as with doubts, distractions, or worries.*" This paragraph on page 52 of the Big Book is a description of one who at this point is in grips of alcoholism, and not by any stretch of the term, spiritually fit. A wise sponsor may suggest that turning statements found in the text into questions is a useful way starting point in discovering your truth. When we do that, here is what it looks like:

Am I having trouble with personal relationships?

Am I unable to control my emotional nature?

Am I prey to misery?

Am I prey to depression?

Am I having trouble making a living?

Do I have a feeling of uselessness?

Am I full of fear?

Am I unhappy?

Am I unable to be of real help to other people?

For the bedevilments, to affirm that these afflictions presently exist is a sign that we might be in trouble. We thought they had been eliminated for good and all but now the presence of one or some of these conditions is like the check engine light appearing on your dashboard - it is possible that it could be a temporary condition or it could be something that requires attention sooner rather than later. Typically, if we are serious

Continued page 9.

“I believe anyone can be helped if they have an honest desire to stop drinking. I’m living proof.”

“Ripped Jeans and Threadbare High-Tops,” The Pas, Manitoba, July 1999, In Our Own Words: Stories of Young AAs in Recovery



IN OUR OWN WORDS
Stories of Young AAs in Recovery



THE BEST OF BILL

Reflections on Faith, Fear, Honesty, Humility, and Love

Plus Bill’s Classic Essay on Anonymity

“We began to see adversity as a God-given opportunity to develop the kind of courage which is born of humility, rather than bravado. Thus we were enabled to accept ourselves, our circumstances, and our fellows.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., January of Bill 1962, “This Matter of Fear”, Best

Are you Spiritually Fit? ... continued from page 7.

about our effort, our replies will need to go a bit deeper than just a “yes” or a “no”, particularly if our responses fall more along the lines of “kind of” or “maybe” or “sometimes” or “can you repeat the question?” For some reason, as you may have heard, putting a pen to paper is magical when it comes to self examination. Don’t be shy, this exercise is about your favorite subject – YOU. The deeper you go, the more effort and thought you put into it, the more worthwhile the exercise will be for you.

Now let’s shift to the other end of the spectrum, “The Promises” on page 83. I view this paragraph as a description of someone who has had a spiritual experience / awakening. What a dramatic alteration from the emotional state of one who was drowning in the desperation of the bedevilments to a life of happiness, peace, and usefulness to others! This transformation comes about by following the directions in the chapters “How It Works” and “Into Action”.

Again, we will apply that same formula of taking statements and turning them into questions when looking at these statements:

Today, do I feel a new freedom and a new happiness in my life?

Do I not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it?

Do I comprehend the word serenity, and do I have peace in my life?

Do I now see how my experience in life can benefit others?

Has that feeling of uselessness and self-pity disappeared in my life?

Have I lost interest in selfish things and gained an interest in others?

Has self-seeking will slipped away from me?

Has my whole attitude and outlook on life changed?

Has your fear of people and economic insecurity left you?

Do you know intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle you?

Have you begun to realize that God is doing for you what you could not do for yourself?

Unlike the earlier bedevilments, if the promises ARE NOT manifesting themselves in your life, why not? “At some point, I did feel like they were coming true in my life but I don’t know about now, maybe I was too optimistic or I was on that pink cloud that people talk about.” Do you think that they are unrealistic? Perhaps you feel that you now have reached the objective that you set when you arrived in the rooms of AA – freedom from alcohol, and that is good enough?

Is it possible that at this present time, you may not be as spiritually fit as you thought?

A Selfish Program?

Where it started or who first said it or why, we don't know. But, we feel deeply that it is a discrediting and distorted opinion of the Alcoholics Anonymous program. We inwardly cringe whenever we hear the statement blithely uttered "AA is a selfish program."

It came as something of a disconcerting shock the first time we heard it, for it sullied whatever decent motivation had inspired us to accept the 12 Steps as a way of life. We are grateful that we had in our possession the Big Book, for it clearly refuted any such assertion completely. Had we believed it or accepted it, we might have abandoned AA's design for sobriety and continued a hopeless and fatal quest. We had had enough of selfish living that produced only aloneness, misery, humiliation, and loneliness.

