

THE MIXER

THE AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

HELP FROM INDIA

Alcoholism is a worldwide disease. Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship, and together, wherever we are, we can carry the message by supporting each other, all we need do is reach out.

I work in a homeless men's hostel in Sydney, Australia. Several months ago a Nepalese man was staying in the hostel. This man was very ill, he had been diagnosed with Chronic Depression and he was drinking large amounts of alcohol, on a daily basis. One morning, we noticed that he had not gotten out of bed, so I and two other members of staff went to investigate. We found him in his room, in bed under the blankets crying and shuddering. Fortunately I lived in India for six years (many years ago) and can still speak a few words of Hindi, it was enough to encourage him out from under the blankets and then downstairs to the nurse's clinic.

I found out he was well medicated for his depression, but nothing had been done to address his drinking problem. I began speaking to him over the next few days and encouraged him to attend the in-house AA meeting at the hostel, but still I felt he needed more. I rang my friend Bhalla in Mumbai, India, and told him this man's story. I asked Bhalla if he could send me a Big Book in Nepalese. Bhalla's response was, "It's on its way".

Three days later the parcel arrived, from India, containing the Big Book. I was delighted and excited. I was going to give it to Anil (not his real name) the next day, but when I arrived at work the following morning I found Anil had left — no one knew where he had gone. Feeling heavy of heart, I put the book in my pigeon hole thinking, "You never know, someone else may have use for it some day!"

It was a Tuesday morning and I was working the day shift, about to go out to attend lunch duties, when I saw Anil quietly sitting in the TV Room, shaking and crying. I sat with him for some minutes and he told me some of his story and how miserable he felt. I told him how I had gotten him a Big Book in Nepalese some two months earlier, but he had disappeared. I asked him if he would like to have it now, as I still had it in my pigeon hole. Anil shook his head and thanked me. I went and got the book and gave it to him. That was the last me I saw Anil.

Some time later I was working in the hostel reception, and as usual the phones were ringing, men were queuing for laundry tickets, to use the phone, or checking to see if they had mail. [Continued on page 2]

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"Yes mate", I said, to this well-dressed man standing in front of me, "how can I help you?"

"I have come to thank you for the book", he replied in a quiet soft voice with a distinct accent, which I instantly recognised.

"Anil! Is that you?" I exclaimed. I could not believe it. He was unrecognisable from the man I had known several months ago. His face was glowing, he had lost weight and looked in his mid-thirties (his right age) not in his mid-sixties as he had before. He was well groomed and he was happy.

We sat and spoke for half an hour, he told me he was sober and was living in an apartment in the Western suburbs, close to where his family lives. He had renewed his relationship with them, often having lunch with his children.

As he was leaving Anil said, "Thank you for that golden book, without it I could never have got sober. Whenever I think of a drink I pick up this book and open it at any page. I start reading then the thought of drinking leaves my head."

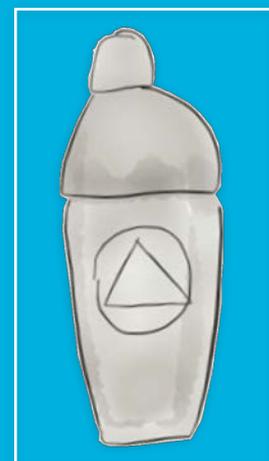
Thanks to my friend Bhalla's prompt action in India, another alcoholic has found his way into the fellowship in Australia.

(Kel M.)

The Mixer 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 volunteer Editor in each Area, thus ensuring a voice for all AA members around Australia; and these Area Editors form an editorial group conscience for the magazine, together with the General Editor and technical and design team. We, the editors and other volunteers contributing service to *The Mixer*, try to practice the AA principles in our work, being guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. All contributions present the views of the contributors, and do not represent the AA Fellowship as a whole.



KAREN'S STORY

I had my first drunk at a family function in Melbourne. I was 14 or 15 years old at the time, and a family friend was making me double rum and cokes. I blacked out, and came to totally bewildered the next morning (where had last night gone?). I didn't know it then, but it was to become a pattern I'd repeat over and over for the next 29 years. The guilt, remorse and shame I felt that morning only grew in the years to come. I may have never done anything wrong to anyone, but it didn't stop the way I felt, nor did it stop me from chasing the effect that alcohol had on me.

A few years later my 20 year old brother died as a direct result of his drinking (he fell off his bicycle, hit his head and had a cerebral haemorrhage whilst drunk). This did not do anything to stop or regulate the way I drank. My rock bottom was to come much later.

