

KENTUCKIANA NEWSLETTER

THE VOICE OF AREA 26

ANONYMITY ONLINE

I don't think that it's a going to be a surprise to anyone when I say how important and impactful the internet has become in the daily lives of everyone living in the world. With everything from basic internet access in our homes and Wi-Fi at almost every public place we can go, to the tiny computers

that we call cell phones that we dare not leave

home without and are carried in our pockets with us wherever we want, the power of connectivity between human beings has never been stronger. So much good has come from this level of access to one another, especially for alcoholics. Specifically, alcoholics who are trying to establish and maintain sobriety. Gone are the days where it was often that newcomers had little access to another alcoholic, who didn't know when the next AA meeting would be in their area, or even had to carry that big blue book with them everywhere they went if they needed reference to the instructions that

guide us through daily sober living. With the touch of a few buttons we can instantly be connected to one another and often to life saving experience, strength, and hope that gets us through the next few hours or even minutes of living sober.

Like any other form of

instant

WHEN ANYTHING GOES...
SOON EVERYTHING WILL!

gratification, it is not surprising that alcoholics would be inclined to use this accessibility to each other for their own benefit or gain. That is the reason that I am writing this article. When do we draw the line of when it is appropriate to share that we are members of Alcoholics Anonymous? In all actuality, the experience of those who came before us and the acceptance of our 12 traditions has already drawn that line long ago. The long form of our 11th tradition states "our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed." It seems to me that we

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have sometimes forgotten that the word "anonymous" is even a part of the name of our fellowship. With so many social media outlets to choose from coupled with a society super-focused on sharing every detail of our lives, or at least sharing the parts that we want others to see, the concept of anonymity is often entirely ignored in favor of showing off with our friends who just happen to be standing in front of a poster of the A.A. 12 steps or for declaring to the world that we have 60 days sober thanks to A.A! Even worse, we "tag" 50 of our new friends from A.A. in these posts and, in doing so, compromise the anonymity of those members too.

Some of you may be thinking, "what's the big deal? It's not like anything bad can happen from a few posts or pictures." This is the very sort of self-centered thinking that can be detrimental to our fellowship. When we are posting as A.A. members, is it not usually to achieve some sort of recognition or personal gain? Let us not forget that "our primary purpose is to stay sober and help another alcoholic to achieve sobriety." There are many people who fear coming to A.A. because they are concerned with people finding out that they are alcoholic. While the social stigma of alcoholism is not what it used to be, there will

always be those who do not understand. We don't want to do anything that could compromise the security of anyone, A.A. members or not. The commitment to keep the identity of those in our fellowship in confidence is critical in creating an environment where newcomers can feel safe and find the willingness to be open about their drinking problem. As a newcomer, I wasn't giving a lot of thought to my long-term life and career goals, but now I am very grateful that as Facebook checks have become as commonplace as background checks when applying for jobs that I haven't compromised my anonymity online.

Probably most important to me about the impact of not maintaining anonymity is that an individual becomes the voice of the entire fellowship to those who do not know better. And while it is my hope that every alcoholic who passes through the doors of A.A. will stay sober indefinitely, I have been sober far too long to believe that will ever be true. As we all know, the same A.A. who was so grateful for 60 days sober in their post a few weeks ago and is now drinking again is most likely not carrying the message of hope that the A.A. program offers. This has now become "promotion" in the worst possible way.

So, what can we do about this? I believe we take the same approach that we do with our program of recovery. The foundation of everything I know about how to live and treat others has come from A.A. and its teachers. I only know how to stay sober because someone took the time to guide me through the 12 steps and showed me how to apply them to my daily life. I only learned how to interact with the fellowship and the world about me in a way that is positive because someone took the same time to take me through our 12 traditions and teach me how to apply them to my life as well. I have fallen short in both matters and have been blessed with alcoholics who approached me with attitudes of love and tolerance and showed me how to live differently. So, we continue to reach out to those who may not know better and have loving but firm discussions with them. We utilize our A.A. literature so that it is not just our opinion that is being expressed but the voice of A.A. itself. We have the sometimes uncomfortable but necessary conversations with alcoholics which explain that "to assure the unity, effectiveness, and welfare of A.A., anonymity has to be universal. It is the guardian of all that A.A. stands for." For those things, I am responsible.

Christina R.

