

Zoom ZOOM!

A newcomer shares his experience of a surrender in a distinctly 2020 style

The voice in my head chattering away. Making excuses. Hating. Judging. Resenting - my forte. Stuck in this cycle. It was getting progressively worse. Alcohol use was merely a symptom of this misery. It didn't occur to me to quit drinking. I just wanted to learn how to drink regularly, without life-ruining consequences.

My romanticised view of my own alcoholic behaviour hadn't previously included the isolating, fear, and uncertainty that I was currently experiencing. Oh, and to make matters worse, there was also some new virus doing the rounds, yay!

The amount of drink I was consuming wasn't socially acceptable. I would get angry if I had to moderate it. I began hanging out with people online and in-real-life further down the slope of alcoholism, to feel better about myself in comparison.

While in the process of trying to get a disability pension - hoping to be able to drink how I wanted to, without the pesky pressure of working 9-5 - I had a moment of clarity. This honest realisation leads to a willingness to change.

Well, just my luck, I thought: 'I'm finally ready to come back to AA, and there are no meetings on! Looks like God does want me to keep drinking after all.'

Defeated, I did a quick Google search and found a link to something called "Zoom". A meeting is a meeting, right? I logged in, turned my mic and camera on, and sat, staring back at myself in the screen reflection. My name is Craig, and this just

feels plain awkward. That first meeting got "Zoom-bombed" pretty good - a screen-shared video of a lewd act loomed stubbornly in the digital air even after the offender's swift ejection. 'It's gonna take a bit more than someone's junk to shock this boozier,' I chuckled to myself.

But then we got started, and for the first time, I listened for the similarities and not the differences. Most importantly, I took the three suggestions: I joined a homegroup (the Deal in Melbourne); got a sponsor; and found a Big Book. (Note: if you told me to do this directly, I would probably have done

the opposite; such was my immaturity at that stage of sobriety.)

Having had periods of physical abstinence before, I knew deep down that alcohol wasn't providing the promised benefits I used to believe in. Previous sobriety had felt like each day was counting down to relapse. Since working the steps and with this program of action, each day feels like a step towards freedom.

I enjoy the company of alcoholics. I find them more interesting people than "normies". Once I had my confidence back, I began to feel more at **...continued on page 6**



Did you know?

In October the **AA Australian National Convention** lands in Toowoomba, albeit virtually, in a first-of-its-kind live and on-demand online event!

See page 4 for details.

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Statement of Purpose

The Mixer, for ‘people who normally would not mix’ (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 17), is a forum for AA members in Australia to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Stories are collected by a group of volunteer editors around Australia, who form an editorial group conscience for the magazine, together with the General Editor and technical and design team.

While the editorial team takes reasonable effort in vetting contributions to ensure relevancy to and general adherence with the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, any facts or opinions asserted in a contribution remain that of the contributing individual or group; not the magazine or the AA Fellowship as a whole. Contributions are not intended to be a complete or accurate presentation of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, but instead how individuals or groups relate to it.

The Mixer can be accessed online at our website: www.aamixer.com

You can subscribe, contribute or offer service to The Mixer by contacting us by email at: editor@aamixer.com



Service Keeps Us Sober

Linds from Melbourne reflects on the value of doing service in the Program

I received a text from a fellow member of AA, reminding me of the date I'd agreed to speak at a rehab centre. At the end of the reminder message the text read:

Remember service keeps us sober.

Oh yes, I thought, so it does. I know this now, but in early recovery, I had no idea about this important truth for members of 12 Step Programs.

My name is Linds and I'm an alcoholic. I haven't had a drink today and that's still a miracle. From being a top-up, fall-down drunk to having days and days of sobriety; from a hopeless end, to endless hope - I'm that member of the AA fellowship.

When I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous I was so unwell I struggled to make sense of the words on the banners. And let's be frank, they are not printed in a small font! I had addled my brain and my capacity to function. If I hadn't found the rooms, I was headed for the next world. I recall in early meetings a sense of calm descending as I gradually returned to something near sanity. I remember that and an image of the chardonnay draining out of me. This last sensation was probably my kidneys clearing out the last remaining toxins stored there.

Well, this is not a story about speculations about human anatomy based on my



Image by Cook'n® on dvo.com

guesses. I'm just remembering how my body and mind felt, in early days of meetings and not drinking, a day at a time.

So, in that muddled but pleased and surprised state of being able to stay sober all day and attend meetings at night, I honestly didn't notice much else, at first. I loved listening to people's experience, strength and hope and I was amazed to find that hope was, suddenly, available to me.