I met my husband when I was 19 and we did our fair amount of partying. He always seemed to look after me, which I needed as I could get very messy. He even offered to take the blame for wetting a bed at a friend's house we were visiting, I was so ashamed and embarrassed that I think we mentioned I had a bladder infection (I did not) and it all got swept under the rug. This was to happen again over the years. Again, this didn't cause my drinking to slow down any; until a couple of years later, something caused me to stop completely on self-will (I can't remember what that incident was) and I stayed 'dry' for 2 years; till I was married and, on my wedding day, I started to drink and ended up messy again. Nothing had changed! Even after 2 years I went straight back to where I had left off.

Anyway, along the way we built a couple of houses, had jobs and had kids. I was in no way a 'park bench drunk' - I had nice clothes, cars etc. etc.; the difference was - once I started to drink I could not stop. It's as if the stop button on my body had been left off. On the other hand, when I was *not* drinking, I was pretty miserable, as I thought everyone was having so much more fun.

I was invited to a local function which I took my 3 kids to. The champagne was flowing and I was into it. The next thing I know, its about 7pm and I'm on my bed. God, where are my kids? How did I get home? I raced out to find my husband feeding the children and not very happy with me. I had driven home in a blackout with my children in the car. That scared the hell out of me because I wasn't just hurting myself, but had put my children in danger. I decided to see a drug and alcohol counsellor. When told what the recommended intake of alcohol was for a woman, I laughed, and they tried to teach me some 'controlled drinking' techniques. As I said, I don't have an 'off' button, so these are pointless to me. I would rather not drink at all than to try to stop after 2 or 3. I also tried my first AA meeting, but there I saw only the differences - they had lost everything (kids, cars, houses and jobs) and I had not. I had nothing in common with these poor people at all. So I decided to once again go it alone.

Two miserable years later, I tried the control drinking again with pretty much no result. But by this time I was more careful. I'd only drink at home (isolated) or only on

weekends (binge) or only drink beer or only wine... on and on the experiments went, but the end result always ended up the same: blackout. So I drank for another 10 years, still not losing too much of the material stuff, but losing lots of self-respect. It became common for me to 'come to' around 2am on the couch, drink in hand, sitting in a puddle. I would just clean up, go to bed, and nurse the hangover next day.

I can't tell you the amount of times I have embarrassed myself, my husband, my children and friends with my behaviour whilst drinking. I've had friends look after me time and time again. I've not been responsive to my children's needs at times. My husband had got very sick of trying to get me to come to bed, in the end he gave up trying. I was not to be trusted. Till the day I hit my rock bottom.

This day (Sunday 14th Jan 2007) started like most others. Me coming to on the lounge, then going to bed. We had been to a comedy night with some friends the night before. I had already had a hangover from the previous night, so it was 'hair of the dog' stuff. I apparently heckled all the acts and generally made a goose out of myself. My husband had to lean me up against a wall and prop me up with a potted plant so he could get the car and take me home. The next day, the same feelings - guilt, remorse, shame, and FEAR. Somehow it had been creeping in. Now it was full on, I feared my actions and the reactions of everyone who had witnessed me. My daughter could not even look at me (I'm still not sure what I did). But the next day I jumped in my car and drove to a very good friend's house, and I had a long talk to her about my drinking. She said, 'Don't you think it's time?' That filled me with dread. Even though I was sick as a dog, the thought of never drinking again terrified me (remember, controlled drinking never worked for me). I also went to my friends I had been with the night before and apologized for my behaviour. They also said they were worried that my drinking was out of control. I picked up my daughter from work that afternoon, I was sobbing, crying and gutted when I got there, and she refused to look at me. I drove down the road and parked the car, and turned to her and simply said, 'I've got a drinking problem and I can't promise that I will stop, but I promise I'll get all the help I can to help me stop'. That admission was the first time I had really said out loud that I was an alcoholic.

From there, things fell into place (as they do when you surrender). I found a drug and alcohol counsellor that was very pro-AA and knew the true meaning of alcoholism. He encouraged me to go to lots of meetings. I began to go to my local meeting (a Just for Today meeting), and learned to take the cotton wool out of my ears and put it in my mouth! Over some time I related to other people's stories, they weren't 'park bench' drunks either. I learned about the Big Book, the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and that there are meetings everywhere. I now go most days and am very happy to do so. The fellowship and understanding I have found with these people still blows me away (I'm 10 years sober now). With their help I have learned how to live life on life's terms. How to mix with drinkers and non-drinkers as a sober alcoholic and how to be HAPPY doing it! I no longer have to grit my teeth with resentment and think 'why me?' Sure, some days are hard, but I have not had to pick up a drink over any situation or experience so far.