FOURTH STEP

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

.... Now, let me get this straight! After living a life of self-motivated, selfish, lying, cheating and secretive behavior, I'm now, in a short time frame, supposed to write all of it down? Then I'm expected to announce all of it to myself, God, and for goodness sake, tell all of it to someone else?? No wonder that Step Four drives more alcoholics out of the rooms of A.A. than anything else.

Many of us, including me, interpreted a fearless moral inventory as a fearful and immoral list of all that we have done. How can we admit our secrets to another person much less face them ourselves? And then draw the attention of that God, who may not have noticed us, to what we've been doing. Not on your life.... Oh, it is my life! Yes, in Step Three I agreed to be willing to let that God of my understanding guide me in this endeavor, so, maybe I should let Him.

All the Steps are important to our recovery, but Steps 3-7, to me, are inexorably tied together and according to our Big Book are also time sensitive. In our Big Book **Alcoholics Anonymous** Bill W. tells us:

...” Next, we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital step, it could have little permanent effect unless AT ONCE followed by a strenuous effort to face, and be rid of, the things in ourselves which have been blocking us.”

Bill W. let us know that our inventory should include: Resentments (Our number one offender), Fears (This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives) and our Sexual Conduct List (We subject each relationship to the test-was it selfish or not).

When it was time to start my Fourth Step, I assured my sponsor that I didn't need to write anything down as I could keep it all in my head! After being stared down for a few minutes, I reluctantly agreed to use pencil & paper. Now the remarkable part for me was, as I went through my life and wrote down all my resentments, fears and bad conduct concerning others, some of those that I thought would be the most glaring disappeared in a puff of white smoke. Others that I believed to be of little consequence turned out to be the major stumbling blocks that occupied my mind and kept me in a state of constant turmoil. So, PLEASE listen to the knowledge of those wiser and use pen & paper!

In the Big Book of **Alcoholics Anonymous** there are prayers and promises for each step, not just the Third Step Prayer and Ninth Step Promises which are the most well-known. The Fourth Step Prayer is found on page 67, please use it:

...When a person offended we said to ourselves, “This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.” ...

In the book **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** Bill W. tells us: **“So these desires - for the sex relation, for material and emotional security and for companionship - are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.”** Our basic instincts are a product of our creation NOT some evil plot that we came up with on our own. We, as individuals are just not that powerful. In our case we simply have twisted them to meet personal gains.

In the case of personal relations, we tend to try to control others, or rely on them to the point of driving them away. Others will always fail us in the end. Therefore, we should always trust in an Infinite God not in finite man. An A.A. speaker once said that people are not against people, they are just for themselves. I need to keep in mind that the basic cause for my problems always is in me. Bill W. compares our list of defects of

character to the Seven Deadly Sins. These are defects found in all humanity, not just in ourselves as alcoholics. Bill W. also tells us that Step Four is but a beginning of a lifetime practice.

In the book ***The Steps We took*** by Joe McQ. (Of Joe & Charlie fame), Joe suggests that the Sexual Conduct List is what harm we have done to others, simply a manifestation of self-will. Our harm to others, he says, includes all that we have done for personal gain and domination over those we have harmed throughout our lives. That passage really hit home for me as that was how I operated most of my adult life!

So! To sum up for me about the timeline of Steps 3-7, I see the following: All the steps are sequential and tied to each other, but Steps 3-7 allow me to immediately list my most serious defects and work on them. Step Three is becoming willing to let the God of my understanding guide me; Steps 4-5 are identifying which defects I have and name them; Steps 6-7 allows me to become willing to have God remove them "Root & stem".

As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, there are prayers and promises throughout the steps. The Fourth Step Promises are found on page 70 in our Big Book Alcoholics ***Anonymous***:

... "If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can." ...

.....Let the church say amen!

Bill E.

Step 5:

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

I remember the fear that struck me when I thought of going through with Step Five, even before I was there yet (when I was supposed to be focused on my first few steps instead of jumping ahead...can we say *classic alcoholic?*). There's a lot of hype around "dropping" the fifth step that invokes anxiety and heart palpitations, and I read pages 72-75 in the Big Book several times, cringing each time it seemed like the book could read me better than I could read it. Each fear I held or unsound reason for trying to avoid carrying out Step Five was addressed almost immediately in the pages. I remember thinking, "Why do I have to tell someone else about these things? Surely this person will judge me, even if they pretend they don't" and "My sponsor is going to hate me after seeing what I've done", or perhaps worst of all (for an egomaniac with an inferiority complex like myself), "If I share this my sponsor is going to tell everyone else who I really am."