My earliest service was just turning up, and I then graduated to washing the cups. This was service that was a serious undertaking in my first home group, as we had no water supply in or near our meeting room in a hospital. So water had to be carried in, and then heated. I remember finding this and many other things bemusing, but the important thing about early meetings is they

were keeping me sober. And I was welcomed, every time.

It took quite a few weeks before I became aware of the notion of service in the Fellowship. At first, I found this talk to be just another confusing statement that older, sober members were prone to make.

When other members spoke to me about the range of service positions available to me in early recovery, I remember thinking, 'Oh, I can't be expected to do any of that.' I see this, now, as an example of my over-inflated sense of uniqueness remaining, even after the long chardy-party had ended.

I'm very glad I hung around long enough to see the value of service. The older, sober members were right: it does keep me sober. I have conversations with members in service, new members, people in rehabs and detox, and all of these give me an opportunity to reflect on the absolute truth of my lived experience:

My life runs better when I don't drink, a day at a time, and I owe my life to AA.

So, thanks, to all members who remind me of this. And if you're reading this in early sobriety and recovery: just keep coming back.

Linds (a woman from Melbourne's inner west)



*"You gotta **listen to hear**, but you gotta be here to listen."*

2020 National Convention (Australia)

On 2nd October Toowoomba will host the 55th edition of the National Convention

What interesting times we find ourselves in. 2020 has so far been anything but predictable. The world is definitely not following the script I wrote for it in any way shape or form! For this alcoholic who loves predictable and is about as mentally allergic to change as I am physically allergic to alcohol, I've had to work twice as hard picking up the tools the program has taught me - to stay in the day, be grateful and maintain my spiritual fitness.

In all areas of my life during COVID I've had to pivot, adapt and be open to different ways of doing life. In some ways it has felt like early recovery, when the notion of dealing with life one day at a time without a drink in-hand seemed like an impossible ask.

In sobriety, life still happens but for me it's a very different life to the one I left behind the last time I had a drink. The journey from a life of unmanageability in all areas, which I soothed with alcohol, to one of connection, purpose and humility is a lifelong one. But AA has opened up a way of thinking and experiencing life I didn't even know existed.

Conventions are like a supercharge of the program's beautiful guiding principles. Speakers who share their experience, strength and hope at these events open the channels for the possibility of a new existence - not the old one scrubbed up.

The 55th Australian National Convention was due to be a face-to-face event in Toowoomba from the 2nd to the 4th of October 2020. The Committee were all set to welcome members together with a fantastic



line-up of local and international speakers to Toowoomba in the glorious Spring time. But, in the spirit of pivoting we are now excited to share that the Convention will now proceed in a virtual format. There is still a fantastic line up of speakers and the conference will offer a really unique combination of both live and on-demand content making it, as far as we know, an AA-world first!

Connection has never been more important and the Committee have been working to ensure that the Convention experience is a rewarding and enriching one. Whether you're an experienced convention-goer or a newcomer to the program (or conventions) please join us.

The Conference program is on our website

[aanatcon2020.com.au](http://www.aanatcon2020.com.au), including details of the meetings and speaker line up. Registrations are now open for members of AA, Al-Anon and Alateen.

As a little aside, I was nervous to write this article. Giving back to AA and doing service kind of made me a little anxious in case I didn't do it right or well enough. The all-too-familiar inner voice of 'I can't' rang loudly in my ears. Thankfully other committee members were encouraging and I feel humbly grateful for being able to do something that might just help another alcoholic find their way to this life changing program.

Yours in service,
Mo F

Did you know?

The above image is from the 2020 Toowoomba National Convention's video trailer, available on Vimeo at: vimeo.com/444392633?ref=em-share

Someone Stood at the Door

The first instalment from a piece by “K” exploring the spirit of the fellowship

Imagine a HUGE supermall, bright lights, piped music thumping in the background. There are shopfronts lining the walkway, escalators linking floor upon floor of inviting doctrines, creeds, dogmas and philosophies that are all aimed at the shopper.

In the foyer there is a long index of “Ways To ...” - ways to empower; to heal and thrive; to reclaim and disclaim; to nurture and detach; to mend relationships and set boundaries. The index is overwhelmingly long. Each offering is proclaimed to be not just a way, but the way to redemption.

In each shopfront, colourful and intensely lit, are rows of books propounding the view of the store owner. There are cds, dvds, flyers on seminars and workshops. There are speakers, gurus, preachers and ministers, laypeople, professors and confessors all vying for your attention. “LOOK THIS WAY - I HAVE THE ANSWER...only I have the true answer!”