I now have a great sponsor and we meet a couple of times a week. We are working through the steps and yes, there is quite a bit of God talk. But if it makes me uncomfortable I can break it down to Group Of Drunks. I'm not a religious person at all, but this is a spiritual program and I have come to believe that some power greater than me is helping me out. I don't understand it, but I don't care. As long as it keeps working I'm happy. And I am happy. I can't recommend AA enough. It has changed not only my life but also my family's. My husband now attends Al-Anon meetings for those who love us alkie's. My children are also aware of my illness and are very accommodating, they don't wonder why I go to meetings, and they can see the change in their mum and are happy. I have been able to do so many things for them, myself and others that would have been impossible when I was drinking. And for that, I am grateful.

Karen M – Brunswick Heads Big Book Study

EARLY SHAKY DAYS

What was it that kept me sober in those early shaky days of sobriety? It was the early 1990's in Sydney Australia when I found myself sitting in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was incredibly frightened, but I was so desperate to change my life that I had no choice but to force myself to walk through those doors. A warm handshake with an assurance from an AA member that I would be all right was the perfect greeting I received when I walked in to the meeting room.

I appreciated anonymity (even though I had no idea what it was) when the only personal information an AA member asked for was my first name. At the end of the meeting the same AA member told me, "The first drink does the damage, don't pick up that first drink one day at a time no matter what happens and come to another meeting." Those two pieces of information saved my life, because they simplified how to get sober in AA in a manner that my scrambled brain could understand. Also, I had the third tradition, 'The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking', even though I didn't realise it at the time. I acted on the advice given to me and have been sober ever since.

I heard some members say that I had to read the Big Book straight away, do the Steps immediately, or else I wouldn't stay sober. Initially, my mind was like a food blender on full speed, and despite being literate I was unable to read any of the literature. If I tried to read, my focus jumped all over the print, and even if I did manage to make sense of a line I forgot what I read in a matter of seconds. I was worried about this and thought I would never get sober because I couldn't read the AA literature. Little Davey suggested I put the AA books to one side and come back to them later when my head cleared, which was great advice. I was able to stop putting pressure on myself, essential to achieving quality sobriety. In time, I was able to make a start on reading the AA literature and continue to do so to this day, I just had to be patient.

Little Davey told me how many AA members were unable to read or write, but they got sober. That is one of the reasons why the Steps are read out by the

chairperson during the meeting. He also pointed out that what I needed to be able to understand in AA was 'The Language of the Heart'. Scottish Jock from Parramatta used to say, "What keeps me sober might get you drunk". This allowed me to just be myself and get sober the way that works for me, not anybody else.

I used to worry about my shakes in the meetings and not being able to sit still. I thought I might get thrown out for it but then I heard Maureen from Edgecliff share about a similar concern she had. A member called Greg the dentist said to her, "Maureen, remember that you are sitting in a room full of 'professional shakers' so you just shake away."

The drinking stories and laughter were so important for me, helping me to identify as an alcoholic in order to accept myself as I was. I realised that AA had an answer for me, that I could get well and lead a happy sober life if I wanted to. I would follow certain members around to meetings to hear them share.

For example, 'Railway Norm' was a regular at the Kogarah Friday lunchtime meeting and I would hang on to every word he said. Railway Norm had been a steam train driver, and used to say, "If you were a passenger on my train and knew the condition of the driver up the front, you would want to get off straight away". He also had the habit of abandoning trains in the middle of nowhere that were full of passengers, in order to get himself a drink, creating chaos on the NSW train system. I can still vividly remember sitting at that meeting of laughter and love, and slowly coming to the realisation that AA can work for me.

Railway Norm also spoke about the deadly nature of alcoholism. His entry into AA was initiated by his brother, also an alcoholic, who took him to his first meeting in 1950. Norm got sober but, ironically, his brother would not accept the fact that he too was an alcoholic because he was a doctor. He considered himself to be too intelligent and too well qualified to be an alcoholic. While Norm accepted his alcoholism and what AA had to offer, his brother refused to have anything to do with AA, hanging himself some years later. This is an all too familiar tragedy story we hear in the rooms of AA. The impact of this story on me was profound, bringing sharply into my mind the fact that my life was on the line. I began to take my sobriety very seriously, and was determined to do what was necessary to avoid picking up that first drink.

I heard a number of precious one liners at the meetings in the early days. I would hang on to a line I heard at a meeting and it would see me through the day. I was told, "You didn't get sick overnight, don't expect to get well overnight". Irish Des used to say, 'If you don't get AA, maybe AA will get you', which is exactly what happened to me. Bryan from Ryde said that when he attended his first AA meeting in 1973, the secretary said to him, "If you're here looking for sympathy you're not going to get any, but if you've come here looking for understanding, then you're in the right place".

