

THE COURIER

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September 2026

GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM



I have come to believe that I need to know God from my deep innermost self and not from my ever-inquiring alcoholic mind.

Very few of today's two-million-plus AA members claim to possess a satisfying definition of God. However, there exists undeniable evidence that God's power has released countless of its members from alcoholic obsession.

Steps Three and Eleven contain the phrase, "*God, as we understood Him.*" was new, I found this insert both challenging and confusing; consequently, I soon found myself delving into books on theology, theosophy, philosophy, and other mystical readings—but to no avail. I soon realized that I was no along understanding God than when I started. Months of studying left me without any satisfying logical or scientific definition—what to do? After all, am I not supposed to "*understand God?*" If not, perhaps my sobriety would be in jeopardy! Confusing times!

But then, I came across a watershed idea from Bill W's Oxford mentor, Reverend Sam Shoemaker who wrote: "*Step Two is not theological; it is evidential!*" Of course, I could plainly see the evidence of God's work by simply observing numerous members around AA tables with many years sobriety; they all claimed that contact with God, or a "*Higher Power,*" was keeping them sober. It was evidential!

I had been barking up the wrong tree! I no longer need search for a logical definition of God, but I still needed to improve my conscious contact with God. Step Eleven convinced me that I could begin to know God through prayer and meditation—then there would be no need of a logical or scientific understanding of Him.

I have come to believe that I need to contact (know) God from my deep innermost self (heart) and not from my ever-inquiring alcoholic mind. I had been searching for God from the wrong place all along! After all, doesn't the Big Book speak of the "*Great Reality deep within?*" (p. 55). So, in conclusion, "*The better I understand God, the less I know God.*"

By Bob S., Richmond, IN

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.)



SEPTEMBER ... The Ninth (9th) Month Of Alcoholics Anonymous

STEP NINE: *"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."*

TRADITION NINE: *"A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."*

TRADITION NINE (Long Form): *Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principle newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.*

CONCEPT NINE: *"Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous."*

9Th Step Prayer: *I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, Being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your guidance in making indirect amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.*

TRADITIONS—CHECKLIST

This is a Checklist for Tradition NINE. Reprinted with permission from Service Material from the General Service Office:

1. Do I still try to boss things in AA?
2. Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative?
3. Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the AA program—even if no one makes me do so—with a sense of personal responsibility?
4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?
5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?
6. Why doesn't every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?
7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?
8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?

"The only way I ever found to displace a thought was to put another thought in its stead."

"We Must Banish Fear!" Alexandria, Virginia, August 1950, AA Grapevine



COME FOR THE GRATITUDE.
STAY FOR THE FELLOWSHIP!

The Naples Area Intergroup

239/262-6535

GRATITUDE Dinner

AN EVENING OF GRATITUDE,
FELLOWSHIP & CELEBRATION

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 7, 2026

TICKET PRICE

\$40

CASH / CHECK

Payable to
NAPLES INTERGROUP
see your Intergroup
Representative



WELCOME RECEPTION 6:15PM



DINING ROOM DOORS OPEN 6:45PM



DINNER BEGINS 7:00PM

➤ *Come Join Us!* ➤

GRATEFUL
CONNECTED
TOGETHER

New Hope Ministries

7675 Davis Blvd.
Naples, FL 34104

*credit card payments accepted in person at Intergroup Office
(office hours Mon.-Sat. 9AM to 4PM)

Thankful



Low Self Esteem

I am always listening to the different ways that members of the AA program try to articulate their perception of their day-to-day problems and what causes them and what can be done about them. I experienced the same type of confusion in my early days and it has taken me a very long time to convince myself to trust the AA process and to be totally honest with myself about those issues and I can honestly say that they got it right when they suggested that we “thoroughly follow this path” and that is what I do, to the best of my understanding.

It was very hard to let down my egocentric guard in the beginning and even after many years in the program I still had to be very vigilant about my motives for every decision I made.

About twenty years ago, while listening to some members being critical of one of the newer members of the group, I heard this loud popping sound. That was my head coming out of my “you know what”. They were accusing him of the same things that I recognized in myself when I was new to the program, and it gave me a new respect for how I treat other people.

A friend of mine once said that “most forms of criticism and character assassination stem from low self-esteem”. Recognizing these things in myself, and not letting my EGO convince me that I’m superior to anyone has been the most profound leap in my spiritual development that I have experienced in all my years in AA.

They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. (BB p 58). If I want people to accept me, knowing that I am flawed myself, then how can I stand in judgment of anyone else simply because that person has not been as fortunate as I have and has not yet been able to let down his guard? Those critics also deserve my understanding as well for they are just displaying symptoms of alcoholism by being judgmental.

We have all been conditioned to defend our turf this way. I have learned that, if I want forgiveness for my flaws, then I will have to be accepting of those other people and have the strength to look beneath the surface and try to understand the things that trouble that person and replace my criticism with empathy and compassion.

As I practice this little exercise on everyone that seems to act outside of the norms of acceptable behavior, I remove one more of those little mental conflicts that used to keep me awake at night. If, when I was new in the program, I could have understood this simple principle and the peace of mind that has ensued as the result, I would have cut to the chase and never looked back, but it wasn’t that simple.

I had to unlearn all the faulty behaviors that I employed and replace them with unselfish, proven principles while my EGO fought me every step of the way. I’m happy to report that this approach has put my EGO in the back seat and my conscience rides right up front with me and I am looking forward to my next late sobriety revelation.

By Rick R., San Diego, California



“Today I have a clearer perspective on what my role as a sponsor is and isn’t. It is to stay sober, be available to listen, share my thoughts, pray for others, and let them live their own lives. It is not to ‘fix’ anyone, get them sober, make them happy, demand they conform, or make their decisions.”

**Berlin, Conn., September 2004,
From: “What a Sponsor Is and Is Not”, AA Grapevine**

“Two or three years ago the Central Office asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in. After they arrived we set them all down. They took a great many sheets of paper. A little reflection upon these many rules brought us to an astonishing conclusion. If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once, it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined Alcoholics Anonymous.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., August 1946, From: “Who Is a Member of Alcoholics Anonymous?”, The Language of the Heart



THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

**Bill W.’s
Grapevine Writings**

Step Nine (9)

As I finished my Eight Step, and before I began making amends to those I had harmed, my sponsor asked me: "As you review your Eight Step list, how heavy are the memories, the guilt, the fear and shame you carry in your heart? Have you been thorough?" I recall looking down, knowing that I had wronged many and that guilt and shame was a heavy burden to bear. I made an honest and thorough effort in the Fourth and Fifth Steps and I had created an honest list of those I had wronged and I still felt guilty.