You scurry onwards, shoulders hunched and head down, lost in your own pain, and resigned at the fact that none of these cures will work for your particular pain. Your “Spiritual Malady”. Been there, tried that. So instead you clutch your only known salvation: your bottle.

You. The child of the night. The lost and lonely one. Driven by a multitude of abuses, causes and conditions, stumble blindly past their cries. You have heard it all before: the pleas; the bargaining; the frothy emotional appeals; the worldly clamour of “We have the answer for you..the only answer for you, Come to us for your salvation!”

Resigned, your gaze looks beyond the stores, deep into the mall, where you notice a dimly

lit, flickering “EXIT” sign, which sits atop a passage normally used for waste trolleys. As you make your way towards it, the service entry door swings open.

As you make your way through the corridor, you sense a figure nearby. Something serene, at peace and quietly waiting.

You approach a door, non-descript – except for something which looks like the pagan symbol designated to ward off evil: a triangle enclosed by a circle. Under it are two letters...

AA



Weary from the demanding spruikers and self-proclaimed healers of souls, you open the door. The awaiting figure takes your hand, smiles and says “Welcome”.

That one softly spoken but heartfelt word, reaches into the depths of your pain-filled soul, and strokes your broken spirit. It conveys an intuitive understanding: you are no longer alone. Your spirit – shut off after trying (and failing) with all the other ways...the systems, the methods, the doctrines, the creeds, the dogmas...bringing only remorse, self-loathing and judgment from others – begins

to awaken.

The Greeter standing at the door places your hand on the doorknob and nods...

Automatically your broken spirit knows “It’s ok...it’s safe...it’s where I have been led”.

While the greeter is a “stranger”, intuitively you know. It’s OK. This is where I have been led. Tentatively you step across the threshold, leaving your bottle behind.

God has brought you home to the place He designed specifically for you, the alcoholic, the shivering denizen of King Alcohol’s mad realm. A place of safety, a place where you can be free to come or go, A place where there is a code of love and tolerance. A place governed by a loving Ultimate Authority, not a human intercessor.

AA is a place where people of ALL races, creeds and sexual orientation can share together in the Spirit of Healing. It is here in the rooms that Buddhist and Jew sit alongside each other, where Muslim and Christian can take solace together as His children, where the Green and Orange lay aside centuries of disunity. A dwelling where Bai Hai and Indigenous Aboriginals can join in a common solution and prayer.

A place founded upon a basic text that refers not to the Torah, nor the Koran, the Mabinogion, the Bible or the Book of Shadows.

At a meeting everyone is free to bring the God of their own conception. And it is that combined dynamic that forms the “Spiritual Entity” that reaches out to welcome the newcomer “Home.”

Submitted by K

Zoom ZOOM! (cont'd)

ease around others. Like going to the gym, I do this program a little bit, each day. Like drinking water, I could probably last a couple of days without, but there is no reason why I would choose to stop water completely. I had to put my sobriety first; without that foundation of recovery I am liable to lose everything.

Nothing else worked for me. I couldn't stay sober on my own willpower. The book describes my default state succinctly: restless, irritable and discontent.

Now that I'm not continually trying to 'enhance' the present situation with alcohol, my mental faculties are improved by not having to do the complex alcoholic mathematical formula:

*Desired drunken state = Standard drinks
x Cost per unit x Preference x What's on
sale x Time the bottle shop closes - Time
until it opens x Level of functionality
required tomorrow x Is anything going
to get in the way of this drinking session
x Analyze all past failures x Worry
about everything that might happen
in the future (Oh and try to ignore that
feeling of underlying disappointment)*

Whew, even typing that is exhausting. Luckily, I believe that change is a good thing, and people resistant to change are (mostly) idiots. Ultimately I didn't want to die and being too scared to kill myself, I was taking the slow, painful and less effective alternative. Maybe, I was depressed because I was systematically flooding my body with a depressant and constantly reliving past negative and traumatic experiences. Maybe, I was having anxiety because I was thinking about future situations that don't

even exist.

Having heard in that meeting that I would, 'live a life beyond my wildest dreams', sign me up! As a creative-type, I can tell you, I do not struggle to dream big. Imagining being the ruler of the earth, space travel to Mars, becoming St. Craig. I didn't quite comprehend the meaning of that phrase at that point in my sobriety.