If I am rigorously honest (as I have been taught to be), I was also on the lazy side. The Twelve and Twelve mentions that some of us are "genuinely alarmed at the prospect of work", and so was the case with me. I still was not convinced that the Twelve Steps would work for me and my illogical thinking told me that maybe I should keep my work load down to a minimum, just in case it did not actually work. Then I would not have sacrificed so much time writing and sharing. Thankfully the God of my understanding was speaking through my conscience and through my sponsor, so I did go through with the whole thing, fearlessly (kind of) and thoroughly (100%). I have been so fortunate to have seen my own sponsees, friends, and even family members take this step as a result of taking my own and reap the rewards.

At this point I had been ready and just hadn't known it. I had been prepared by my sponsor, who was armed with the facts and the experience to guide me through steps 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each step had brought me closer to being ready and I knew by now what the basic problem was (lack of power) and that I had been afflicted with a disease that affected mind, body, and spirit. I realized I had certain deficits that I needed to take stock of and then get rid of, but only with the help of another sober member could I clearly see what they were. It was impossible to do an honest self-appraisal on my own; my mind could recognize some of my

character defects but in most cases I could also rationalize things based on my intentions or the wrongs other had done instead of facing my own head-on.

I learned that Step Five truly is a life or death errand. The quality of my life as a recovering alcoholic depended upon the willingness I put forth and would have been thwarted by another one of my efforts to take a short cut. I started off shaky but the fear dissipated the longer my sponsor and I discussed each resentment, each fear, each sex harm, and each offense I committed against others. Sharing my most embarrassing, hurtful, or shameful acts was a difficult process but paradoxically (like most things in this program; who believed that admitting complete defeat is liberating and began the path to freedom?) it gave me the sensation of chains being removed from my body and spirit, one by one. My sponsor could hear me; God could hear me. I had often wondered why admitting these things to God were so important since I figured He already knew them, but then I learned. Honest, meaningful relationships are based on truthfulness and communication. I could not draw closer to God without talking to him. Imagine learning a secret about someone you see at work every day but had only a causal relationship with up until now. Would you bring it up with them if they had not told you about it on their own? I wouldn't. I would wait until they trusted me enough to share it with me so that our dialogue could be open, sincere, and beneficial instead of forcing their hand before they were ready.

After the experience was over and I was alone, reviewing what I had done, I found that each step's promise had come true so far. Maybe "they" were telling the truth after all. I could look the world in the eye, I could feel the nearness of my Creator, and so my spiritual awakening had begun.

Amy K.

Steps 6 and 7

Were Entirely Ready to Have God Remove All These Defects of Character.

Humbly Asked Him to Remove Our Shortcomings.

Through the 5 years that I've been in the program, the principles that lie within these two steps have helped to show me how essential they are for my spiritual growth. When approaching 6 & 7 with my sponsor early on in my recovery my initial thought was, "these 2 steps are easy and simple, just a question and a prayer." The more I continued to grow and learn from others in AA the more I realized that they were simple, but at times not easy. If I was being truly honest with myself then I know in my heart, there were some defects that I wasn't quite ready to let go of. A saying that brings more meaning to this step is, "a certain sense of security in the familiar." Some of these defects that I encountered in the fifth step had shown me how much of a defense mechanism they had become over my childhood years and into adulthood – so letting go of them proved to be more difficult as I continued to stay sober and become a part of life again.

Lying and manipulation were two easy defects that I was entirely ready to let go of because I could see the role they played on my life, especially in my drinking. It was, and still can be the gossiping and character assassination that can plague my spiritual well-being. The lesson I get from this is that I am still human, and learning from the spiritual pain these defects can cause is essentially pushing me into the "willingness" to want to be free from these defects. The Big Book gives us a couple of questions to ask ourselves: 1. Are we ready to let God remove these defects? 2. Can he take them all – everyone?

The more I continue in AA the more I can see that Step 7 has two essential parts; action and humbly asking God to remove my shortcomings. The prayer that coincides with this step and the principle behind it

shows me that there is a bit of good in the worst of us and a bit of bad in the best of us. For me it is a prayer of selflessness because I am praying for the strength to better do his will so that I may be useful to him and to my fellows around me. What I have learned over these past 5 years is that prayer will only go so far. If I am not willing to put some effort into changing, then how can I expect God to remove the shortcomings – I have also realized that there are some parts of me that He may use to help others even if I think it's a defect. For me that just reiterates the fact that I am not God and that I don't know who I may help in this process.