At this point, I began to feel the release from fear, however in relationships there was still much to be done. I had "worked the steps" once before and had been sober for eleven years, experiencing the benefits of a spiritual life. At the same time, I got "busy" gradually taking back life's "steering wheel" resulting in a "slip" that lasted five years. After wrecking sweet, loving relationships, despair set in. Significant wreckage had occurred and I found the progression of the disease included a darkening guilt and the "messy bog of self loathing."

"We wallow in this messy bog, often getting a misshapen and painful pleasure out of it. As we morbidly pursue this melancholy activity, we may sink to such a point of despair that nothing but oblivion looks possible as a solution." (Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions)

Step Nine is a call to action. I was asked to take responsibility for my behavior. Step Nine challenges me to work towards restoring those relationships I had harmed. And so I embarked on the journey of making amends. In many instances I experienced a healing grace, and in other cases it was not yet possible so I prayed to do God's will and to make myself available for when the time is right. In some case, with input from my sponsor, a "living amend" was the best course of action to pursue. The benefits have been remarkable. I feel release from the heavy feelings of guilt, remorse, fear, and shame, but most importantly, I began to treat others better. The Big Book suggests that we pray for the knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out. Taking responsibility, living honestly, and making amends when a wrong has been done, is doing God's will. I have experienced joy as the result of living by God's will. I am now a better husband, better brother, and better employee. The result has been a "new happiness and a new freedom."

"I, too, have been hurt by my addiction. Should my name also be on the amends list? Step Nine is another change to change self-destructive choices and attitudes that accompany my disease. I abused my body when drinking and now I try to take care of my body in healthy ways. I've sought outside help in order to better understand how past life events affect my current mental health. I have left behind the negative "stinking thinking" which sabotaged relationships. And finally, I've made amends to my Higher Power. I am no longer blind to the natural beauty and wonder of this world. I am no longer disrespectful of other's expression of faith. I actively pursue prayer and meditation and know the experience of "walking in the sunshine of life." Thank you, God, for the many A.A. members who have shown me your grace and through their example demonstrate the promises resulting in "living" the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Reprinted from The Maui Serenity Gazette,
September 2019 Written by: Another Member of AA

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**"How do I know when I'm doing God's will?
I don't ... but, I KNOW when I'm not.
AA GRAPEVINE, February 2003**

Identification

Ann Meese

Naples, Florida

Once I surrendered to the Program and the 12 Step way of life, I became teachable and began identifying more and more with everyone - even people with whom I wouldn't normally mix. I identified with cravings, triggers, feelings - all the things that came before picking up the first drink. They helped me understand my own unmanageability which I couldn't always see at first. Connecting the dots of where my alcoholism had taken me to the disease of alcoholism was a gift that kept on giving as started my AA journey.

One of the greatest of these gifts in my early days in recovery was when someone in a meeting said they identified with something I said. Me. The validation that I wasn't crazy was amazing. Identifying my struggles as being the same that other people went through meant so much to me. I heard someone say in a meeting that we can identify and name our mistakes, faults and defects because someone else before us identified and named them, too. It meant that I wasn't alone with them, living in the shadow of their shame. It meant that I'm just a human being like everyone else.

Today, I know that identifying with other people and them with me is a gift of the Program that unites us in a common language. A person who says "that happened to me, too," is saying I understand your pain. They're saying you fit right here. You belong. And there's help here for you. There's hope here, and if you follow some simple Steps, you will come to believe it for yourself and you'll want more.

To help someone else identify by telling a shameful thing we did while impaired by alcohol or drugs is not easy. No one likes the leveling of pride that comes along with this deal. It takes humility which is not always easy to come by. But once we have the experience of helping someone that way, I believe that we heal a bit more from our own painful experiences with alcoholism. It's as if air gets let out of that heaviness we sometimes feel inside when a painful memory of how things were comes to the surface once again, even at the oddest times. The Program suggests that we don't shut the door on the past, and I believe it's because our histories with alcoholism can help the next person identify with their own alcoholism. But leaving the door to the past open also gives us another chance to let some of the shame out, expelled, exhaled, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. I believe it decreases every time we share the truth about our own alcoholism with another alcoholic.

I learned in AA that I need to be a part of something greater than myself because my loneliness only turns my identification with others into comparison to others - a place where I always lose out. I never measure up in that state of mind where self-pity usually sits, waiting to shift my attitude to the dark side. I may not drink the day that I'm comparing myself too much to someone else, but I can sure be walking in that direction, and that is a very uncomfortable place to be for an alcoholic.

To compare my insides to someone else's outsides is pretty much a waste of time, I've come to believe. Through my interactions with other AA's, I've learned that while it may be helpful to, as they say, try to walk around in someone else's shoes as a way to get to know them, it can only provide a small glimpse into all the motivations behind what another person thinks and feels. Human behavior is just too complex to be used as a comparison to how I think I would have reacted to something or someone. In the end, all I'm doing when I'm comparing myself to someone else is judging them when I don't really know everything about them or the situation they may have found themselves. It's a very poor, very limited way to get to know someone.