Jimmy from Ramsgate used to quote Father Tom Dunlea, a Roman Catholic priest, alcoholic and co-founder of Australia AA. He used to say, "You can never be too stupid to get AA but you can be too clever", and also to "Keep it simple, take it easy and make haste slowly". Father Tom also cautioned about AA's survival when he used to

say, "AA can never be destroyed from the outside but it can be destroyed from within". Father Tom was talking about his own experience of a split between the members in Sydney AA's 'Early Shaky Days'. There were some who believed that American AA would not work for the Australian alcoholic. One member, Jack, started a rival group called The Commonsense Group, inducing some of the AA members to join him. The group limped along for a while before folding, with the members returning to AA with the exception of Jack. He died later on while recovering from a prolonged bout of alcoholism. This rift in AA had a very unsettling effect on the group members, but it made them acutely aware of the need for unity and their dependence on each other for sobriety.

Curly Frank told me, "This is the easier softer way", and, "The Steps are my homework". I really appreciated Frank's description of the Steps as my homework. I loved school and learning, always completing my homework in time for the next class. Frank helped me to see the Steps and sobriety as a way of learning to enjoy life and be happy. Terry from Kogarah used to quote Sylvester Minogue, alcoholic, psychiatrist and co-founder of Australian AA. He said, "If you had a watch that kept perfect time you wouldn't take it apart to see how it worked. You would just accept that it works and use it. So, treat the Steps the same way, don't take them apart, just use them". Terry put it to me this way, "If you want what we have, do what we do". That meant I had to stop analysing AA, and getting stuck in analysis paralysis. Instead, I took practical simple actions to get and stay sober. So, I stayed away from the first drink, went to meetings, got involved, and tried to help where I could. An understanding of the Steps came later, when I could look back on the changes brought about in my life by doing what Terry and the other old timers did.

In a similar vein, Leo from Newtown used to say, "You don't have to understand the workings of an internal combustion engine in order to drive a motor vehicle. You just need to know how to start the motor, engage drive, accelerate, brake and steer. In the same way, you don't have to understand how AA works in order to stay sober, you just need to know what to do". Metaphorically speaking, I began to drive my sobriety, no need to understand exactly how it all worked. I could see the positive and remarkable changes in my life as proof that what I was doing in AA was working.

Some of the meetings I didn't like and I thought there was something wrong with me. I had the impression I had to attend them even though I didn't like them. I spoke to Jimmy from Ramsgate about this, and he just said to me in his matter of fact manner, "Of course you realise that the roof won't fall in if you don't come back to this meeting". I laughed and started to attend meetings where I felt comfortable.

I thought I was the only person who suffered from ungrounded and unfounded fears until I heard Bill from Paddington share. Bill said, "My drinking got to a stage where I had to have a drink in order to answer a knock on the front door. Then it progressed to the stage where I had to have a drink in case I had to answer a knock on the front door." What beautiful words for me to hear from someone who suffered from fears just like I did. I was no longer 'terminally unique'.

Stan from Ramsgate gave me a tape of the first AA public meeting in the Sydney Town Hall in 1957. One of the speakers on that tape was Sylvester Minogue, who described certain characteristics of the alcoholic. It's the best ten-minute description of me I have ever heard, and he defines the most outstanding characteristic of the alcoholic as 'restlessness', the inability to be at ease with oneself. He said, "You have to accept yourself as you are, with this make up you are born with, you can't change yourself. All that AA does is to teach you a philosophy of life, a way of living, that allows you to accept yourself and put up with yourself". Hearing this description helped me to learn to be myself, to live more comfortably in my own skin without trying to be perfect.

Over time, AA has opened up for me, and I have been able to live my sobriety in practical daily living. A final quote from Sylvester Minogue on living happily sober: "Forget yourself, help others and live twenty-four hours at a time". I'm so grateful for the simple, practical advice given to me in those early, shaky days.

PJ (Brookvale Secular ID Meeting, Sydney)

JUST FOR TODAY IN 2017

33 years without alcohol, and today to be alone with my thoughts, with that Power that brings Surrender in all its forms. To be down in my garden observing new growth, to be accompanied by the Fairy Wrens busily searching for the next morsel of food, the wild ducks, Egret, Spoonbill, Swan, Pelican etc. just over my back fence (not visible from the Pub). Daily Reflection, Meditation, being in tune with that Power that is greater than I and resides Within. Totally inconceivable 33 years ago; but today, thanks to our 3 legacies, Recovery, Unity, Service, to Al-anon, AA members and non-alcoholic friends, the *BB*, *12&12*, *AA Comes of Age*, all this and more freely given to me. In the back of the *BB*'s Spiritual Appendix, I was given the 3 essentials of Recovery: WHO (Willingness, Honesty, Openmindedness). And then also, in italics, *but these are indispensable*. Who am I to argue with logic, and more importantly with the first 100 low bottom drunks who gave us these 12 Steps for living and the Foreword to the 1st Edition. I am constantly reminded that over the last 75+ years the nature of this disease has not changed nor has the democracy (always inclusive, never exclusive) of AA, as contained in our Australian AA service manual. If I believe I have something better than what exists, then I am duty bound to submit it to the General Service Conference and find out what the rest of AA Australia thinks, rather than take my bat and ball home and set up an opposition Structure, thus violating Tradition 1. In AA there are no big shots, no little shots: one shot and we're all shot.