- Brian C.
- Sobriety Date: January 13th, 2012

July Word Search

E P R A Y E R Z I V M R M G S
P S G K B W S N R J E O N N D
F P P U Q F E I Z J D C H E A
R E T E T U B W M O A G F W O
A W L L D R O K T X P L V N C R
D C L L T A P B S B L I G O S
T V I A O J N E E R I E J M S
S H I O H I C J Y S K A F N G I R R
U I K M N G Y L H X Y F F E R I C
Y H U Z U V I S I I S E O L P G
O G L B F X N K B I F B G P K
J G L H G X A J T G U N G L U M
Q T S N O I T O M E S G Z A B

NEWCOMER
SIMPLE
MEDALLION
THINKING
JOYOUS
GLUM
FELLOWSHIP
PRAYER
COFFEETOT
EMOTIONS
PSYCHIC
ESPERANZA
LIVING
CROSSROADS

Concept XI

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore, the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

Concept XI is concerned with the structure of and the relationships between all our trusted servants at the corporate headquarters from trustees to general office staff. It outlines the structure and principles for how we share leadership. While the trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, their work requires the support of the best possible standing committees, service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. The people filling these roles are the face of A.A. While many people never meet a trustee, they routinely seek assistance from the General Service Office. Therefore, it is critical that we are concerned with the composition of these supporting committees and service boards, the qualifications of the people who serve in these roles, the way these positions are filled, the system of rotation among these positions, the rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, and the financial compensation of these workers. Concept XI explains the inner workings of the daily operations of A.A. – as it was in 1962. Because A.A. has grown and changed over the years, some of the details have changed or are irrelevant today. The essence of the concept, however, remains pertinent.

In his discussion of the Nominating Committee, Bill Wilson mentions the need to avoid the tendency toward deterioration in the caliber of personnel from the human instinct to recommend new associates who are slightly less competent than themselves and therefore less threatening. We must strive to fill all vacancies from trustee to staff worker with workers of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry. This process will require careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, and refusal to act in haste. The Finance Committee is where money and spirituality must mix. Bill suggests the need for hard headed realists, and a pessimist or two. Real prudence, the balance between hoarding and recklessness, is the goal. The Public Information Committee will require individuals with specialized technical skills in public relations who can adapt their experience to AA's special needs and traditions. Bill discusses a unique difficulty inherent at corporate headquarters; namely that “bosses” and employees must run a business and yet also remain close friends in AA. After all, their lives depend on belonging to same “club”.

Regarding the status of executives, Bill says that sustained and competent executive direction is necessary for the successful functioning of the organization. This function must be delegated to a single person rather than to a board or committee. One person must always be in this leadership position, supported by necessary assistants. This leader must have ample freedom and authority to do his/her job, and should not be interfered with so long as work is done well.

As to how paid workers are compensated, AA must pay its staff in reasonable relation to the value of services in the commercial world. Each paid executive, staff member or consultant should be compensated in an equitable way. As stated in the service manual:

Cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient. It is very costly in the long run. This is neither good spirituality nor good business. Assuming service money is readily available, we should therefore compensate our workers well.

We would not expect other A.A. members to make financial sacrifices to their income so why would we expect our service workers to work for less than a “fair wage”. Therefore, the paid workers should be compensated at a level that they could earn in a similar position in a non-AA organization or company. In this way, we can ensure that we can employ the best people who will be committed to doing the best job possible to support the organization. Support staff all receive identical compensation and pay raises are based on time served only. This idea of complete staff parity removes the usual money and prestige incentives and is the main departure from the normal corporate world structure. It removes the temptation to destructive competition and office politicking. This policy seems to work because of our workers dedicated desire to serve which replaces the normal ego drives.

At A.A.’s General Service Office, most staff members’ assignments are rotated every two years. When engaged, each staff member is expected to possess the general ability to do, or to learn how to do, any job at GSO — excepting for office management. Rotation is important for the security and continuity of the office. The more responsible the assignment, the longer the term of service must be for the sake of effectiveness. Group secretaries can rotate every 6 months; intergroup committee members rotate each year; delegates rotate every 2 years; trustees rotate every 4 years. Most World Service office posts are rotated every 2 years. Those which are the hardest to fill may have no fixed term because of the years of training and unusual qualifications required.

It is critical that paid personnel are given a voting representation on our committees and corporate boards because full participation of paid workers is highly important. They should enjoy a status suitable to their responsibility, just as our volunteers do. It also is critical that those employees who are not members of AA are not treated differently in any way.