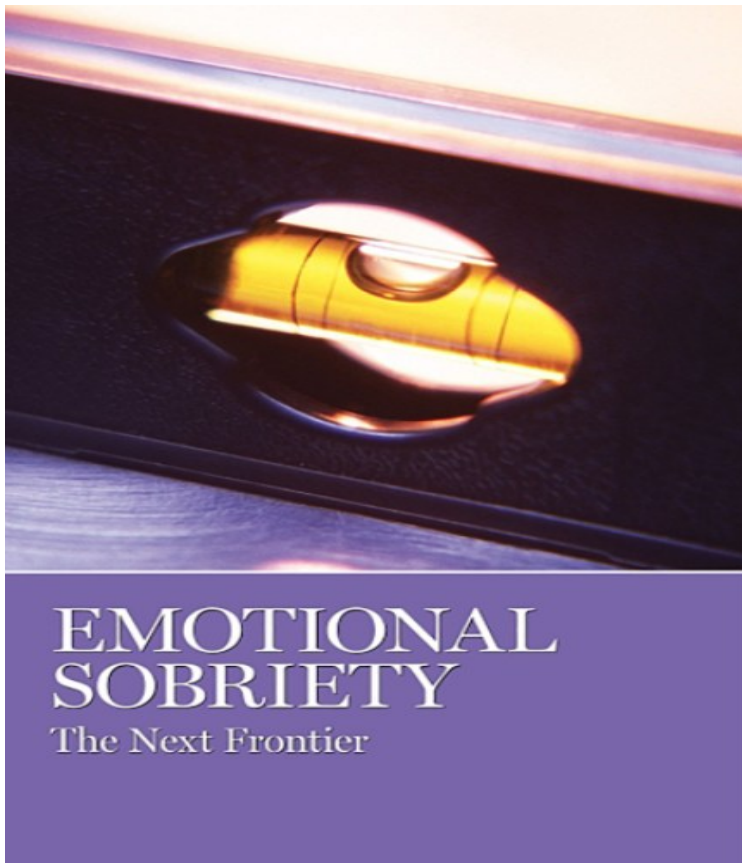
When I first came into recovery, I thought I could read people pretty well. I thought I could figure them out. Now, after years in the program, I find a better way to get to know someone is just to be curious about their lives and listen. I don't have to measure up to anyone else. I just have to be right-sized - human-sized - to be able to do the service my Higher Power provides for me.

When I finally learned to simply identify with another person's story as they told it, I learned about true empathy for another person. I stopped thinking that I was so sure what it must have been like for them. The truth was, I could only imagine what it was like for them, and instead of judging them, I could try to find compassion for them. The ironic benefit of this practice over time was that by truly listening to someone else, I finally understood who I am. I got to know myself because I identified with someone else. And because I had a plan for my recovery that involved meetings and AA events, I found that I fit into a wonderful AA home. I found my tribe, as my sponsor used to say. Learning to identify and not compare myself to anyone else has given me one of the greatest spiritual gifts I've ever received. There's a Native American prayer I love that says it best:

"My Creator, I seek strength not to be superior to my brothers and sisters, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy - myself. Make me ever ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes, so when life fades as a fading sunset my spirit may come to you without shame."

My greatest wish is that by the end of my life, all the air is let out of the pain, humiliation and shame I've carried due to my alcoholism, so that I, too, may go to my Creator without the burden of it any longer. Helping other people identify and let go of their own shame has changed me and lightened my load. I am grateful for the road I'm on, able to see the sign posts that say:

You Belong Here - You are One of Us: Welcome!!!

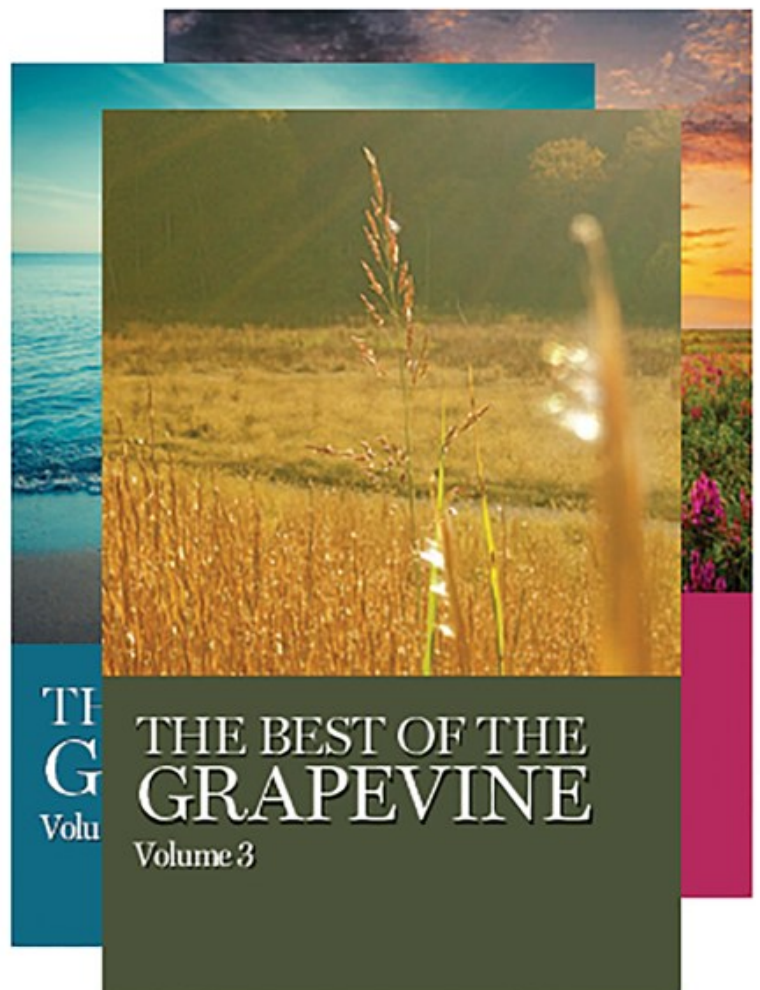


“It seems to me that I achieve growth by leaving things out – when I don’t say the cross word, when I don’t answer sarcastically. If I can delay only one second, maybe two, I have time to ask myself, ‘Do I really want to say that?’”

Houston, Texas, June 1976, From: “Growth”, Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier

“The mind will often drift away into daydreams, but patiently we turn our attention back to the truth and the reality of existence and experience, all as it is happening right now.”

New York, N.Y., April 1969, From: “Seeking Through Meditation”, Best of Grapevine, Volume 1



The Persons We Have Harmed

It's Time to Pay the Piper

Rick R., San Diego, California

How many of us show up at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A) ready to start exploring our past and all the issues that we have had with our fellow man? Not me! I came here with a rationalizing, alcoholic mind, and the last thing I intended to do was to go searching for more things to hate about myself. The alcoholic within me was pointing the finger at them to minimize the appearance that I was at fault. My mind was constantly spinning yarns to have the right answers ready should anyone question why I did the things I did. In all my waking hours, I got no peace of mind unless I had something to drink in me, and when that happened, it diminished the need to care about other people and, in fact, it immediately turned into drunken arrogance and often into verbal and physical confrontations. A life lived by those standards can only end in destruction and when we have the option to drink it away, we can put it off indefinitely, but eventually we will have to pay the piper.