What is it like now? Firstly I had to learn how to show up... the longest journey begins with a single step, and by logging in to that first Zoom meeting, I had started. I chaired the second Zoom meeting I attended, with no idea what I was doing. I asked someone for their phone number, and they became my sponsor. Importantly, I suspended my thoughts on what I think the meetings will be like or should be like. When I call someone, I don't freeze with panic, wondering what I'm going to say or how the conversation will go. I just do the action, just show up, just press the dial, just answer the call. (I had a fear of phone calls, so I changed my ringtone which helped with this.)

Like the butterfly effect, the outcomes of these positive actions can't be predicted. I listened more than I shared, wrote down interesting points, and didn't go to extremes (I had the idea of doing a 24-hour straight meeting). I shared what works for me, and I try to share for the benefit of the newcomer - not for me - which helps me stay on topic. I don't judge people returning from a relapse. On the contrary, I thoroughly

welcome them back because I can find out what happens without having to experience it myself. And I've never heard anyone say how awesome it was, "well, I got drunk and woke up with a brand new car, new job, and my wife loves me more than ever! This getting drunk every day is the secret to success, I swear!" said no-one ever.

I identified people who had strong sobriety and kept in contact with them. I made an effort. I discovered it's quality of relationships over quantity. It's easy to fall in the trap of dishing out my phone number to everyone and building lots of shallow friendships. If I never call that person or form a bond, what exactly is the point then? I respect people's boundaries, and wherever possible, I try to see it from their point of view. When I got my sponsor, I granted him the authority to make important decisions on my behalf. I listen and trust his judgment completely. I met my grand-sponsor (also on Zoom) and have him as a safety net if there is ever a dispute between us. When a thought arises to drink, I don't suppress it...I welcome it and understand that, like all thoughts, it too shall pass. I put it in the "red basket" in my brain, where the weird ideas occur. Like kicking someone that I walk past on the street. There might be a thought - stupid as it may be - but I don't act on it.

I read a story at the back of the Big Book each night. They're the perfect bedtime length. They aren't dull, and I'm able to rotate through them without it becoming a

Did you know?

Previous editions of The Mixer can be downloaded at
www.aamixer.com

repetitive bore. I then thank my higher power for keeping me sober that day. The next day I show up again and ask Him to open the channel to work His will, not mine, through me. I think of the still suffering alcoholic and do my best to help them. And I don't pick up a drink, no matter what happens.

I understand that my alcoholic behaviour can manifest in other ways. I just bought 11 pairs of shoes online, I will eat all the ice-cream in the house, and I go on fanatical fitness regimes. Still, these things don't put me in an institution, locked up in jail or ending up dead (I hope). I also have no need to take mind-altering drugs - LSD, mushrooms, cannabis... - that I used to crave. I accept my reality for what it is, and I don't try to change that state. I appreciate the past experiences, but as the saying goes, 'when you receive the message, you can hang up the phone'. Anything that changes my state of consciousness can lead me back to poor decisions. I remind myself every day that I have a decision-making problem, not a drinking problem.

Today, as I write this, I do not have the desire to drink, that mental obsession has been lifted. I don't think about having to stay sober tomorrow, seven days, the next month, years, or the rest of my life - even though I know deep down I have to. It is irrelevant. Who knows what will happen. This plane I'm on now might crash, and my thinking about what could or should be happening, would be down in flames. Wasted. Better to focus on the now. Keep it simple. By taking the first step up, away from level zero, asking for help, and knowing there is a solution that works. The proof is in any person who has long-term sobriety, perched out on the porch, gazing out towards Bonny Doon. You can see it in their eyes. I had read there was a study

saying that this program doesn't work...well if I identify with those that share in meetings and am sober today, what more proof do I need?

I was sceptical at the start because it does sound like a lot of work... and I hate doing things that someone tells me to do. But I discovered it's totally worth it. I was searching for meaning in life. Looking and praying for a sign. The spark that ignites the backside, and to get off Step Zero. This is it. THIS IS THE SIGN. Asking for help, swallowing my pride, facing the fear, and sitting with self-consciousness. If I could stomach the burn of those foul-tasting tequila shots, I surely can handle the butterflies of logging on to a Zoom meeting. The path is well worn, so I stick to the middle and surround myself with those who are healthy. Who is the one that gets the benefit? Using the steps to identify character defects, asking

God to remove them, clearing up the past, and living a meaningful life is worth the investment. It doesn't cost anything, no fees or dues. But it is a program of action. It is not theoretical. It's not motivational self-help masturbation; it's showing up even when I don't feel like it. Excellence comes from habit. This is the habit of living life. I read the promises, got a sponsor, found the Big Book, and made a call. I asked for help. My name is Craig, I live in Townsville, and I am just an alcoholic - my sobriety date is February 28th, 2020. If you're reading this and are an alcoholic like me (or are not sure), please reach out to me (by contacting The Mixer editor at editor@aamixer.com, who will pass on my details).

