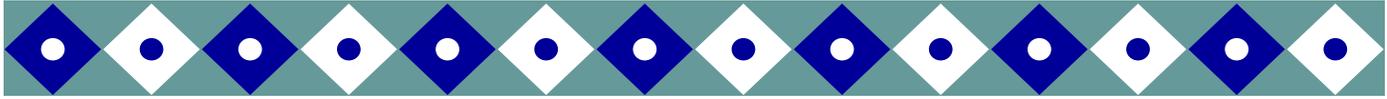


WELCOME TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

***BEGINNER'S  
PACKET***

***A.A. Helpline 210-828-6235***

***Www.aasanantonio.org***



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## **HOW TO FIND A MEETING**

### **There are two main types of meetings, In-Person and Online.**

These are divided into types.

- A. Open Meeting-Anyone can attend.
- B. Closed Meeting-Only Alcoholics can attend.

### **BOTH TYPES**

Call our 24hr Hotline 210-828-6235. Our volunteer will assist you in finding a meeting.

### **ONLINE MEETINGS**

Go to our website [www.aasanantonio.org](http://www.aasanantonio.org). On the home page you will find links to local and national on line meetings.

### **IN PERSON OR LIVE MEETINGS**

1. At our website [www.aasanantonio.org](http://www.aasanantonio.org), click on meetings. It's best to search by zip code. There you will find meetings. BE SURE TO READ THE NOTES SECTION, BECAUSE SOME OF OUR GROUPS ARE NOT MEETING IN PERSON RIGHT NOW DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.
2. If you have a smart phone, go to the app store and download the Meeting Guide app (the one showing a white chair). The App will find the closest meeting to your location.

## Information

### FOR ANYONE NEW COMING TO A.A., FOR ANYONE REFERRING PEOPLE TO A.A.

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. A list of recommended pamphlets and Guidelines is given later in this pamphlet. This tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does *not* do.

#### WHAT IS A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, nondenominational, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

#### WHAT DOES A.A. DO?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or "sponsorship" to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at the following different types of A.A. group meetings.
  - a. Open speaker meetings-These are open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members "tell their stories." They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of A.A.
  - b. Open discussion meetings-These are open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics -one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up.  
(Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.)
  - c. Closed discussion meetings-These are conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
  - d. Step meetings (usually closed)-discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
  - e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional and treatment facilities.
  - f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I (Driving While Intoxicated) programs.  
These meetings about A.A. are not regular A.A. group meetings.

#### MEMBERS FROM COURT PROGRAMS AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

In the last years, A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment facilities. Some have come to A.A. voluntarily, others under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate," the following paragraph appears:

We cannot discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency. --- Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in A.A., many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. But continual exposure to A.A. educated us to the true nature of the illness ..... Who made the referral to A.A. is not what A.A. is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern. ... We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

#### PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Sometimes, courts or other authorities ask for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.

Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have their A.A. group secretary sign or initial a slip that has been furnished by the court together with a self-addressed court envelope. The referred person supplies identification and mails the slip back to the court as proof of attendance.

Other groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group's involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

This proof of attendance at meetings is *not* part of A.A.'s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus avoid breaking A.A. members' anonymity.

SINGLENES OF PURPOSE AND PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL

Alcoholism and drug addiction are often referred to as "substance abuse" or "chemical dependency." Alcoholics and nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Anyone may attend *open* A.A. meetings. You are an A.A. member when and if you say so. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking, and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached A.A.

Dr. Vincent Dole, a pioneer in methadone treatment for heroin addicts and for several years a trustee on the General Service Board of A.A., made the following statement: "The source of strength in A.A. is its single-mindedness. The mission of A.A. is to help alcoholics. A.A. limits what it is demanding of itself and its associates, and its success lies in its limited target. To believe that the process that is successful in one line guarantees success for another would be a very serious mistake." Consequently, we welcome the opportunity to share A.A. experience with those who would like to develop Twelve Step/Twelve Tradition programs for the nonalcoholic addict by using A.A. methods.

WHAT A.A. DOES NOT DO

A.A. does not:

1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
2. Solicit members
3. Engage in or sponsor research
4. Keep attendance records or case histories
5. Join "councils" of social agencies
6. Follow up or try to control its members
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
8. Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment
9. Offer religious services
10. Engage in education about alcohol
11. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services
12. Provide domestic or vocational counseling
13. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources
14. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of A.A. is to carry our message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety. Regardless of the road we follow, we all head for the same destination, recovery of the alcoholic person. Together, we can do what none of us could accomplish alone.