Not everyone can repair all the damage they have done in the past, to our families and friends, and that is simply because some of them have moved on and may not be concerned about what our plans are, and they do not see the need to be involved in the drama that the alcoholic is going through, especially with their memory of the failed *good intentions* of the past. Until we have a history of changing our way of life and putting some time between us and that snapshot of our last drunken debacle, we cannot expect any recognition from them since they are not following us around every day recording our progress.

When it comes to making a list of all the persons we have harmed, the first thought that came to my mind was, how far do I go with this list. My thought on that is; what amount of peace of mind would I be satisfied with? The most obvious people are the ones that are closest to us such as family, friends, employers, and as I list those, I can spiral outward to the more remote people like relatives, friends from the past, and so on.

The last thing I hear questioned is who I owe amends to and again, the peace of mind issue sets the standard for who goes on the list. First off, if I have completely changed those old behaviors and have put them behind me, I have already mended my ways and all that is left to do is to acknowledge my past mistakes in the presence of the person receiving the amend. I find it easy to level the playing field by simply asking the question: "Have you ever done something that you really regretted?" The answer usually goes: "Of course, who hasn't?" Next, I say, "Can we talk?" You have just leveled the playing field. You can do this with anyone that you feel uncomfortable about, when you hear their name mentioned, and eventually you will run out of people that are constantly renting room in your brain. In the rare occasion when a person responds to your effort to make things right, in a negative way, they may have issues of their own that we are not aware of, you have done all you can, and you can put it behind you. All that free space in your head adds up to *peace of mind* and you have the rest of your life to complete it.



I Found Cleveland

I am what is called a “Zoom baby”. My first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and for the next two years, was all online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I love online meetings and still chose them over in-person meetings because online meetings are easily accessible and convenient—there’s a meeting anytime of the day, every day. And, although I live in Canada, I’ve developed close relationships with my online home group: AA Freethinkers in Lakewood, Ohio. I’m getting ahead of myself. Allow me to back up and share how I discovered AA online.

“It’s either me, or the bottle,” my partner of 15 years said to me. An ultimatum. Hmm. I chose my partner, afraid of losing our house, our

animals, everything we’ve built up together over the years. I’ve heard in the rooms that fear will not keep you sober. It may not, but it sure is a good starting point.

My partner, a trauma and addictions counsellor, knew about AA and recommended I find a meeting immediately as my drinking was out of control. A meeting? During COVID-19? It was November 2020 and we were in a lockdown. I had no idea what to do so I turned to Google and typed in the words, “AA meetings in Ottawa, Ontario” (where I live). At the top of the page was the website of the Ottawa Area Intergrout of Alcoholics Anonymous.

All meetings listed were moved to online only and mostly on Zoom, a platform with which I was familiar through my job. I searched for women’s only and LGBTQ meetings, both of which weren’t offered until Thursday and today was Tuesday. I needed a meeting fast. So, I broadened my search to any online AA women’s and LGBTQ meetings and found an International Women’s meeting open 24/7 and an LGBTQ meeting in northern California open every night at 6:30 pm PST. These were my first two meetings, which I eventually left because they were too religious for me and I’m not a religious person.

By fluke, someone in the LGBTQ meeting shared a link to a Google spreadsheet that had many, many secular AA meetings listed on it that spanned the United States and went around the world, including Canada. What a smorgasbord of choices! I went to meetings in the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and New Zealand—places in the world I only dreamed of visiting. I also went to many meetings across the US, such as: Colorado, Arizona, California, Seattle, Oregon, Indiana, South Carolina, and several around NYC, just to name a few. Over the first year, I dabbled in hundreds of meetings (I was going to at least three meetings a day), but I never felt grounded or at “home” in any of the groups until I found Freethinkers in Lakewood, OH, a suburb of Cleveland Ohio.

There was something about this meeting that intrigued me—Freethinkers, what does that mean? I discovered quickly that a lot of secular meetings talked more about, or rather complained a lot about, God than the traditional meetings I frequented, and that bothered me. I just wanted a meeting where I could believe in what I believe in, or not, and feel welcomed.

I found my place when an old-timer in the meeting said, “You can believe in what you want, or not; it’s none of our business. We do AA here and everyone is welcome.” I am so grateful for that comment. I instantly felt welcomed and have been attending Lakewood Freethinkers for a year and a half now. If it weren’t for this group, I don’t think I’d be sober today.

Service work became an incentive to quit drinking. And, as more service work emerged, more drink-less days emerged until Monday became Tuesday became Wednesday and I started to accumulate days, then weeks, and now 16 consecutive months of sobriety!

I love my home group so much that I drove eight hours to visit them in May 2022! We had a special picnic in my honor in the park behind where we have in-person meetings: Lakewood Public Library, Madison Branch in Bird Town. It was wonderful to meet in person the core group of Clevelanders. We hugged, we laughed, we broke bread.

It was a momentous occasion for me and because of the success of that trip I returned for Founders’ Day in June and got to experience what it is like to be surrounded by 10,000 sober people! It was a phenomenal event for me and would not have happened had I not found Freethinkers Lakewood.

I would never have gotten my passport, driven to Cleveland, and met so many lovely sober people had it not been for online meetings. The landscape of online AA meetings expanded my world to include friends across American, the globe, and especially in Cleveland—now my home away from home both virtually and in real life.

By Tracy L. (Alcoholics Anonymous Cleveland, Ohio)

“Spiritual awakening ... begins with knowledge and acceptance of the truth about ourselves.”

Hankins, N.Y., May 1967, From: “AA’s Steps Lead to – Spiritual Awakening”, Spiritual Awakenings



SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS

Journeys of the Spirit



BEGINNERS’ BOOK

Getting and Staying Sober in AA

“Turn toward that power and ask for help whenever you feel disturbed or afraid, the way a plant turns toward the light.”