The 66th panel of the General Service Conference removed 2 paragraphs from the end of Concept 11. Those with an interest in history or gender issues might want to check those out.

Respectfully submitted,
Sky W.

STUMP THE CHUMP

1. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE ALL THREE LEGACIES IN THE RECOVERY PROGRAM AND LIFE?

"Our Twelfth Step- carrying the message- is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer-ranging all the way from the Twelfth step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and the AA's General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service." (S1 The AA Service Manual)

2. WHEN SHOULD I START THE STEPS?

IMMEDIATELY!! It is never too early to start going through the book, *Alcoholic Anonymous* with a sponsor. Getting through the steps teaches you how the ones before us RECOVERED from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. This gets you ready to be able to sponsor people yourself, which guarantees personal sobriety.

3. RECOVERY SPONSOR AND SERVICE SPONSOR. WHATS THE DIFFERENCE AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Recovery Sponsors help the sponsee learn and work the steps. They are there to listen and share their experience, strength and hope. A Service Sponsor is someone that helps a person navigate the Service Manual and understand the Twelve Traditions and 12 Concepts of World Service. Sometimes the same person does both jobs but it is ok to have two different people. Not everyone in the Fellowship knows and understanding Service.

4. WHY SHOULDN'T I POSTED ABOUT "MY AA STUFF" ON SOCIAL MEDIA, IT'S "MY" PAGE. WHO DOES IT HURT?

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities" (Twelfth Tradition) This is speaking of our personality not others.

"If we look at the history of AA, from its beginning in 1935 until now, it is clear the anonymity serves two different equally vital functions:

- At the personal level, anonymity provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers.
- At the public level of press, radio, TV, films and other media technologies such as the Internet, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their AA affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain.

When using digital media, AA members are responsible for their own anonymity and that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should assume that we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others." (Understanding Anonymity page5)

JOKES

AN IRISHMEN WALKS OUT OF A BAR..... IT COULD HAPPEN

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ALCOHOLIC AND A DOG? THE DOG STOPS WHINNING WHEN YOU LET HIM BACK IN THE HOUSE.

WHATS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR THERAPIST AND YOUR SPONSOR? THE ONLY TIME YOUR SPONSOR SAYS THE WORD "CLOSURE" IT IS FOLLOWED BY "YOUR MOUTH".

A GUY GOES TO SEE A BRAIN SURGEON FOR A NEW BRAIN. THE BRAIN SURGEON SHOWS FOUR BRAINS.
AN ARCHITECT'S BRAIN FOR \$250,000. A SURGEON'S BRAIN FOR \$350,000 AND A NASCAR DRIVER'S BRAIN FOR \$500,000.

THE MAN SAID THAT THOSE WERE ALL WAY TO EXPENSIVE AND ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY OTHER BRAINS AVAILABLE.

THE DOCTOR RESPONDED THAT THERE WAS ONE OTHER BRAIN, AN ALCOHOLIC BRAIN, BUT IT WAS GOING FOR 1,000,000. THE MAN WAS AMAZED AND ASKED WHY SO MUCH?

THE SURGEON RESPONDED THAT IT COST SO MUCH BECAUSE THE BRAIN OF AN ALCOHOLIC HAD NEVER BEEN USED....

WHATS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LITTERED OLD BUS STATION AND A LOBSTER WITH A BOOB JOB?
ONE IS A CRUSTY OLD BUS STATION AND ONE IS A BUSTY OLD CRUSTATION.

EVENTS

DISTRICT 12 ICE CREAM AND CORRECTIONS WORKSHOP

JULY 29, 2017 7:30-9PM

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODISTS CHURCH
2000 DOUGLASS BLVD.
LOU, KY 40205
BRING COOKIES OR CAKES IF YOU WISH.

SSAASSA 2017

NOVEMBER 10, 2017

HOLIDAY INN & SUITES ATLANTA AIRPORT

THE THEME FOR THE FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER IS:

**MENDING FENCES, ALCOHOLIC'S EXPERIENCES WITH
AMENDS**

STEPS 8 & 9

PLEASE SUBIT ARTICLES TO KENTUCKIANA@AREA26.NET

OUR GOAL IS TO INSPIRE RECOVERING ALCOHOLICS THOUGH
ARTICLES ON AA TOPICS THAT SHARE THE EXPERIENCE,
STRENGTH AND HOPE OF AA MEMBERS