We can serve as a source of personal experience and be an ongoing support system for recovering alcoholics.

RECOMMENDED MATERIAL AVAILABLE FROM A.A. WORLD SERVICES, INC.Pamphlets:

"A Member's- Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous"  
 "How A.A. Members Cooperate"  
 "If you are A Professional, A.A. Wants to Work With You"  
 "Problems Other Than Alcohol"  
 "Understanding Anonymity"  
 "Let's Be Friendly with Our Friends"  
 "Is A.A. For You?"  
 "A.A. in Treatment Facilities"  
 "Is There an Alcoholic in the Workplace?"  
 "A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional"

Guidelines:

For A.A. Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field  
 Cooperation with the Professional Community  
 Cooperating with Court, A.S.A.P., and Similar Programs

Catalog:

Conference-approved Literature and Other Service Material "How A.A. Literature and Audiovisual Material for Special Needs "If You "

Videos:

Alcoholics Anonymous – An Inside View  
 Young People and A.A.  
 Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous  
 A.A. – Rap with Us  
 It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell  
 Your A.A. General Service Office, The Grapevine and the  
 General Service Structure  
 Carrying the Message Behind These Walls  
 Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (American Sign Language)  
*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (American Sign Language) Public

For additional copies of this paper, or our literature catalogs write to: A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Tel. (212) 870-3400. [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)

## AA At A Glance

### What is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a voluntary, worldwide fellowship of men and women from all walks of life who meet together to attain and maintain sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership.

### Current Membership

It is estimated that there are over 120,000 groups and over 2,000,000 members in approximately 180 countries.

### Relations with Outside Agencies

The Fellowship has adopted a policy of “cooperation but not affiliation” with other organizations concerned with the problem of alcoholism. We have no opinion on issues outside A.A. and neither endorse nor oppose any causes.

### How A.A. Is Supported

Over the years, Alcoholics Anonymous has affirmed and strengthened a tradition of being fully self-supporting and of neither seeking nor accepting contributions from nonmembers. Within the Fellowship, the amount that may be contributed by any individual member is limited to \$5,000 a year.

### How A.A. Members Maintain Sobriety

A.A. is a program of total abstinence. Members simply stay away from one drink, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism.

### Why Alcoholics Anonymous Is “Anonymous”

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of A.A. It disciplines the Fellowship to govern itself by principles rather than personalities. We are a society of peers. We strive to make known our program of recovery, not individuals who participate in the program. Anonymity in the public media is assurance to all A.A.s, especially to newcomers, that their A.A. membership will not be disclosed. (OVER) [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) A.A. at a glance

### Anyone May Attend A.A. Open Meetings

Anyone may attend open meetings of A.A. These usually consist of talks by a leader and two or three speakers who share experience as it relates to their alcoholism and their recovery in A.A. Some meetings are held for the specific purpose of informing the nonalcoholic public about A.A. Doctors, members of the clergy, and public officials are invited. Closed discussion meetings are for alcoholics only.

### How A.A. Started

A.A. was started in 1935 by a New York stockbroker and an Ohio surgeon (both now deceased) who had been “hopeless” drunks. They founded A.A. in an effort to help others who suffered from the disease of

alcoholism and to stay sober themselves. A.A. grew with the formation of autonomous groups, first in the United States and then around the world.

#### **How to Find A.A.**

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in any telephone directory, your local newspaper or “Find A.A. Near You” on the home page of our website, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). In most urban areas, a central A.A., office or intergroup, staffed mainly by volunteer A.A.s will be happy to answer your questions and/or put you in touch with those who can.

#### **What A.A. Does Not Do**

A.A. does not: Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover... solicit members... engage in or sponsor research... keep attendance records or case histories... join “councils” or social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them)... follow up or try to control its members... make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses... provide detox, rehabilitation or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment... offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats... engage in education about alcohol... provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services... provide domestic or vocational counseling... accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources... provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

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## WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE??

**Soon you'll be back** out there in the real world again. You'll find it's the same old world with the same old problems.

**No matter where you live**, you'll still have your full share of those problems. Plus the one problem that can make all the others seem a lot bigger than they really are.

**You're not the only one** who has come face to face with a drinking problem. There are about 2,000,000 of us who are not alone anymore.

**Back in 1935**, two men saw that alcohol had ruined their lives. They knew it would kill them if they didn't stop drinking. They wanted to stop, but couldn't do it alone.