Funny, one of the few things I did really well was consume alcohol, and that got me to AA; and among many things I have learned is gratitude and how little this know-all really knew; but as my old sponsor would say, "I have remained teachable". I first heard him say that at a meeting in Maclean almost 33 years ago. That, plus a thirst for knowledge to replace that thirst for alcohol. Among those many gems I have found in the first 164 pages of the *BB* and all other Conference Approved Literature is Appendix

II at the back of the BB: as a non-believer I was given the group, then a power greater, then my understanding of that power developed into a full understanding of the need to surrender, to a greater power within, a real tangible Power, my friend the 6th sense; and all I need to access that Power is to sit quiet and listen to that wee voice within. And as Bill W. said in Step 2 of the 12&12, get out of the debating society; and in Step 3: There is only one key and that is Willingness. I am still teachable: Step 12 is very clear, I have had a spiritual Awakening as a result of these steps (many spiritual Experiences along the way); I do try to carry "this message" and am getting better at practicing these principles in all my affairs.

Today, at 87, I enjoy water fights with my Great-Grandies, I get up with a smile and a positive attitude (it works if you work it), I am a good driver; and look forward to going to the next dance, and along with a good dance partner have achieved a good level of skill and look forward to learning a new dance - a very cheap form of entertainment and exercises both sides of the brain. Also text messages, email, visiting rels all over Vic, and 2013 did a gratitude trip through N.S.W to visit my sister in Queensland and attend our Convention. My glass is ½ full: I did the Steps to get well, I don't believe I can get well to do the Steps. More logic: that's why we have this beautiful 12 Step programme, sure beats being a dry drunk. The most powerful word in my vocabulary is surrender. And remember, when it gets dark enough you can see the stars. If I don't have that first drink I can't get drunk. Thank you one and all, and in the final analysis, this can only continue to operate for me if I stick to that which our Elders gave us: the Foreword to the 1st Edition of our book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*; and in part, "To show other alcoholics *precisely how we recovered* is the main purpose of this book".

(Jim S, Port Fairy Topic Group)

WOMEN IN RECOVERY: TWO STORIES

I came to AA broken. I was facing losing my partner and our home. My thoughts of suicide were constant for the first few days following my last drinking binge. A week later a fellow AA member suggested I try the Womens Meeting in my area and get a sponsor. So I did. With my sponsors help I went through the Big Book, and made the Womens Meeting my home group.

These women taught me so much. My journey through the Steps was made easier by hearing about their own experiences working the AA program. I was welcomed, comforted, advised and un-judged. I felt safe.

The bond between myself and these women quickly grew strong. They knew me like no other of my friends did. They "got me" and I felt it. At 6 months of sobriety I volunteered to be Secretary. I was so nervous but keen to be of service anyway I could. The women supported and guided me in this role till it was rotated to another member 12 months later.

At 1 year of sobriety to the day, I got the most devastating news. My brother had suicided. The next day I was flying to NZ to face the biggest challenge in my life so far. One member of the Womens group texted me before I boarded the plane to tell me the group as a whole had held me in their hearts and said a prayer for me. In this moment I felt the love and support of a sisterhood. This feeling would help carry me through some of the most painful days I have ever known. I attached the keys for the building that the Womens group is held in onto my car keys in NZ. Each time I picked up those keys I felt the love and support from the Womens group. I would take a deep breath and say to myself "I can do this".

Along with my higher power, these women continue to help me find the courage and strength I need to grieve my brother and stay sober. Our Womens group is more than a group of alcoholic women, sharing and practicing the AA program. We are a sisterhood. We have a bond that only women together in sobriety can understand, it is powerful. I am incredibly grateful to be part of it.

(Kelly, Corrimal Women's Group)

Hello, my name is Catherine and I am an alcoholic. When I came into Alcoholics Anonymous I was fortunate to have a sponsor who said to me that I needed to change if I was to stay sober. At that time I didn't think my problems stemmed from my drinking. I thought I was a victim of circumstances. I had many problems. I was in debt. I had no home. I had been placed in a women's prison twice for my 'circumstances', and I had been told that I was to leave the country I found AA in and return to my own country. The judge said that they had enough of their own, of my type, and they didn't need someone from another country doing the things I was doing.