Our early experience in AA revealed something awesome, beautiful, inspiring and rare. We saw it in the eyes of those who accepted us into the group. We observed it in the actions of those who strove to relieve the suffering of other alcoholics with tenderness, patience, and understanding. We sensed it in the kindness and warmth of the fellowship of those who extended a helping hand to us.

It touched and altered the course of our life because it was the living manifestation of unselfishness. It was truly the finest expression of man's love for his fellow man. It was the giving of self with compassion and concern for the good of another human being without hope of reward.

SELFISH is defined as: Caring unduly or supremely for oneself, regarding one's own comfort, advantage, etc. in disregard or at the expense of that or others

Nowhere in the Big Book have we been able to find where we can work any part of this program without due consideration of others. In fact, we have counted some 55 places where it underscored that selfishness, self-pity, self-concern, self-aggrandizement, self-delusion, self-seeking, conceit, etc., as being the root of all our problems. Quote from the Big Book: "the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything – we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must or it kills us!"

Many of us do come to AA for positive reasons because we want to be better husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters – because we are desperately ashamed of the hurt our drinking is causing others – because we are sick of our own degrading conduct and selfish existence and desire something better – and not merely because we can't continue drinking.

Therefore, we believe it is extremely poor psychology to profound this statement to a new man, if for no other reason than to crush the first "out-going" thought he has had for many years. It could even so discourage him as to destroy his fair chance for recovery.

In our opinion, the great and satisfying rewards that accrue to "self" are the results of unselfish thought, attitude and effort. Some alcoholics may stay dry through development of new techniques by substituting habit or ritual, but we have failed to see them achieve sobriety meaning emotional stability and maturity of judgement.

Their lives continue to be plagued with disorder and conflict for they neglect their real source of power and guidance, spiritual growth and faith in a Higher Power. Our Big Book tells us that the alcoholic's recovery is not dependent upon people. It is "dependent upon his relationship with God."

AA does require individual acceptance. It does require individual application of its suggestions. It does require individual action in the practice of its principles. But, neither the tools we use nor the aims we strive for are selfish. Even our Twelve Traditions underline the essential quality of personal recovery, the concern for others. We learn to "give up personal desires for the common good."

We should even strive to lay aside the very human aspirations for recognition and acclaim – and serve others as humbly and as gratefully as possible. No, even though our human weaknesses sometimes prevent fulfillment of AA's aims and ideals, its "spirit" of love and service should never be tarnished with selfish motivation or goals.

By Les V., St. Paul, MN., Central Bulletin April 1973



“As faith grows, so does inner security.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., January 1962, “This Matter of Fear”, Best of Bill



THE BEST OF BILL

Reflections on Faith, Fear, Honesty, Humility, and Love

Plus Bill's Classic Essay on Anonymity



“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.”

“Distilled Spirits,” Indianapolis, Indiana, August 1982, AA Grapevine



How Spiritual Joy Differs From Human Happiness

For years I considered the Big Book statement: “Happy, joyous and free” as a bit redundant, for after all, are not happiness and Joy the same (p 133)? However, years later I found that HAPPINESS and JOY are two completely different things:

HAPPINESS is a human experience. It disappears when we are sad or depressed. But JOY is a God experience that may take place even when we are sad or depressed.

I have experienced said unexplained joy while feeling deeply depressed in a tent while camping in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. I had recently been separated from my ex-wife and was feeling enormous depression. We had camped in that same tent in the Grand Canyon during our honeymoon previously. In the middle of the night, I became unexplainably full of energy, and everything seemed to wax extremely vivid and bright. I was full of Joy. This lasted throughout the night.

I believe Bill Wilson was experiencing great Joy—not ordinary happiness—after he went through his vital spiritual experience on page 14 of the Big Book: Doctor Silkworth told him: “Something has happened to you I don’t understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were.” I believe Bill’s resultant Joy prompted him to immediately go out and start helping alcoholics. So, I believe God’s Joy can be ongoing.