**Their families and** friends and doctors couldn't do it for them. There was no personal loss or calamity big enough, no threat, treatment, or cure strong enough to make either of them stop drinking. Willpower didn't work, either. The countless and sincere promises they had made to themselves were broken over and over again—over that first drink.

**Each of the two men** had been diagnosed as hopeless alcoholics. Worse yet, they saw themselves as hopeless. Until they saw each other.

**By strange coincidence**, they met and began to share their common experience with alcohol. They found they understood each other's problems better than their families and friends and doctors did. This mutual understanding gave them the strength each desperately needed to pass up the first drink that had always paved the way to disaster.

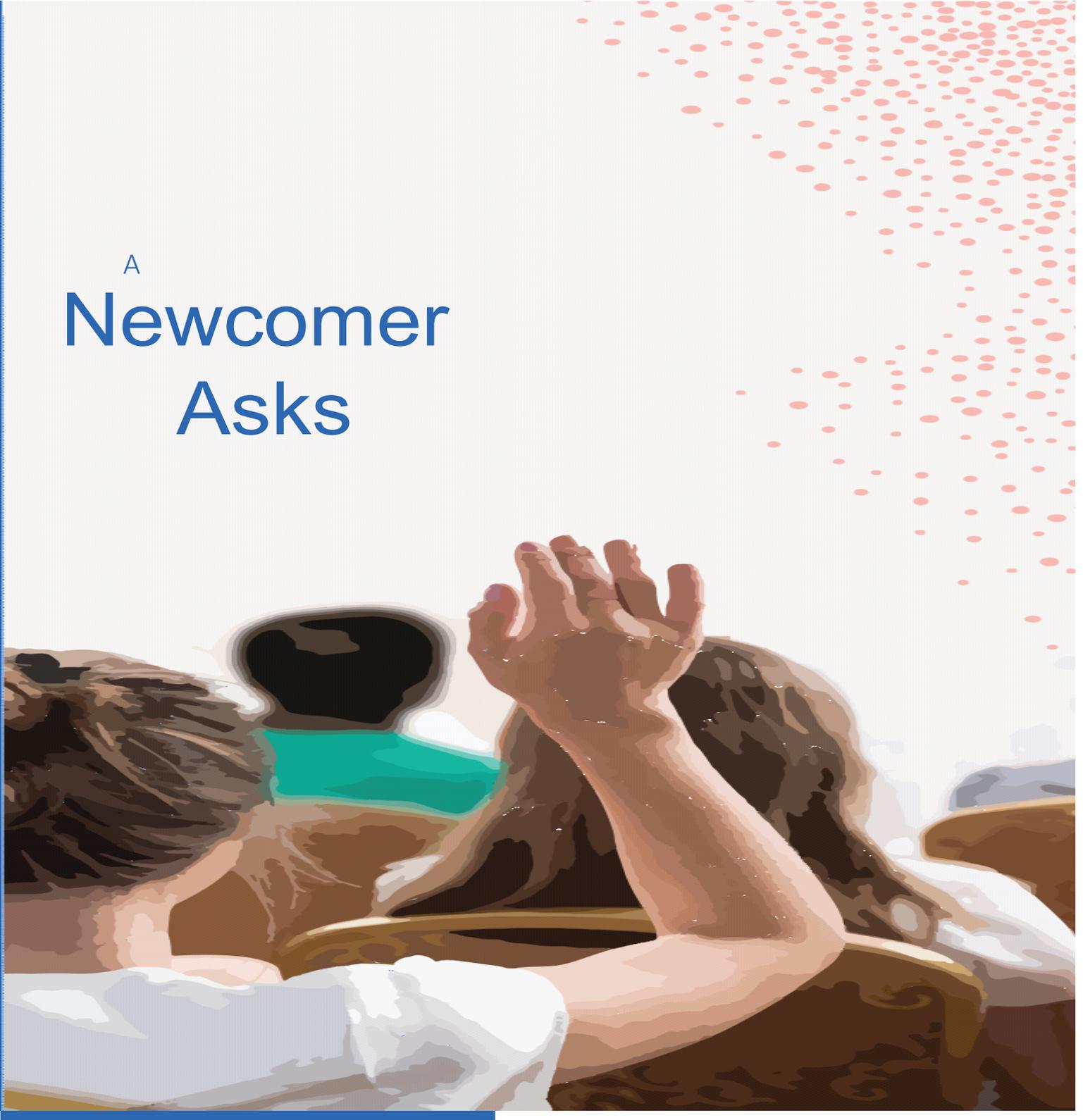
**Very gradually**, their new strength restored their hope for life and a future. They survived to share their experience with other so-called hopeless alcoholics.