Thank you for reading. God bless.

CG

From
**Around
the World**



Submitted by international members Nagini and Tomas, taken at the European North Sea Convention early in 2020

AA in Australia - The Early Days

An excerpt from the book Castle of Shadows by AA Australia Pioneer, Archie McKinnon

This made up a group of four and I considered that A.A. was in business, the first successful A.A. Group outside the United States. But not the first attempt. Some months earlier, a Catholic priest, Father Thomas Vincent Dunlea, known nationally as the founder of the Australian "Boys Town", in association with Dr. S. J. Minogue, psychiatrist and Medical Superintendent of the Rydalmere Hospital, had endeavoured to start an A.A. group.

Dr. Minogue was quite familiar with A.A. and for several years had been corresponding with Bobbie Berger, General Secretary of A.A. in New York. Long before 1940 he had been following any trail that may have led to a solution of the riddle of alcoholism.

During the period he had been Medical Superintendent of the Kenmore Hospital he had experimentally tried many new approaches to the treatment of alcoholism. He seems to have been the first psychiatrist to investigate in depth the problems of the alcoholic. I regard him as the father of Australian A.A.

Father Dunlea had collected a group of "Skid Row" alcoholics as subjects for an A.A. group. He had taken them to his parish of Sutherland, which adjoins the great National Park, and camped them in tents on the outskirts of the Park, in much the same way as he had camped the homeless boys who made up the first "Boys Town".

This first group went quite well for a while. The men were clothed and fed, bedded down, and even given a small ration of good

liquor to replace the cheap wine and "metho" they were accustomed to. To them, the whole venture was a pleasant vacation from their dingy city haunts.

The whole operation seemed to be going so well that Father Dunlea considered the time had arrived to approach a certain wealthy businessman who had indicated that he was willing to make a substantial contribution towards anything practical in the way of rehabilitation of alcoholics. So one day Father Dunlea left for Sydney to bring his benefactor back to look over the group at Sutherland.

When the two men arrived at the camp the group members were all there numerically, but all unconscious from the methylated spirits they had consumed in the priest's absence. The businessman did not make a contribution. After one look, he fled to his car and drove away. The morale of the group deteriorated rapidly after this, and eventually some left of their own accord and the rest were chased out by the police.

So ended the first attempt to start A.A. in Australia, but Father Tom Dunlea was a dedicated man. Undeterred by failure, he rang me at the Reception House, said he had heard there was an A.A. Group there, and asked me to meet Dr. Minogue and himself at the Boys Town office in Elizabeth St., Sydney.

In this manner, in April, 1945, there came together three men who had been working individually towards the same objective, the founding of A.A. in Australia. After discussing

at length all aspects of A.A., we decided to join forces to publicise and build up A.A.

Up to now, the group I had formed had been meeting at appointed places, walking until we found a suitable cafe, and then holding our meeting over numerous cups of coffee. This arrangement suited all of us and worked quite well, but it was no longer practical, especially as the group now included a priest and a doctor. Dr. Minogue suggested his residence at Rydalmere Hospital as a permanent meeting place, and we held a few meetings there. But it was an inconvenient place to travel to at night, so Father Tom solved our difficulties by making available to us a room in a business block in the centre of Sydney, and for the following two months we held meetings there.

Eventually it became known that this office was used at night as a meeting place for alcoholics, and the caretaker, who did not like alcoholics, insisted that we hold our "get togethers" elsewhere, in spite of the fact that no one had ever been under the influence of alcohol at any meeting. So, for the first time, A.A. encountered discrimination.

All of this time Rex had remained sober and had been appointed to a position in a Government department, and was working continuously. He had left the hotel and taken a large ground-floor apartment in an old stone house in Lower Fort Street, Dawes Point, which is at the southern end of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

This old colonial mansion called Bligh House, was reputed to have been the home of Bligh

of "Bounty" fame during his tenure of office as Governor of New South Wales. It was in fact built in 1833 for Robert Campbell, one of Sydney's first merchant princes.

Its only connection with Bligh was Mrs. Campbell's desire to commemorate his name. It now houses the Australian College of Medical Practitioners.

The windows of Rex's apartment were still barred as when it had housed convict servants more than a century ago, and when Rex put it at our disposal it became the home of A.A. for the next four months. As soon as we settled down to regular meetings at Bligh House, we started a publicity campaign to make A.A. more widely known.