N.Y., January 2006, From: “Tools for Life”, Beginner’s Book

Learning to Love Ourselves

Lisa F., Red Bank , New Jersey

For many of us, the most difficult task we will have in sobriety and in life, is learning to love ourselves. While it may come easily to love others and attend to their needs, nurturing our own minds, bodies and souls is a more arduous endeavor. Often, we are quick to provide comfort, acceptance and tolerance to those we care about and love, yet, when it comes to ourselves, we fall short. Though we have cared about ourselves enough to maintain sobriety on a daily basis, enduring many challenges and, often, heartbreaks along the way, a deep sense of self-value, self-worth and self-love has eluded many of us. As we continue on this journey, maybe the most valuable asset we can obtain, is learning how to turn the same love, understanding and compassion we so freely give others, inward.

From an early age, we are taught through fairy tales, novels and movies, our objective in life is to strive for perfect love with another human for the completion of our beings. Instead of attending to ourselves, we learn connecting with another is of the utmost importance and the absolute expression of undying love. Though a purely magical concept, striving to meet and fall in love with the ideal mate, may be an unrealistic aspiration and dream and accomplishes nothing in the pursuit to obtain self-love. And if somehow, we miraculously get swept off our feet and fall in love with the “perfect” person, are we loving ourselves in the process or is our whole feeling of “love” dependent on our mate? Do we have self-love or even an identity without them? Where will we be if they are gone? A quick walk through any cemetery, looking at grave markers will show that the majority of partners, die years, sometimes, a decade or more apart from each other. If our whole basis of love is dependent on another, at some point, there is a very good chance we will be on our own, devoid of the love we once possessed.

As we progress through life, a true paradox becomes unveiled. In whatever way the message is conveyed, we are told we cannot love another unless we love ourselves. Seems a bit confusing. First, we are led to believe our mission in life is to create a true, loving union, yet if we somehow find it, the connection is baseless if we do not possess self-love. Although many of us believe the later teaching to be true, in actuality it appears quite false. Any parent who loves a child or person who has experienced love, can attest to its lack of validity. Many of us, who have not achieved self-love have known the feeling of intense, deep-seated love that comes from a place within our hearts and souls. Sometimes we are so enamored with another we forget to attend to our own basic needs and wants. When this happens, our love is often labeled obsessive, co-dependent, and unhealthy as opposed to what we know and feel, overpowering feelings rooted in the center of our beings. For those of us who have experienced these intense feelings, it is obvious the ability to passionately love another is not an indication of a person possessing self-love. So, if we are capable of loving others, why is it so hard to love ourselves?

To complicate matters more, those of us in recovery have commonly experienced a loss of self and dignity in the throws of active alcoholism. Though the steps offer a way out of the despair and self-loathing we often feel, memories of our past sometimes linger. In addition to our own journeys through the darkness of addiction, many of us grew up in homes which lacked the skills needed to foster a healthy sense of self in a child.

Continued on page 13.

Learning To Love Ourselves ... continued from page 12.

Frequently, we also learned through verbal and non-verbal communication that we were unworthy, unlovable and undeserving, and our actions under the influence only reinforced these early teachings. Knowing the obstacles we have faced in the journey through life, it is not surprising many of us are ill-equipped to nurture and love ourselves. Interestingly, the absence of a sense of self-love often leads to self-centeredness and self-absorption, which although appearing to be a great love of one's self, may just be a manifestation of needs not met and does nothing to promote self-love. So how do we learn to truly love ourselves?

Probably the first, and most important step in the process of developing self-love is acceptance; acceptance of who we are at this very moment. Unless we have magical powers, we cannot instantaneously become who and what we want to be. How often do we feel that when we reach a particular goal, whether losing or gaining weight, being free of a character defect, finishing an academic course or training, getting into shape, eating better, the list goes on and on, we will be at a place where we feel content with ourselves? The truth of the matter is, we are what we are in the here and now and it would behoove us to accept that this is good enough. We are as perfect as a human could possibly be and we need to take pride in who we are in the present. As we all know, tomorrow is a promissory note; all we can truly focus on is today. There is not one being on earth who is flawless, so why do we demand near perfection from ourselves?

With acceptance of who we are, comes release from the constant pressure we feel to measure up to unreasonable, self-imposed standards. In addition to relinquishing impossible demands upon ourselves, acquiring a new way of using vocabulary when self-critiquing is also beneficial. When referring to our actions and decisions, it is important to refrain from the use of derogatory language and labels. If we did something we feel was foolish, it is far better to call our action stupid, than to proclaim we are stupid; words are powerful and can be harmful, even when we are using them on ourselves. A word which we might want to take out of our verbal content completely is should. Saying to ourselves we should have done this or that, only instills a belief we make wrong choices and undermines our confidence. Every time we make a choice, we are doing the best we can, given the presenting information and circumstances at hand. Perhaps our decision would have been stellar if ensuing events had unfolded differently. In regards to using the word should in the here and now, we do what we can to the best of our ability on any given day. To say we should be doing this and should be doing that, only sends a self-directed message that we are not accomplishing enough.

When it comes to our bodies, we may not treat them with the upmost care and respect. I know for myself, I can easily look at another and see they are not doing their body justice, yet, I appear to be somewhat blinded when it comes to my own. I can't imagine any of us can make a remarkable transition overnight, but we can take baby steps. Whether it be consuming a little less sugar or caffeine, adding a few healthy foods into our diet, sleeping a bit longer if we are sleep deprived, smoking fewer cigarettes if we still smoke, exercising for 10 minutes, providing we are physically able, and listening to our bodies when we are tired, any change will be an advancement towards honoring our physical beings. Eventually, if we keep striving to nurture our bodies, we may come to a place where it becomes second nature to treat ourselves with the care and nutrition needed to maintain an optimal level for our physical vessels which carry us through life.

Continued on page 14.

Learning To Love Ourselves ... continued from page 13.

In Step 11, we are given practical advice and instruction on how to nurture our souls. While there is no clear outline on how to meditate, we are encouraged to take time to pray and quiet our minds. If we need guidance, it is suggested we look at various literature, explore our own religions which practice meditation, or simply start with the prayer of St. Francis. Incorporating whichever path we choose into our daily lives, will bring upon a closer connection to God and peace and, in return, nourish and replenish our souls. Although the thought of meditating may appear daunting, we can all begin by devoting just 5 minutes a day to the practice. Even if we feel our minds are racing, going through the motions, in time, may produce a state of calmness where we can begin to reap the benefits of meditation. If we don't make an attempt, we will never have a chance of experiencing an interrelatedness with God on a higher level.