Then there is Fitz Mayo who had such an ongoing vital spiritual experience that: “He couldn’t drink even if he would.” (p 57, Big Book) There must have been great joy in that!

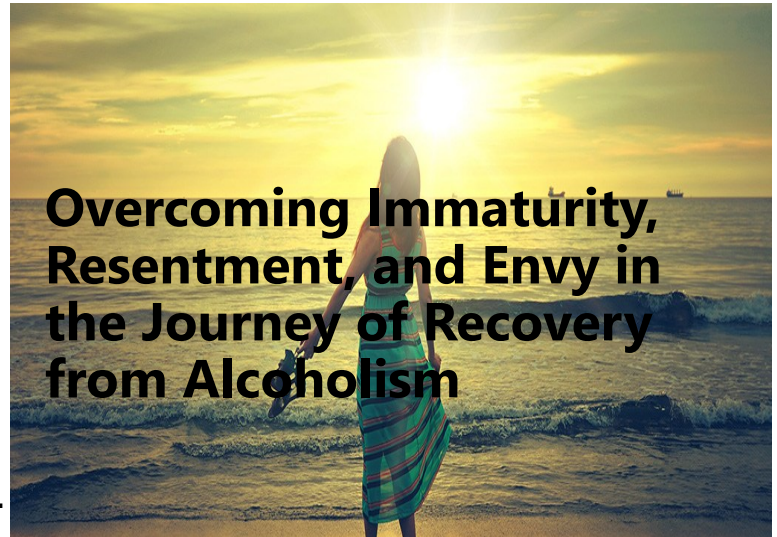
Again, Ebby Thacher (Bill’s sponsor), who was not a spiritual person prayed to God: “as never before” and was stuck sober for two years and seven months. Again, great joy must have been present. (EBBY The Man Who Sponsored Bill W., by Mel B. – p 58) Ebby died in 1966, two years sober.

I believe the blessing of spiritual Joy will come to me when God decides to send it—I cannot just wish for it. However, I believe my chances are all for the better if I try to maintain a fit spiritual condition by living the Twelve Steps.

By Bob S. (Alcoholics Anonymous Cleveland

Most of us are familiar with the story about the little selfish boy who picked up his ball and went home because the boys he was playing with wouldn't let him pitch, and as a result of his resentment, the game was discontinued.

No doubt most of us can still remember our drinking days when our behavior was like that of the little lad. No doubt too, many of us can recall when we habitually used family and friends to sate our lust and desire for drink and when our demands were not met, we would slink off to some secluded part of the house or den and sulk like an ill-tempered brat. Continually we took the joy out of the lives of



Overcoming Immaturity, Resentment, and Envy in the Journey of Recovery from Alcoholism

our loved ones and made life miserable for them. We demanded love and respect from our wives and children but offered nothing in return toward their welfare and security. When a family member complained about our demands, we pick up our hurt pride and hustled off for the nearest bar to have it dressed and bandaged.

Some of us bring this little boys' temperament into AA and we don't want to let go of it, as it may come in handy when a disagreement arises. This enables us to pick up our wounded pride and ego and head for some bar where we can always find a sympathetic listener, who will listen to all our troubles as long as we furnish the drinks.

AA too, has some group jumpers. They bounce from one group to another for various reasons or for no reason. Some members have picked up their ball of resentment and joined another group at the slightest provocation.

As an example, men have left and joined another group because they were not asked to serve on the committee for the group anniversary celebration. Others leave a group because the coffee is too hot or too cold, too weak or too strong.

There is no such thing as finding the perfect group because groups are made up of people and there is no perfect human being. Consequently, there is not perfect group. They will seek in vain until they realize their own imperfections.

We have also some in AA that are not mentally mature and take it upon themselves to attempt to reform the whole AA program. They try to assassinate another persons character that opposes their plans by using the shield of anonymity to hide their identity.