We were still dependent on the Reception House as a source of supply of new prospects, but felt we might get other and more co-operative types elsewhere.

Our major problem was the refusal of private and public hospitals to admit alcoholics for treatment. When we had a contact who needed hospitalisation, only the Reception House would admit him, which posed many difficulties for us, as patients did not want to be treated in what they considered to be a mental institution.

There was in Sydney no one for us to turn to like Sister Ignatia, who opened the doors of St. Thomas' Hospital at Akron to members of the first A.A. Group in America. Our meetings soon became quite large; sometimes as many as thirty people would turn up, but this growth had its drawbacks.

The meetings became less beneficial or less therapeutic, as they were cluttered up with philanthropists, social workers anxious to help the new organisation, journalists looking for copy, a large number of hard-core alcoholics investigating the new "racket" and

trying to work out the best way to exploit it, and some psychotic individuals who insisted they were alcoholics. Early A.A. seemed to have had an irresistible attraction for this latter type of person.

We had to thin out this top-heavy group so that we could get on with A.A. So we told the philanthropists we did not need money as we would not know what to do with it if we took it, and, in any case, A.A. paid its own way. So the philanthropists moved on, somewhat puzzled.

We explained to the social workers that A.A. did its own social work in that the twelfth step of A.A. sent each member out to carry the message and assist those who sought help that, in fact, A.A. looked after its own, so that we had no need of help in that direction. Rather saddened by our lack of appreciation, they too disappeared from the scene.

Journalists always had been a problem and we had grown tired of them. After long and tedious explanations of what A.A. was and what it meant, the result would usually be a nonsensical article next day under such captions as "Booze Battlers Get Together" or something similar. So, in sheer desperation, Rex sat down and wrote a lengthy, reasoned and authentic account of A.A. and submitted it to the "Sydney Morning Herald".

To our surprise, not only did the "Herald" accept the article and print it in its entirety, but they also gave Rex five guineas, which he paid into our meagre funds. So we got rid of the philanthropists, the social workers and the journalists, but we were still stuck with the psychotics. However, in spite of them we

got down to the business of building up and spreading Alcoholics Anonymous.

We immediately fell into one of the many traps which we found in our path. We made the mistake of concentrating on what we called our fringe members. These were the hard-case alcoholics who were making alcoholism a way of life.

It took us two months to find out that these types were completely resistant to A.A. and that A.A. was only for those who actually wanted it. Those two months did not bring one new member to our Group. Rex was the principal victim of these roving alcoholics. They moved in on him, so he lodged and fed them, and in return they stole his money and his clothes. Often he returned home from his office to find the apartment full of drunks, the drunks full of wine, and the rooms littered with empty bottles.

Rex seemed to consider this an occupational hazard of A.A., dismissing it as being of little account, but I could see that it was gradually wearing him down, and I feared that his anxiety state would return and that he would be driven to alcohol for relief from this worrying situation. We decided the only way out of our predicament was to move elsewhere.

See more from Archie McKinnon's book, *Castle of Shadows*, in future editions of The Mixer

(N.b we could not identify any copyright associated with this content - if you wish to assert copyright, please contact the editor)

Alcoholics Anonymous National Helpline
ph. 1300 222 222

Honouring the 12 Traditions Online

How do we respect the Traditions in the digital sphere that 2020 has propelled us into?

The following are tips are from an AA intergroup in the San Francisco and Marin area in the United States - and are at the very least food for thought for our groups here in Australia!

They have some other handy materials on their website (<https://aasfmarin.org/managing-meeting-participants>):

[Honouring the 12 Traditions in Online Meetings](#)

Just because these meetings are online does not mean they are not real AA meetings. My home group still has a responsibility to maintain the Integrity of the AA meeting.

Here are some tips...

1. The group, and its members safety, must still come before any one individual.
2. Business meetings are essential right now. Allow God to speak through your group's conscience.
3. It's important to make your online meeting accessible and available for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem.
4. It's okay to stick to your regular meeting format. There's no set online meeting format. Every group is autonomous.
5. Experience with ALCOHOL is one thing all AA members have in common. It is misleading to hint or to give the impression the AA solves the other problems or knows what to do about drug addiction. Is your group offering information about where non-alcoholics can get help?
6. AAs employed by the treatment facility should not run AA meetings at the facility. It is important that we reach out to treatment facilities right now and make sure their alcoholic clients know that they are welcome in our online meetings.
7. Many groups are looking into venmo and other payment apps that can be scanned at your online meetings.
8. Our paid employees are just that. They are not trusted servants when they are employees. They do not do service work while getting paid. Even if they are AA members. Be mindful of what we are asking of our paid employees right now when Intergroup offices are closed.
9. Modem to modem or face-to-face AAs speak the language of the heart in all of its power and simplicity.
10. AA has no opinion on outside issues, including the Coronavirus.
11. Privacy settings, Privacy settings, Privacy settings!
12. Let's remember that anonymity is STILL the spiritual foundation of ALL of our Traditions.