My sponsor said that since admitting to being an alcoholic, I was now in God's World. At that time I did not know what that meant. I just believed her and 8 months later, clean and sober, I returned to continue my AA journey.

My sponsor took me through those first five Steps immediately. I was angry. I said to her that I have managed my life all my life and did not believe that some Higher Power or something outside of self could change me. Sponsors are wonderful because she just said to me, well let's look at your life up to this point and tell me how well you have managed so far. She then said, just try it our way and see what happens.

This began my journey into changing. I knew I had to change, as the woman who walked into AA would not stay sober if I stayed how I was. My sponsor gave me direction to telephone old acquaintances and tell them I was now a sober member of AA and that I could not see them any longer. There were only two phone calls to make! I then had to change my wardrobe and no swearing. I had to get out of bed and onto my knees straight away and say the Third Step prayer, and I had to go to meetings, lots of meetings. I had to get a home group. My first home group was the attraction of donuts, it was the best I could do at the time. I had to learn about saying yes to any AA request, especially when asked to share, because I was so full of fear, my sponsor knew that I would end up leaving AA if I started to say no. I had to learn to walk through those fears

so I could learn to let go of them. My fears were so big, but my sponsor would say that no harm would come to me and that she would always be there. I learned about a Higher Power through her and her own actions. She said that nothing would change until I put those actions into action!

It is not about the drinking, this was the symptom of what was going on in me. I had to change with the help of a sponsor who directed me to the Twelve Steps, our program of recovery to show me how to live right. I am so grateful that no matter what - I stayed.

Thank you for letting me share this way.

(Catherine, Kilburn Group)

PI EQUALS POSITIVELY INSPIRED!

When I was about 4 and half years into my recovery I found myself in a conversation about spirituality with an older, sober member. They pointed out to me that spirituality was an action, not a feeling. Boom! Once again, my perception of things in AA was rebooted.

This led to an immediate examination of how many spiritual actions I was actually taking, inside AA and beyond. What I discovered wasn't surprising. I was certainly doing enough to stay sober and carry the message, but there was a heap of room to do more. But how?

The answer was staring me in the face. Public Information.

See, I was my group's GSR at the time, but to be honest, I wasn't a particularly active one. That's mainly because I didn't really know what a GSR was, other than that it was a change from being my home group's Secretary, Treasurer, Greeter etc. I'd go to district meetings, sit still, say nothing, be mainly confused as to what was being discussed, vote occasionally, then go home again. But here's where I was lucky. My new girlfriend was the DCM for our District and pointed out to me that GSRs have suggested reading. I thought, "OK, why not?" One scan of the Service Manual and there they were; a whole bunch of spiritual actions, staring me down, daring me to do them!

Which brings me back to Public Information. I'd never really heard much about it. To be honest, in all the AA meetings I've attended in the last 5 and a half years, I can't recall any member sharing on the subject. In short, where I live, PI just doesn't seem to be a hard core suggested thing.

Now remember, I'm an alcoholic. Prone to grandiosity of thought and action, so... I decided to conduct a little experiment. What if I did as much PI as possible over, say, a month or so, just to see how much I could get done and whether this action made me feel more connected with my Higher Power or not?

Here's what I did:

- I grabbed some posters, postcards and business cards and started putting them up where I could. Community noticeboards, dry cleaners, supermarkets etc. I soon

learned that within a walking distance of my house there were at least 20 such locations!

- Then, more and more, I went back to see if the posters were still there and if the cards had been taken and needed replenishing.
- I contacted the Rotary district that aligned closest to my AA district and, with my home group's support, become the contact person for arranging AA speakers for their meetings.
- I put together a PowerPoint presentation for these speaking engagements, using the structure suggested in the pamphlet on speaking to non-AA groups.
- I road tested the presentation a few times myself, tweaked it, then arranged for other members to speak.
- I dropped off literature to doctors, chemists etc.
- I researched and began to organise a paid-for poster campaign for the district committee to support.
- I talked about PI as part of my GSR report at my group conscience.

And what did I discover? All that spiritual action led to a whole lot more serenity. Can I tell you, dropping off a stack of AA business cards at a community noticeboard one week, only to return the next to see them all gone, made me feel so happy; so connected to the fellowship and to God.

From that time on I have just kept going. For example, I had a really bad day at work recently and as a result was feeling waaaay restless, irritable and discontented. After praying to god for direction, an idea suddenly popped into my head (exactly the way pages 86 and 87 talk about). "Do some PI".

I couldn't leave the house, so I thought I'd research something. I quickly thought about AA speakers for schools. It's something I'd heard another district was doing at the last Area assembly. I thought about Principals being the decision makers in schools, and how AA might do well to make contact with them. But how? Hmm... Maybe via an existing system... a mailout maybe? 10 minutes later I was on the phone to the Victorian Principals Association, speaking to the person in charge of sending out info to Principals right across the state once a week. They were more than happy to consider including something from AA. Once again, I felt the emotional benefits of taking spiritual action, and that whole bad day at work feeling was long gone!