As with our journey through sobriety, self-love is attained by progress not perfection. I know for myself, I will always have to make a continuing effort to nurture every part of my being on a daily basis. Perhaps, we can all make self-care something we examine at night in our daily inventories. Did we attend to nurturing our minds, bodies and souls? If not, is there anything we would like to do differently tomorrow? I often ask God in my morning prayers, to assist me in taking better care of myself. This may sound selfish, but I believe when I am engaging in self-care, I am an all-around better person for those whose lives I touch. I have no doubt I am capable of loving another, yet, when I am consumed with what I should or should not be doing, doubting myself, not taking care my physical body or lacking the peace I find through meditation, I am not as present as I could be for those around me. It seems like an oxymoron, but the more I love myself, the more I can offer others.

The END.

“I was told that sometimes a good sponsor disturbs the comfortable and comforts the disturbed.”

“The Gift of Time,” Dover, Pennsylvania, June 1991, In Our Own Words: Stories of Young AAs in Recovery



**IN OUR OWN
WORDS**
Stories of Young AAs in Recovery

God's Hand In Step Nine

By: Bonney R. | Langley, British Columbia/AA Grapevine

An amends sweeps things clean, but the outcome isn't what she had hoped.

In my first few meetings, I recall reading the Steps hanging on the wall and feeling they were insurmountable. I stopped at Steps Eight and Nine and wrote a girl's name on the inside cover of my brand new Big Book. This gal was someone I had grown up with. Her parents had also immigrated to Canada, and she had been a true friend.

My issue was the lies I had told her (and everyone else) about things I wanted to be true. Mainly about imaginary boyfriends, but also about anything else that made me feel normal and got me some attention. Needing attention was a cross I carried for years, even into sobriety.

I was almost two years sober when I started the Steps, as my old-timers discouraged me from beginning them before I was ready. Step Eight came and I placed her on my list, thinking about what I would say to clean up my side of the street. Then we came to Step Nine, and I asked God to give me the willingness to make amends if the opportunity ever presented itself. I tacked the list on my fridge as I had no idea how to get a hold of her.

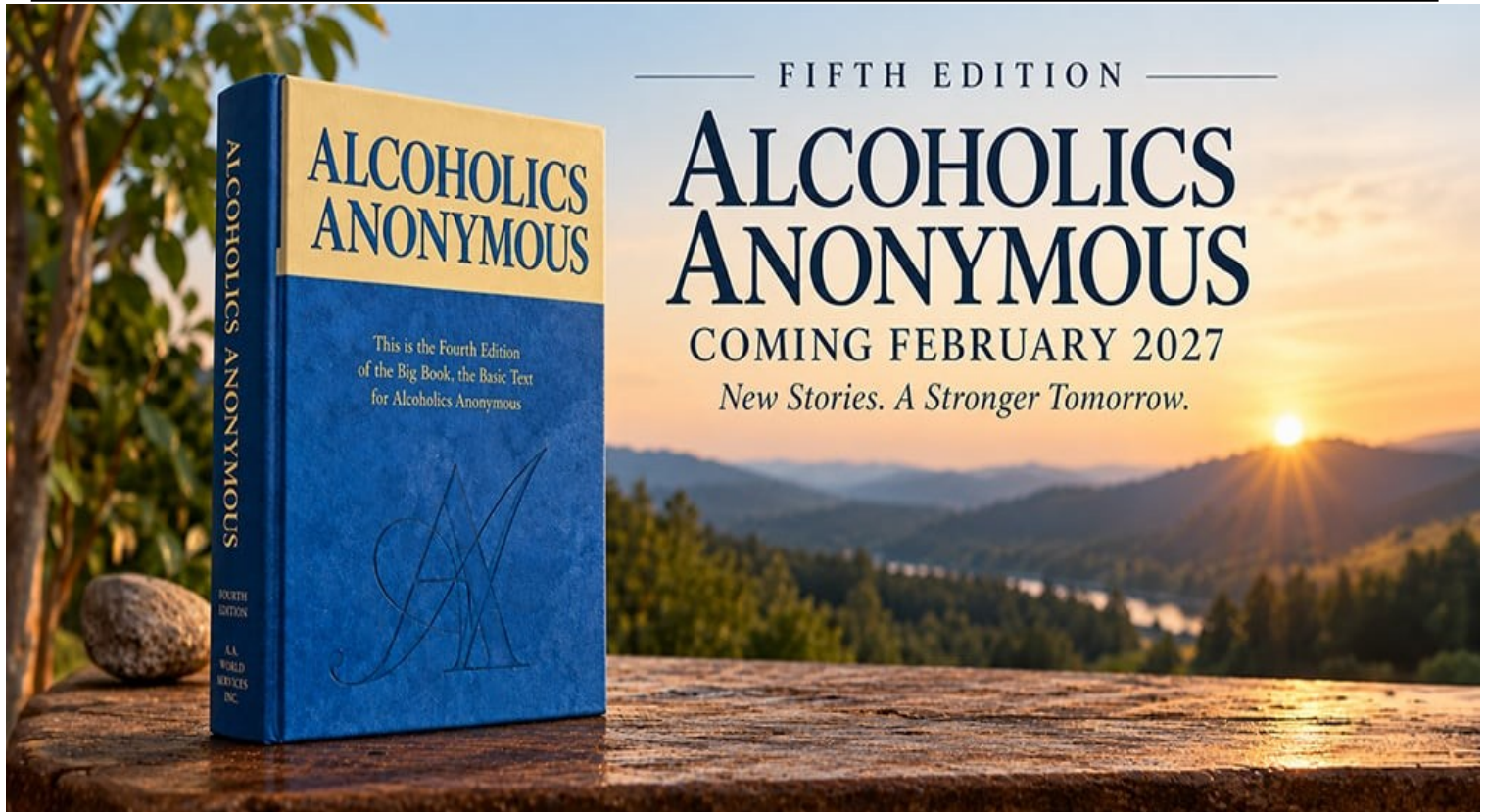
One year later, an opportunity arose. I had moved to the west coast and was enrolled in future education because I could no longer work in the bars. I was with a friend who wanted to go to Costco and I tagged along. Coming down the aisle was the girl whose name I had written in my Big Book. Taking one look at her, I quickly turned and ran out of the store, directly to my car. Trembling, I apologized to God for ruining this opportunity and promised that if he could find it in his heart to do that again, I would take full advantage and make my amends.