**Today, Alcoholics Anonymous** is made up of an estimated 2,000,000 men and women who once felt just as hopeless. We still meet regularly to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. Our everyday lives are a lot better now than they used to be. And each of us once had to ask ourselves that question: "Where do I go from here?"

**We live and meet everywhere** now and at many different hours of the day. And we hope you'll want to talk to one of us when you get out. We'll be waiting, because somebody waited for each of us. And that made all the difference.

This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature

A  
Newcomer  
Asks



This leaflet is intended for people approaching Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) for the first time. In it we have tried to answer the questions most frequently in the minds of newcomers — the questions which were in *our* minds when we first approached the Fellowship.

### ***Am I an alcoholic?***

If you repeatedly drink more than you intend or want to, if you get into trouble, or if you have memory lapses when you drink, you may be an alcoholic. Only you can decide. No one in A.A. will tell you whether you are or are not.

### ***What can I do if I am worried about my drinking?***

Seek help. Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

### ***What is Alcoholics Anonymous?***

We are a Fellowship of men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking and have found ourselves in various kinds of trouble as a result of drinking. We attempt — most of us successfully — to create a satisfying way of life without alcohol. For this we find we need the help and support of other alcoholics in A.A.

### ***If I go to an A.A. meeting, does that commit me to anything?***

No. A.A. does not keep membership files or attendance records. You do not have to reveal anything about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back.

### ***What happens if I meet people I know?***

They will be there for the same reason you are there. They will not disclose your identity to outsiders. At A.A. you retain as much anonymity as you wish. That is one of the reasons we call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous.

### ***What happens at an A.A. meeting?***

An A.A. meeting may take one of several forms, but at any meeting you will find alcoholics talking about what drinking did to their lives and personalities, what actions they took to help themselves, and how they are living their lives today.

### ***How can this help me with my drinking problem?***

We in A.A. know what it is like to be addicted to alcohol, and to be unable to keep promises made to others and ourselves that we will stop drinking. We are not professional therapists. Our only qualification for helping others to recover from alcoholism is that we have stopped drinking ourselves; and problem drinkers coming to us know that recovery is possible because they see people who have done it.

### ***Why do A.A.s keep on going to meetings after they are cured?***

We in A.A. believe there is no such thing as a cure for alcoholism. We can never return to normal drinking, and our ability to stay away from alcohol depends on maintaining our physical, mental, and spiritual health. This we can achieve by going to meetings regularly and putting into practice what we learn there. In addition, we find it helps us to stay sober if we help other alcoholics.

### ***How do I join A.A.?***

You are an A.A. member if and when you say so. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking, and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached A.A. ***How much does A.A. membership cost?***

There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership. An A.A. group will usually have a collection during the meeting to cover expenses, such as rent, coffee, etc., and to this all members are free to contribute as much or as little as they wish.

### ***Is A.A. a religious organization?***

No. Nor is it allied with any religious organization.

### ***There's a lot of talk about God, though, isn't there?***

The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the A.A. group, still others don't believe in it at all. There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

### ***Can I bring my family to an A.A. meeting?***

Family members or close friends are welcome at "Open" A.A. meetings. Discuss this with your local contact.

## *How can I contact A.A.?*

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous online or in your local telephone directory. These telephones are answered by A.A. volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions or put you in touch with those who can. If there is no A.A. telephone service close to you, write or phone the A.A. General Service Office or visit our website at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

## *Here is a list of A.A. pamphlets which may be particularly helpful to you:*

*"Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?" "Frequently Asked Questions About A.A." "Is A.A. for You?"  
"Do You Think You're Different?" "Women in A.A."  
"Young People and A.A." "Too Young?"*

Remember that alcoholism is a progressive disease. Take it seriously, even if you feel you are only in the early stages of the illness. Alcoholism kills people. If you are an alcoholic, and if you continue to drink, in time you will get worse.

### THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Newcomers are not asked to accept or follow these Twelve Steps in their entirety if they feel unwilling or unable to do so. They will usually be asked to keep an open mind, to attend meetings at which recovered alcoholics describe their personal experiences in achieving sobriety, and to read A.A. literature describing and interpreting the A.A. program.

A.A. members will usually emphasize to newcomers that only problem drinkers themselves, individually, can determine whether or not they are in fact alcoholics.

At the same time, it will be pointed out that all available medical testimony indicates that alcoholism is a progressive illness, that it cannot be cured in the ordinary sense of the term, but that it can be arrested through total abstinence from alcohol in any form.