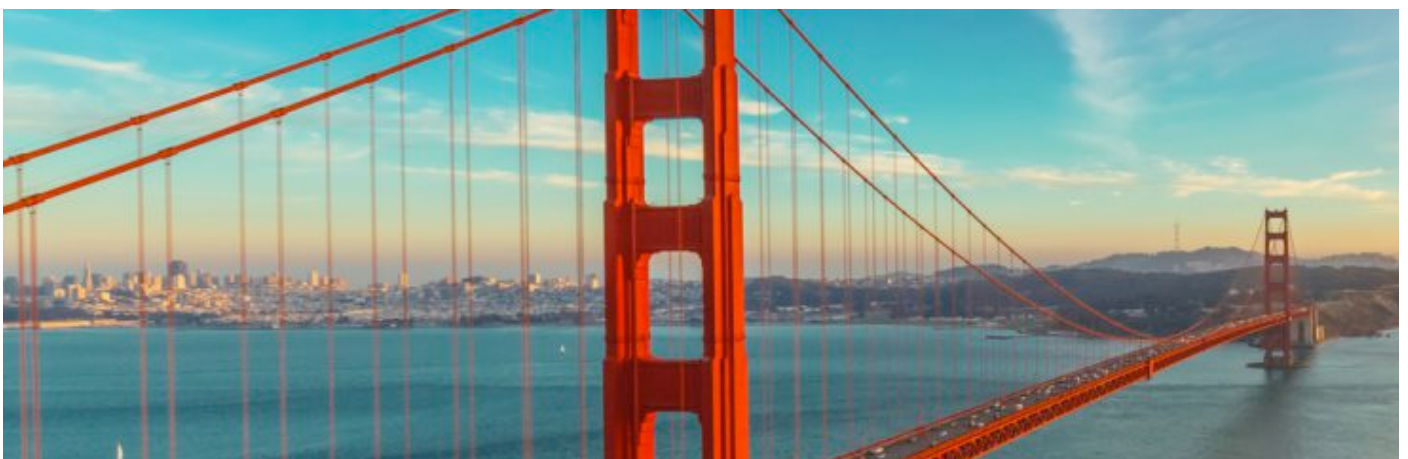


Image from <https://aasfmarin.org/>

The Waking Up is the Hardest Part

A story which explores the idea that, it's always darkest just before the dawn...

As the first sunlight finds its way through the curtains, it flickers gently onto my eyelids. Once I open my eyes, excruciating pain pierces my head. My heartbeat is heavy and my chest feels crushed like a car is parked on it with the handbrake pulled tight.

"What happened last night?", I wonder and the fragments of last night make me shudder with shame. "I will never drink again," I promise with sincerity. But hours later, my morning horror fades and I open my first beer. "What the heck, it's the weekend / it's the holidays / it's nearly my birthday / it's Tuesday morning...I deserve it." Any reason serves for me to have another drink.

I am trapped in powerlessness over alcohol and change is nowhere in sight. Years of denial, exhaustion, irritability, anger, lying, blaming, aggression, loss, ill health, misery and self-hatred will follow. I did not know this then, but I know now that there was simply not enough pain in my life to be motivated to seek sobriety. After all, I hold down my job and pay my mortgage. I am convinced that I am a good father to my kids and a good husband to my wife. I am a 'high-functioning alcoholic', whatever that is? And the weirdest thing is that I totally believe my own bullsh*t! It doesn't worry me that I never make it past the many bottle shops on my way home from work, no matter how hard I try. Without alcohol, I have no calm. I am restless and fearful. That first beer in the car on my way home calms me, particularly when I add a little vodka. Then, I turn the stereo up and let the wind breeze through the open window and I feel great. Maybe I am a little paranoid

about police on the road. But overall I am not worried about drinking and driving. I am selfish and I don't care. Once I arrive home, the kids, the mess, the noise, everything about my home life requires far more calm from me than I possess. So, I take another large mouthful of vodka before I greet the kids and my wife. Then, and as innocently as possible, I open a cold beer from the fridge and offer a glass of wine to my wife, but she declines as she checks the dinner in the oven. We don't kiss. Then, I take out the rubbish, just so I can take another gulp of vodka from my car on the way through. Nothing tells me that there is anything wrong in this recurring scenario.