They resort to this cowardly trait to spout their poisonous envy at the men and women who take on job or position which they themselves could not ably handle. Yet, we should not and best not condemn them but rather pray for them, for they know not what they do.

We, the recovered alcoholics are both fortunate and aware that our main body is composed of many, many level-headed men and women, who freely devote their time and talents in carrying the message and helping others because they feel and are responsible.

These solid AA members stand up, discuss and handle problems in an efficient manner. As long as such honorable men and women serve as guardians in AA, our program will continue to grow.

Originally Titled "Resentment" by Ed B. Akron Ohio, Central Bulletin, July 1983

AA Volunteer Opportunities



*Naples Area
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Mornings: 9:00 to 12:30
Afternoon: 12:30 to 4:00

(One morning or afternoon each week.)

and, Telephone Helpline

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Your Groups'

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Next Month.

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Big Book History – Why We Call It "The Big Book"

A printer in Cornwall, NY, named Edward Blackwell, had been highly recommended to Bill Wilson. Blackwell was the President of Cornwall Press. So Bill and Hank Parkhurst (author of the personal story "The Unbeliever" in the first edition of the Big Book) went to Cornwall to see Blackwell. There they were told that the book would probably be only about four hundred pages when printed. That seemed a bit skimpy. They wanted to sell the book for \$3.50 per copy. That was a very large sum in those days; probably the equivalent of about \$50 today, and people might not think they were getting their money's worth.

They picked the cheapest, thickest paper the printer had, and requested that each page be printed with unusually large margins surrounding the text. This made for an unusually large book. Thus, the book came to be nicknamed the "Big Book."

A reproduction of the first printing can be purchased today and it is much taller and thicker than the current Big Book, although it has fewer pages.

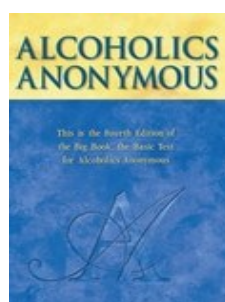
Blackwell had an excess of red material for the bindings, so he offered them a special deal. Eager to save costs, Bill and Hank agreed. They also thought, according to some reports, that the color red would make the book more attractive and marketable.

The first printing was the only one on which a red binding was used. All the other printings of the first edition, except for the fourth printing, were in various shades of blue. The fourth printing, due to another overstock of binding material and thus, lower cost, was bound in blue as well as in green.

Despite all their efforts at proofreading, there was a typographical error in the first printing. On page 234, the second and third line from the bottom was printed twice. This was corrected in subsequent editions.

A New York AA member named Ray Campbell, a recognized artist, was asked to design the dust jacket. His story, "An Artist's Concept", appears in the Big Book's first edition. He submitted various designs for consideration including one which was blue and in an Art Deco style. The one which was chosen was red, and yellow, with a little black, and a little white. The words Alcoholics Anonymous were printed across the top in large white script. It became known as the circus jacket because of its loud circus colors. The unused blue jacket is today in the Archives at the Stepping Stones Foundation

Nancy O., AA member.



THE ADVISORY COUNCIL & HOST COMMITTEE FOR THE 43RD
FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN A.A. PRESENT:

CIRCUS UNDER *the* STARS

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FOR ANYONE ATTENDING.

PRE-SALE \$30 • AT CAMPING \$40

VISIT WWW.43.FCYPAA.NET OR SCAN QR CODE TO PURCHASE YOUR PRESALE PASS TO
2026 FCYPAA SPRING CAMPING OR PROVIDE A SCHOLARSHIP!

WHOOOOS GOING CAMPING?



**BE A PART OF SOMETHING
WONDERFUL!**

LOOKING FOR SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES?

**HELP MAKE THE
SISTERS BY THE SEA, 2026
CONFERENCE SUCCESSFUL!**

JOIN THE HERD AND HAVE SOME FUN!