Six months later, I was in another big box store (Home Depot), turned a corner, and there my old friend was. My promise to God replayed—but I turned and ran out of the store. Trembling again in my car, I wondered what was wrong with me. How many times would I have to apologize to God?

It would be a matter of months before I would find out that my friend's mom had passed away. Soul-sickened by the news, I called the family house, got my dear friend's phone number, and called her. Her mother was one of the most wonderful people I have met.

She agreed to meet me for lunch. I explained that I was in recovery and apologized for all the lies. She brought up some of my stories. The shame and guilt were overwhelming. My lies had affected her greatly. I did not get the impression forgiveness was in the cards. I could visibly see hurt and disappointment in her eyes.

As the years went by, I heard from her when her sister and brothers passed away. She had two daughters I have never met. Although I have reached out, she is not interested in reestablishing any further friendship. All we can do is sweep our side of the street clean. Thirty years later, I still use that edition of the Big Book and look at her name every time I open the book. It's a reminder of the damage my behavior did to the people around me and helps me stay sober.



Alcoholics Anonymous World Services has announced that the fifth edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, commonly known as the Big Book, is on track for publication in February 2027.

In an August 26, 2026 communication to A.A. trusted servants, groups, Intergroups, Central Offices and other members of the Fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services (AAWS) provided an update on the forthcoming fifth edition.

At its July 30 meeting, the AAWS Board approved the recommendation of its Publishing Committee that the hardcover fifth edition will feature a removable dust jacket and have a list price of \$20 USD.

26 New Stories of Recovery

The fifth edition will include 26 new stories of recovery, adding new voices and experiences to the Big Book. AAWS says the publication is currently on track for February 2027.

The fifth edition comes more than 25 years after the publication of the fourth edition. AAWS described the upcoming edition as a much-anticipated milestone for the Fellowship.

More Information Coming This Fall

AAWS stated that additional information about the publication of the fifth edition will be released this fall. Details regarding availability and ordering will be shared as they become available.

Publication: February 2027

Format: Hardcover with removable dust jacket

List Price: \$20.00 USD

New Content: 26 new stories of recovery

Source: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

SMOOTH SEAS DO NOT MAKE SKILLFUL SAILORS

The COURIER The metaphor of the drunken sailor seems particularly apropos for those of us in recovery, and I am certainly no exception. I awoke from a befuddled stupor to find myself abandoned by everyone who had the opportunity to leave, and the ship's deck of my life was in shambles. I had but a vague recollection of having ridden out the most recent tempest, and, as the ship was still reeling, I stumbled around trying to grasp onto anything to make sense of the madness. My sails were in loomed on the horizon. I was understand how my situation in what seemed a short period. and a good deal of soul search around me had not erupted curred overnight.

During the early days learned that I could use the discern my true position. I course toward an initial, tenta efforts were of damage control fully to prevent it from sinking tatters, and new storm clouds in dire straits, and I struggled to could have become so desperate Later, upon careful reflection ing, I saw that the destruc- tion out of nowhere, nor had it oc and weeks of my recovery I tools given to me to accurately began to navi- gate an uncertain tive destination. My immediate - to stabilize the ship and hope altogether. That really was what finally brought me, broken, and beaten into a state of reasonableness, into AA. Periodically, the sun would break out from the cloud cover to briefly renew my hopes, and I would breathe deeply of my new- found freedom. But, just as often, minor squalls would blow up suddenly, and I would become fearful of cap- sizing.

Although I was not at once consciously aware of it, I was sailing upon an ocean of emotion, and my vessel was the USS Self. Eventually, I learned that the navigational instruments which I had previously dismissed as irrel evant were vital to my survival. Seeking a safe harbor, I drifted toward familiar shorelines and the company of others who had weathered similar storms. Fellow sailors had much to teach me, and seasoned veterans of the high seas have always shone like heroes to my flagging spirits. Their shared experiences have proven to be life -saving, then and now.

With time and experience I acquired unexpected critical skills, and I began to gain confidence in my new abili- ties. But I could never afford to take my position lightly nor fail to prepare for the vicissitude of uncertain tides. I found that even if I could not change the wind, I could adjust my sails. A correction in the attitude of my vessel would alter my course completely. But, there were inherent dangers. My perceptions were faulty for awhile and the wildness of my emotions sometimes threatened to spin me back into chaos. I was able to avoid pitfalls common to many such early endeavors, and I survived to become a true Captain. Eventually, the treacherous, rag ing seas have given way to gently rolling waves and a much more pleasant cruise.

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors," and I should have known that I would occasionally encounter rough waters during my apprenticeship. Even now, with years of experience, I can never afford to forget, even for a moment, that the hurricane of destruction could still come upon me if I fail to remain watchful. Indeed, eternal vigilance is the price of my freedom. I am continually tested. With God's grace and a good deal of preparation, I will successfully meet every challenge to live long and happily.

I've worked hard to master the skills of daily sobriety, and I continue to seek the counsel of years. I have attempted to subdue my impetuous nature and harness the winds of an exuberant spirit. I learned to use my se renity as a barometer to fair weather. Today, I plot my course with good intentions and always try to lend a hand to any wayward sailors or castaways that I stumble upon - remembering that they are now as lost as I once was. I relish my new way of life, and I strive to be generous with my treasures. Fresh scents upon the wind draw me on toward new adventures and even greater discoveries.

AA Volunteer Opportunities



*Naples Area
Intergroup*

Mornings: 9:00 to 12:30

Afternoon: 12:30 to 4:00

(One morning or afternoon each week.)

and, Telephone Helpline

After-hours, various days.

1-year continuous sobriety.

For information: 239/262-6535

**Calling all AA
Authors !!!**

**Please submit
an article to**

The COURIER !!!

Email article to:

naplesintergroup@yahoo.com



Your Groups'

Activities

Can Be Here

Next Month.