That idea is still being bandied about at District, just as it should, but my point is it doesn't matter if anything comes of that action. I took it and kept me sober.

I also suggest PI activities to sponsees. "Feeling crummy are you? Boss getting you down? Great! How about you go ask to put up a poster or two at your local police station?" Sure, they think I'm mad to begin with, but in the end service is service, right? It's all about supporting our primary, spiritual purpose. When all else fails, work with another alcoholic. Who says they have to be there at the time?

PI is service. Service keeps you sober. Think about it.

(Derek R.)

WORLD SERVICE DELEGATE REPORT

AOSM Mongolia July 6 – 9 2017

I went to the local GSO in UB (I didn't hear anyone refer to it as Ulaanbaatar). It is a busy 3-room office, and many people wandered in and out while we were there. There is one paid employee and many volunteers.

I met a local Doctor after dinner one night. Another member and I spent over an hour in the plaza talking to her about AA. At one stage she said she thought she was wrong in not being able to solve the local drink problem. We were able to put her straight about that, plus many other questions she had about AA. We were having this discussion under the watchful eye of Genghis Khan! Dr Suvd was very interested in our program and learning about the fellowship. She advised me upon my return that she had been to an AA meeting and found it very useful!!

Thursday, the AOSM started. Members drove from far and wide to attend the 12th AOSM as observers. The primary purpose of the Asia-Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM) is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who still suffers. The Asia Service Meeting seeks ways to accomplish this goal by providing a forum for the delegates to share the experience, strength and hope of the countries they represent, and who come together from all parts of Asia and Oceania. It can also represent an expression of the Group Conscience throughout the region and provide a link to the World Service Meeting for countries unable to be represented there.

Experience has shown that a sound service structure enables the message to be delivered more effectively. The Asia-Oceania Service Meeting encourages the planning of sound structures suited to the needs of the individual countries, and the expansion of AA services to reach the alcoholic through the spoken word, literature and institutions work.

The AOSM recognises that it has no authority over any AA service or group. The only discussions to be made by the AOSM are those which affect the meeting itself. An orientation session was held to commence proceedings and inform all the delegates, particularly the first term ones, of the necessary information needed to hold an effective service meeting. This session covered: A responsibility statement; AOSM statement of purpose; Explanation of minority voice; Third Legacy procedures; Roberts Rules of Order; The use of a quarterly newsletter to help keep up the information flow between countries in the AOSM Zone; Carrying the message; and Country to country sponsorship.

Welcoming by the Mongolian Host Committee: The day's proceedings were completed by a red ball meeting. This was attended by about 100 members from Mongolia and Russia and the delegates. It was refreshing to hear the Serenity Prayer said in Mongolian, Russian, Indian, Farsi, Iranian, Chinese, Japanese and English over the weekend.

Over the course of the weekend, the four committees met to discuss issues in their portfolios. The committees are: Working with Others; Site Selection and Agenda;

Website, Literature and Publishing; and Policies, Admissions and Finance. Inventory sessions were also held and the committees looked at: The AOSM role; What can we do to spread the message better? and How can we improve finance contributions?

A very important point was that the AOSM as such does not tell countries what to do. However, it is important to have an open and consistent line of communication between the countries to help them spread the recovery message better. It is OK to send out a lot of emails. However, instead of not following up any non-replies, we should make calls to try and connect and at least get a response.

Mary C. from the International Desk at GSO NY gave a very interesting presentation on her role and also on PI/CPC. She said that the website, www.aa.org, has a comprehensive amount of information on it; and if one goes onto this site and then clicks onto the PI/CPC area, reams of information is opened up there.

Greg T. also from GSO NY spoke on literature. There are 69 translations of the BB and 15 new ones are pending. The FIRST ever spoken word (audio book) is being done for the first Nations (Navajo language). Most recent translations have been printed in Arabic, Twi (Ghana) and Rarotongan (Cook Islands). The AAWS prints the BB in 33 languages, and 37 are provided by the local structures. AAWS has published across 298 publications in 91 languages.

The copyright was lost in the US for the English versions of the 1st and 2nd editions of the BB.

The keynote address was given by Doug G., a long term attendee at the AOSMs. This was based on the theme of this 12th AOSM which was, 'Preserving the Integrity of carrying the Message'. He highlighted the importance of not straying away from our original purpose and message; and the necessity of keeping the literature translations as near as possible to the originals in meaning and intent. The message is spiritual in meaning, and to try and change this is doomed to failure.