The Pain

On the way back from the car, something else happens; I become irritable – the kid's toys on the floor bother me. I start to make a fuss, thinking I'm 'parenting' as I shout at the kids to clean up. My wife calmly tells me to relax but I am already in black out, so I shout back at her.

She asks me, "Are you alright?"

"Mind your own business."

"Are you drunk?"

"Stuff you, stuff all of you," I reply.

I get in my car and drive off. I hold one eye shut to stop seeing double. Somehow I manage to buy another bottle. I drink it and then I return home. My daughter slams the door shut in front of me and I smash it open. I scare the ones that love me the most. The police arrive and I pick a fight with them

and I get locked up. Prison teaches me no remorse or insight, just fear, hate and self-pity. I have no gratitude and I am unable to take responsibility for the pain I cause. I am released from prison into my own prison of rage and self-pity. I am at war with the world and with myself. I resent living.

The Waking Up

I don't believe that I am an alcoholic. I don't understand alcoholism. I don't want to go back to prison. I am shit scared. My release conditions are that I am not allowed to drink alcohol. I remember this inmate in prison who told me about Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12 steps. I remember the way his eyes light up and how he suddenly looks free as he talks to me about the 'Fellowship'. He gives me the message, the 12-step message to the alcoholic that still suffers. Me. I will never forget the gift this man gives me for as long as I live. I can see why his heart felt the way it did once I finally go to my first meeting of AA. I meet honesty there. I relate to people and I slowly begin to understand alcoholism. I understand that I am powerless over alcohol and that my life has become unmanageable. I slowly begin to understand the importance of patience, humility and gratitude and how they create kindness, harmony and love.

I am awake. I find forgiveness. I am a recovering alcoholic. One day at a time. Life has become full of hope.

Anon. - Northern NSW

How the Big Book Comes to Life

A member reflects on how the passages in the Big Book have come to life

'To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss.'

*Alcoholics Anonymous,
'Working With Others', p. 89*

I love this sentence...but I don't think I really, truly understood all that it meant until I had sponsees of my own.

I knew this sentence to be true in my own life. My sponsor, grand-sponsor, sponsorship family, friends in my home group - they all took care of me and passed on to me what had been so freely given to them. As one of my sponsees says, I had a 'crew', a 'tribe' that surrounded me and loved me.

But when I began to sponsor other alcoholics, this sentence took on a whole new meaning - a deeper meaning - within me. Through passing it on to others, watching them get "it," watching them no longer have the lonely existence we come into AA with, and then watching them pass on to others what has been given to them, is an experience that not only do I not want to miss, but I treasure.

This experience is worth staying sober for. This is an experience unlike any other. So humbling. To think that God saved me, allowed me to find AA, then had me share

this experience others, who in turn, in walking this same path, helped another alcoholic... well, it's nothing short of amazing.

It has nothing to do with me, and everything to do with the God of my understanding.

I have heard other AAs say they have to laugh when their biggest problem of the day is trying to find the time to catch up with their friends and family, because they all want to see or talk with the sober alcoholic, though there was a time when no one wanted to be around them.

To watch others grow; to watch them work so hard; to watch them become free...well, it is an experience I'm so glad I did not miss.

'We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn't control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery, and depression, we couldn't make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn't seem to be of real help to other people - was not a basic solution of these bedevilmments more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight?'

Alcoholics Anonymous, 'We Agnostics', p. 52

...or checking into social media forums with people bickering back and forth? Or watching the news and seeing things that

cause me so much anguish, even though there may be absolutely nothing I can do about these problems?

This sentence from the Big Book helps brings me back to my priority, staying recovered and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. I don't know about you, but this sentence describes me when I came in, and the last thing want is to go into an emotional spree that results in a return to the bedevilmments.

I did not have an honest relationship with anyone in my life. Though I might want to tell myself I did, that would be a lie. I would quietly resent people. I felt depressed and couldn't catch a break. I wasn't a help to anybody and I felt useless. I was absolutely full of fear. I was unhappy. I had no solution.

Today I am grateful that I have been given the solution - that One is God, may I continue to access that Power now.

Today I have wonderful relationships in my life and have emotional stability.

Today I find people every day that I can help.

Today I am happy, joyous and free, and in a position to be of maximum service to God and others.

Anonie-Mouse



Until next time!

Like they say, 'remember, you can put down this edition of The Mixer and never have to drink again - one day at a time.'

Well, something like that anyway!