To Highlight

Your Group,

Please Call Us:

Intergroup Office

239/262-6535

A.A. | RECOVERY | SERVICE | UNITY

Twelve Traditions Workshop

OUR COMMON WELFARE—OUR RESPONSIBILITY



NOVEMBER 14, 2026

2:00 PM – 4:30 PM

**12
PRESENTERS****COFFEE**
Always Available**DESSERT &
SNACKS**
*Enjoy Treats
& Fellowship***DISTRICT
COMMITTEE
DISPLAYS**
*Information,
Resources &
Service in Action***24 HOUR CLUB
BIG ROOM***Hosted by*
Three Legacies Group

GRATEFUL FOR OUR PAST, RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR FUTURE



7TH ANNUAL

THANKSGIVING ALKATHON

St Mary's Episcopal Church
9805 Bonita Beach Rd SE, Bonita Springs, FL

8am through Midnight
Thursday, November 26th



MEETINGS EVERY HOUR ON THE HOUR

Please sign up and chair an hour. If you chair a meeting the hour is yours. Any meeting format you would like we would love to have it.

Please text Don 239-246-0027 to take a slot as an individual or group.

FINANCES**Aug 26** **YTD 26****Income**

Literature/Merchandise \$3,175 \$35,547

Group Contributions 1,161 \$21,839

AA Birthdays - 40

Faithful Five 144 144

Individual/Anonymous 334 1,576

Total Income 4,726 59,224**Expenses**

Bank/Credit Card Fees 140 830

Licenses/Permits - 70

Office Supplies 131 3,455

Office Improve/Repair -

www Hosting - 270

Payroll 2,425 19,400

Payroll Tax -

Postage - 34

Printing - 2,434

Purchases/Lit./Merch. 1,151 21,754

Insurance 973 973

Rent 500 4,000

Sales Tax 626 2,895

Telephone/www 240 2,364

Utilities 100 800

Computer Equipment - -

Computer Software 68 1,196

Membership -

Licenses / Memberships - 270

Accounting Services 155 1,699

Total Expenses 6,509 62,147**Net Ordinary Income** (\$1,783) (\$2,922)

Gratitude Dinner Tickets -

Raffle Ticket Sales

Gratitude Expenses -

NET OTHER INCOME -**NET INCOME** \$676 (\$2,922)

**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%)

District 20

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

General Service Office

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

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*

GROUP*/MEETING CONTRIBUTIONS

The six digit number next to the meeting name is their unique AA Registration Number assigned by the General Service Office in New York. This number signifies they are a "Registered Group"...Those meetings listed without a six digit number are **NOT registered with G.S.O.** and therefore not a "Group" (by AA definition), but is a "meeting". *Please see A.A. pamphlet: "The A.A. Group...where it all begins" P-16

<u>Group/Meeting</u>	<u>July 26</u>	<u>YTD26</u>
Group #510367.....	0.....	321
Group #1092618.....	0.....	304
11th Step Prayer & Meditation Bonita	55.....	123
Beach Bums	0.....	700
Big Book Comes Alive	300.....	600
Big Book Steppers Bonita	0.....	60
Big Book Steppers Naples	27.....	237.
Bonita Banyon.....	0.....	100
Bonita Friday Joe & Charlie	55.....	249
Bonita Springs 96395.....	200.....	924
Bonita Hapy Hour.....	0.....	247
Bonita Springs One Day At A Time	0.....	330
Bonita Springs Women's Meeting.....	0.....	200
Bonita Wednesday Beginners	250.....	250
Brown Bag Group	180.....	900
Cake Meeting	100.....	150
Common Solutions Naples.....	556.....	1,725
Daily Reflections ZOOM	0.....	230
Early Risers.....	0.....	500
Easy Does It	0.....	1,250
Friday Night Lights	0.....	600
Gratitude Hour	0.....	325
Happy Healers	0.....	535
Jaywalkers.....	0.....	51
Keep It Simple.....	182.....	503
Meeting In The Park	0.....	653
Men Of Naples	34.....	368
Monday Daily Reflections	16.....	118
Naples Group	0.....	800
Naples Men Big Book Study.....	0.....	99
Naples Nooners	0.....	795
New Attitude Group (1150040010).....	0.....	490
New Dawn.....	0.....	884
No Name Provided.....	256.....	256
Nuts & Bolts.....	30.....	30
On Awakening	0.....	20

<u>Group/Meeting</u>	<u>July 26</u>	<u>YTD26</u>
Primary Purpose	0.....	3,500
SOS Meeting	0.....	50
Saturday Nite Discussion BS	0.....	700
Tuesday BS Young People	0.....	286
Veranda.....	18.....	108
Wanderers.....	0.....	214
We Care.....	0.....	113
Where Are We.....	100.....	300

AA Groups/Meetings listed here are those which are either registered as a Group at the AA General Service Office in New York, or, have contributed financially to Naples Area Intergroup.



The Birthday Club

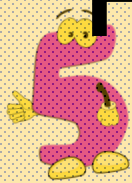
Did you know you can share your sobriety and gratitude in a practical way by joining the AA Birthday Club? Sign up today and be featured in the *Courier*. Show your support for your Central Office. A donation of only one dollar for every year of your sobriety will help carry the message to alcoholics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



Rick G.	56 years
Paul B.	54 years
Ronnie P.	51 years
Ron L.	48 years
Jackie G.	39 years
Bill D.	38 years
Merle B.	38 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.	24 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:

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

Alt. Chair:

Opportunity

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
laurenfrosh@comcast.net
Mary A. 630/215-5091
mjadams12@gmail.com
Business meeting the third
Tuesday of each month at
5:30 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Institutions

Maria M.
mmetchear@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 Friday of each month,
at 6:00pm, 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
mmetchear@aol.com

WILLOUGH

Sunday, Monday and
Thursday
7:00pm
Peggy E., 269-7651
marco-
angel2000@gmail.com

HAZELDEN

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

BRIDGING THE GAP

Joe S., 845/554-8721
joeascalvia@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:

Service Opportunity

Interim Chair:

Robert C. 784-8514
bcrowe616@aol.com

Treasurer:

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

Secretary:

Jasmine C., 220-7798
jasmineyenter@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
Cell: 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., Barry A., Becky S.,
Bill S., Caroline H., Carrie
W., Gay S., Geoff S., James
S., Joe S., Libbie B., Linda
T., Natacha A., Peggy E.,
Ralph B., Swem 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.
Service Opportunity