A few snippets:

Mongolian AA is growing well. This is one reason that it was chosen to host this 12th AOSM. There were about 80 groups and 2000 members 12 months ago. Now there are 101 groups and about 3000 members!! They have the Big Book and the 12+12, which have been translated into Mongolian. They are in the process of having 7 brochures being published, and also other literature such as 12 Concepts, *Living Sober*, *As Bill Sees It* and *Daily Reflections* in the pipeline. The Mongolian members like supporting each other. An instance is when, on one occasion, there were 3 people celebrating their 1st birthdays. About 350 people turned up at the meeting (outside UB) to help them do this!

In Thailand, they sell their literature at cost. On Friday July 7, the second edition of the BB in Thai came off the presses. New Zealand imports all their literature. Their main sources of income are: literature sales, 22%; Seventh Tradition, 71%. MERCAA (based in UAE) hold annual 3 day conventions and quite a few people attend them. Japan has a GSO, called JSO, and they hold 2 major events annually. They sell the BB for USD\$30, Small BB USD\$8, Living Sober USD\$6. They are gearing up for their

convention being held in Osaka in 2020. They have 600 groups and about 5700 members. Their main source of income is 60% from literature sales and the rest from contributions. They have a monthly magazine, Box 916, as their “meeting in print.” 3400 copies are printed monthly. AA in Iran is going OK. It is called the Iran Nameless Sobers there. This is due to cultural issues. There are about 300 groups and 1800 members. Russian AA was first established in Moscow in 1987. Today there are about 500 groups in 120 local areas. The meetings are mainly centred in the larger cities. They are publishing 10 books in Russian with the main ones being the BB and 12+12. They will be having their convention in the first week in December.

It was a privilege to be a part of this AOSM. It was great to see God at work, and by us letting go and letting God, it just worked out beyond our expectations!! A total of 230 observers attended the AOSM. They were from Russia and Mongolia. Of the 101 groups in Mongolia, members attended except for 2 of the groups! That’s commitment! The host committee did a great job with “Bob’s taxi” and all other aspects of the weekend. Thank you Mongolia!!

Mongolia will celebrate its 20th Anniversary from July 28-29, 2018.

The next AOSM will be held in Hong Kong in July 2019.

Our role in the Asia – Pacific Zone

The responsibility for carrying the AA message in Asia and Oceania was formally delegated to Australia by the GSO NY. This was done as part of AA Australia “Coming of Age” in setting up our General Service Structure. This started in March 1970. Australia has been involved in carrying the message to the AOSM Zone since then. We do not go to countries unless we have been invited by them. Recent examples have been India (with a focus on women in AA), Solomons, and Fiji.

AA in the Solomons has been in a state of flux. Some members from Australia are planning to visit there in April next year. The tentative dates are April 12-17. I was talking to a member from Fiji recently and she advised that 4 new people joined AA recently.

I was also conversing with a member from UB (Mongolia), and she said that they are still talking about the AOSM held in July. They were very grateful that we went there and helped to give the local members and the ones from Russia a great insight into the workings of the fellowship.

(Yours in Service, Tony V., World Service Delegate, Australia.)

erratum: the quote from Bill W from the *Grapevine*, in the third issue of *The Mixer*, was from the November 1960 edition.

[The Mixer](http://www.aamixer.com) can be accessed online in colour PDF form at the website, www.aamixer.com; or by subscribing via our email list: please contact us at editor@aamixer.com.

For printing, ‘booklet’ setting in printer properties is recommended. Put a copy into the shaky hands of a newcomer!

GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

In this fourth issue of *The Mixer* AA we again see a rich, diverse range of stories and sharing of experience, strength and hope, of life before sobriety and of living sober in AA. But as with all meetings, this 'meeting in print' would not happen if no one turned up to share! If you would like to contribute to *The Mixer*, all you need to do is send us an email, to editor@aamixer.com; or you can contact your local Area Editor who can submit on your behalf. You can send us your story, share on a Step, Tradition or Concept, or on a topic of your choice: for example, your experience of service in sobriety, being a sponsor, on issues such as disability in AA, access to meetings, staying sober in remote locations, or your experiences of meetings and service in AA overseas. Unlike during our drinking, which for the practicing alcoholic is, in general, an increasingly narrow life punctuated by a long, monotonous series of disasters, in sobriety we live a kaleidoscope life: we find 'release from care, boredom and worry' and our imaginations are fired; life means something at last (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 152). We invite you to share something of your life as a practising alcoholic and as an AA member, and how you find living sober. We also love to hear those sayings one hears around meetings which, as members have shared in this issue, often keep us going when not much else is able to get through or stay in our brains - the 'language of the heart'. That is the remarkable thing about AA sharing, for us members and for the newcomer: "It works when other activities fail" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 89).

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 A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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