
THE ONLY
REQUIREMENT
FOR
MEMBERSHIP
IS A
**DESIRE TO
STOP
DRINKING**



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.

AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation 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.

How It Works

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

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

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

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked his protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a programme of recovery:

The Twelve Steps of AA

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

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

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

We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

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

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

Big Book p58-60

The Twelve Traditions of AA

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

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

The Promises

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

A Vision For You

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

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

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

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

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

Big Book p151-152

It Works – It Really Does

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

We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. “Faith without works is dead”.

Big Book p87-88

Sobriety Insurance

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

Resentment

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

It worked for me then and it has worked for me many times since, and it will work for me every time I am willing to work it. Sometimes I have to ask first for the willingness, but it too always comes. And because it works for me it will work for all of us. As another great man says, “The only real freedom a human being can ever know is doing what you ought to do because you want to do it.”

Big Book p552

Prayer & Meditation

On awakening, let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. In thinking about our day we may face indecision. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. "Thy will be done".

Big Book p86,87

Acceptance

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake.

Big Book p417

Just For Today

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

Just for today I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my 'luck' as it comes and fit myself to it.

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

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways; I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do – just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

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Just for today I will be agreeable, I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticise not one bit, not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for today I will have a programme. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests; hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try and get a better perspective on my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

3rd Step Prayer:

God I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life.

May I do Thy will always.

Amen.

7th Step Prayer:

My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad.

I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.

Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.

Amen.

11th Step Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace; that where there is hatred, I may bring love; that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness; that where there is discord, I may bring harmony; that where there is error, I may bring truth; that where there is doubt, I may bring faith; that where there is despair, I may bring hope; that where there are shadows, I may bring light; that where there is sadness I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek to comfort rather than be comforted; to understand, than be understood; to love, than be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.

It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

Amen.

ABC of Meeting Topics

Acceptance • Amends • Anonymity
Behaviour • Belonging • Blackouts
Conscience • Complacency • Complex
Desire • Decisions • Depression
Easy-does-it • Emotions • Ego
Faith • Fear • Fellowship • Fatigue
Gratitude • Gossip • Guilt • Grace
Humility • Hope • Honesty • Happiness
Inferiority • Illness • Immaturity • Inside
Jealousy • Joy • Judging • Just for today
Kindness • Knowledge
Love • Loneliness • Live & Let Live
Meetings • Morals • Meditation
Newcomers • New Life • Ninth Step
Open Mindedness • One Day at a time • Obligations
Principles • Personalities • Prayer • Promises
Quality vs Quantity • Quiet Time
Resentments • Recovery • Remorse
Service • Steps • Surrender • Serenity • Spirituality
Tolerance • Truth • Today • Traditions
Unity • Understanding • Unselfish
Values • Vanity • Virtues
Willingness • Way of Life • Worry
Yesterday • Youth
Zest

Surrender To Win

This is the how and the why of it. First of all we had to quit playing God. It didn't work.

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

Big Book p62,63

Number One Offender

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

Big Book p64

Without Defence

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

Big Book p24

I am responsible.

Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that, I am responsible.

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OUR
PRIMARY
PURPOSE IS TO
STAY SOBER AND
**HELP OTHER
ALCOHOLICS
ACHIEVE
SOBRIETY**