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE ON MONDAYS AT 5:30 PM AT
THE NAPLES INTERGROUP OFFICE IN PERSON OR ZOOM**

ZOOM ID: 2397844921 PW: 2026

Meeting Dates:

**January 26th; February 23rd; March 30th; April 13th;
April 27th; weekly in May; and June 1st.**

**The final conference meeting will be held on June 8th in
the Governors Suite at the Hilton Naples.**

*** MEMORABILIA**

*** BE A GREETER**

*** ENTERTAINMENT**

*** REGISTRATION**

**SISTERS BY THE SEA JUNE 12,13,& 14TH
HILTON NAPLES**

REGISTER AT WWW.SISTERSBYTHESEA.COM

QUESTIONS?

CALL PEGGY P.E. AT 239-269-7651

OR E-MAIL SISTERSBYTHESEALLC@GMAIL.COM

68th FLORIDA STATE CONVENTION



ORLANDO, FL **ROSEN PLAZA**
ORLANDO
August 6th-9th, 2026

9700 International Drive Orlando, FL 32819

A NEW FREEDOM

Scholarships Available!



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER

Fun Activities

- ✓ Indoor Go-Karts
- ✓ Games & Trivia
- ✓ World Class Golf
- ✓ Dance Parties
- ✓ Scenic 5K Run

Experience Freedom

- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Great Speakers
- ✓ Meet New Friends
- ✓ Marathon Meetings
- ✓ Panels

Register Today While Rooms Are Available!!!

Register Online at <https://68.FloridaStateConvention.com>

Scan the QR Code with your camera. For assistance please visit <https://68.FloridaStateConvention.com>



Overflow
Hotel 1 – \$109
\$20 add. person
Hyatt Place

8741 International Dr.
Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-370-4720



Overflow
Hotel 2 – \$159
Rosen Centre

9840 International Dr.
Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-996-9700



Call 1-407-996-9700
to be put on a
waiting list if
available. - \$159
9700 International Drive
Orlando, FL 32819



Serenity By The Sea!



SEPTEMBER 11 - 13, 2026

A Weekend of Food, Fun & Fellowship Featuring Meetings, Workshops, Speakers, and a Saturday Night Banquet!

BOB D.

Las Vegas, NV

STEPHANIE B.

Konawa, OK

JIMMY D.

Dallas, TX

LAURA B.

Austin, TX

BILLY N.

West Palm, FL

Dynamic Talks from around the United States



A VARIETY OF SPECIAL EVENTS!

(Badges must be worn to attend all meetings & workshops)

~ Workshops! ~ Archives! ~ Speakers

The rest will be a Surprise!

Sunrise/Early Bird and Sunset/Night Owl Meetings!

HOTEL REGISTRATION INFORMATION

The Naples Hilton Resort!

1-800-445-8667

Please visit our website for additional information and one-click booking!

\$140 Per Night Single or Double Occupancy
(Free Self-Parking, Wi-Fi, & No Daily Resort Fees!)

GROUP Name Serenity By The Sea 2026
Group Code: SBTS26

For more information visit www.serenityclubswfl.org/

(Reservations must be made as soon as possible, to receive this rate.)

If you need additional information, or have special needs, please call John F. at 239-450-1044, email jfisheraa05@gmail.com, or write: **Serenity By The Sea**, 12435 Collier Blvd. unit 107 Naples, FL 34116

Your Registration Includes:

Access To All Meetings And Workshops!

SERENITY BY THE SEA REGISTRATION

(Register online at www.serenityclubswfl.org)

\$60.00 Per Person

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Name on Badges _____

Registration Fee (Required) \$60.00

Saturday Night Banquet (Optional) \$65.00

Guest Banquet \$65.00

TOTAL _____

Make Checks Payable To: The Serenity Club
and Mail To: 12435 Collier Blvd., Ste. 107
Naples, FL 34116

This is a fundraiser. All sales are final. NO REFUNDS. Cancelled/unclaimed registrations will become scholarships.

<u>FINANCES</u>	<u>Feb 26</u>	<u>YTD 26</u>
<u>Income</u>		
Literature/Merchandise	\$6,160	\$12,181
Group Contributions	1,900	\$3,940
AA Birthdays		
Faithful Five		
Individual/Anonymous		144
<u>Total Income</u>	8,060	16,235
<u>Expenses</u>		
Bank/Credit Card Fees	115	230
Licenses/Permits	-	
Office Supplies	515	682
Office Improve/Repair	-	
www Hosting	-	
Payroll	2,519	4,850
Payroll Tax	-	
Postage	-	
Printing	1,871	1,871
Purchases/Lit./Merch.	2,243	4,332
Insurance	-	
Rent	500	1,000
Sales Tax	302	302
Telephone/www	286	572
Utilities	100	200
Computer Equipment	-	-
Computer Software	187	293
Licenses / Memberships	270	270
Accounting Services	769	769
<u>Total Expenses</u>	9,105	15,372
<u>Net Ordinary Income</u>	(\$1,045)	\$863
Gratitude Dinner Tickets	-	
Raffle Ticket Sales		
Gratitude Expenses	-	
<u>NET OTHER INCOME</u>	-	
<u>NET INCOME</u>	(\$1,045)	\$863

**Thank you to all who contribute to
Naples Intergroup / Central Office.**

Spirituality and Money

"While the work of the group treasurer often involves many details, it is important to remember that the money the treasurer oversees serves a spiritual purpose: it enables each group to fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is the fundamental work of A.A. and to continue it the group must keep its doors open. The group treasurer is an important part of this Twelfth Step work."

SELF-SUPPORT:

Where Money and Spirituality Mix

Naples Area Intergroup

1509-B Pine Ridge Road
Naples, FL 34109
(50%)

General Service Office

James A. Farley Station
P. O. Box 2407
New York, N. Y. 10116 (30%)

District 20

District 20 Treasurer
P.O. Box 2896
Naples, FL 34106
(10%)

Area 15

Area 15 Treasurer
2950 W. Cypress Creek Rd.
Ste 333 #1097
Ft Lauderdale, FL 33309
New Address(10%)

Disbursement of a Group's Funds

"After the group's basic needs are met, such as providing for rent, literature, refreshments, and insurance, the group can participate in the financial support of the Fellowship as a whole by sending money to various A.A. service entities: 1) their local Intergroup or Central Office, 2) Area 15 and District 20; and 3) the General Service Office in New York. Many groups provide financial support for their G.S.R.s attending service functions. These entities use contributions in a number of ways, always with the aim of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. *The A.A. Group Treasurer, F-96,*

*Service material prepared by the
General Service Office*

The Birthday Club

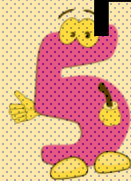
Did you know you can share your sobriety and gratitude in a practical way by joining the AA Birthday Club? Sign up today and be featured in the *Courier*. Show your support for your Central Office. A donation of only one dollar for every year of your sobriety will help carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer.



Rick G.	55 years
Paul B.	51 years
Ron P.	51 years
Ron L.	47 years
Jackie G.	39 years
Bill D.	38 years
Merle B.	37 years
Michael L.	36 years
Dennis F.	35 years
Rad W.	35 years
Judy W.	34 years
Steve K.	32 years
Bill S.	24 years
Ken H.	23 years
Laura .	7 years
Eric S.	6 years



Faithful Fivers Needed



2025 Monthly Faithful Fiver Club

April O., Bill D., Bill S., Eric S., Jeanette H., Jim H., Judy W., Kathryn Mc., Ken H., Ralph W., Rick G., Ron L., Theresa R.

We are members of A.A. who want the hand of A.A. always to be there in the Naples, Florida area.

It's easy to join!

Use a Check or Credit Card to contribute monthly, or one time.

Stop by the Central Office for a one time Credit Card charge.

District 20

(Collier County, the portion of Monroe County bordered by Collier and Miami-Dade Counties, and the portion of Hendry County below the northernmost boundary of Collier County.)

District 20 Officers:

Chair:

Joe S. 845/554-8721
chair@district20aa.org

Alt. Chair:

Tom D. 845/230-6780
tomadavison@yahoo.com

Registrar:

Scott N., 262/374-2269
registrar@district20aa.org

Treasurer

Bob A., 440/667-4372
treasurer@district20aa.org

Secretary:

Maury D. 239/370-7232
maury@mdailey.com

Service Committees:

Archives

Heather O. 272-2632
district20archives@gmail.com

District 20 Business Meeting

4th Thursday of each month,
7:00pm @ 24 Hour Club
1509 Pine Ridge Road

Current Practices

Pete C., 784-7725
pete.curtner@yahoo.com

Grapevine / Literature

Lauren F. 220-2792
laurenfrosch@comcast.net
Jody L. 518/335-9748
jojopr1025@gmail.com

Business meeting the third
Tuesday of each month at
5:30 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Institutions

Maria M.
mmettchea@aol.com
1st Thursday of each month
at 7:00 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Public Information/CPC

Leonard H., 239/315-6120
leonardheller1@gmail.com
3rd Thursday of each month,
at 7:00pm, Serenity Club

The Courier is published monthly by the *Naples Area Intergroup of Alcoholic Anonymous* with an office located at 1509-2 Pine Ridge Road, Naples, FL 34109-2198. This publication is by, for, and about the Fellowship of AA. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or The *Naples Area Intergroup*. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are reprinted with permission from AA World Service, Inc., and/or The AA Grapevine, Inc..

Contributions from our readers are encouraged.

Submissions are edited for space and clarity only.

District 20

Business Meeting:

FOURTH Thursday
of the Month, 7:00 pm
Twenty-Four Hour
Club
1509 Pine Ridge Road

NAPLES AREA INTERGROUP MEETING

Central Office

1509-2 Pine Ridge Rd.
(next to 24 Hour Club)

SECOND Wednesday of
each month at 7:00pm

Technology Opportunity.

Commitments

DAVID LAWRENCE CENTER

Every day except
Wednesday
7:00 p.m.
Maria M., 370-2034
mmettchea@aol.com

WILLOUGH

Sunday, Monday and
Thursday
7:00pm
Peggy E., 269-7651
marco-
angelz000@gmail.com

HAZELDEN

Monday, 7:00pm
Nick Geer 818/424-5463
nicgeer@gmail.com

BRIDGING THE GAP

Joe S., 845/554-8721
joeascalial@icloud.com

Area 15; Panel 75

(South Florida, Ba-
hamas, US and Brit-
ish Virgin Islands,
Antigua, St. Maar-
ten, and Cayman Is-
lands)

Delegate: Lisa D.
delegate@area15aa.org

Alternate: Donna W.
altdelegate@area15aa.org

Chair: Bron F.
chair@area15aa.org

Treasurer: Alan T.
treasurer@area15aa.org

Registrar: Lea A.
registrar@area15aa.org

Secretary: Paul M.
secretary@area15aa.org

Naples Area Intergroup

Trusted Servants

Chair:

Blake B., 285-7174
blake91511@gmail.com

Vice Chair:

Robert C. 784-8514
bcrowe616@aol.com

Treasurer:

Dalton M.
781/444-7070
daltonmurfee@aol.com

Secretary:

Jasmine C., 220-7798
jasmineyeater@yahoo.com

Members at Large:

Service Opportunities

Office Manager:

Ken Helton
1509-B Pine Ridge Road
Naples, Florida 34109-2198
naplesintergroup@yahoo.com
Office: 239-262-6535
239/963-7820
www.aanaples.org

Office Hours:

Monday 9am to 4pm
Tuesday 9am to 4pm
Wednesday 9am to 4pm
Thursday 9am to 4pm
Friday 9am to 4pm
Saturday 9am to 4pm
Sunday CLOSED

Office Volunteers

Amy D., Annamarie T., Becky
S., Bill S., Bonnie B., Caroline
H., Eric S., Gay S., Geoff
S., James S., MariAnn Z.,
Natacha A., Peggy E., Ralph
B., Swen L., ... and loyal
substitutes.

Service Opportunity

After-Hours Phone Volunteers

Bob M., Craig P., Geoff E.,
Heather B., Ken H., Lauren
F., Steve K., and Tim A.