



THE ROAD BACK

includes Service News

JAN - MAR 2025
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STEP 2

Editorial

Having come to terms with the first step in our recovery we find ourselves faced with the dilemma of powerlessness.

Powerless over alcohol and even powerless over life i.e. unmanageability. Then we hear members say that they “came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could return us to sanity, and the insanity is the thought that precedes the first drink of the next series”.

We hear at meetings that insanity is “doing the same thing and expecting a different result”. Adopting a Higher Power in our lives, or God, as we understand him is a great foundation for sobriety. At meetings the old-timers and the newcomers all say the same thing “if I was to have any chance I had to find a new manager”, that manager is personal to each individual and this is the great news of Alcoholics Anonymous. This allows us to commence our journey of recovery.

We hope that in this edition of Road Back, the stories and quotes from AA literature will help you on your journey and inspire you to write an article for future edition of our “Meeting in Print.... The Road Back”.

The theme for our next edition will be “BEHIND BARS”. It is an opportunity for those who went to prison as the result of alcoholism or currently in prison to share their experience of finding AA and how it worked in their lives, or indeed the personal prison of active alcoholism as described by many at meetings.

We are really looking forward to hearing from you,

The Road Back, Editorial Team



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

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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MY JOURNEY IN RECOVERY

My name is Alison, and I have been sober since the 11th of December 2014—over 10 years now. The path to get here was far from easy. My recovery was hard-fought, and it came after years of struggle. It was my fifth time in a treatment centre when I finally began to turn my life around. By then, my life had unravelled. My eldest son was living with his father, and my youngest had been taken into care. That was the moment I knew I had to change.

Alcohol had stopped working for me—it no longer dulled the fear or gave me the illusion of joy or escape. I was done. When I left treatment, though, I was consumed with fear about what lay ahead. The idea of walking into a meeting terrified me, but deep down, I knew that was what I needed to do.

At first, it was one day at a time. I made a commitment to myself to go to meetings every day. Slowly, something started to shift. After about 10 months, my youngest son was able to come back home to live with me. Sometime after that, my eldest son came home too. Those moments were a testament to the power of sobriety and the work I was putting in to heal myself and rebuild my life.

When I was three years sober, I achieved something I never thought possible: I got my forever home. I have been living there for seven years now, and the memories we as a family have created are filled with love, laughter, and connection—they are beyond anything I could have imagined during the darkest days of my drinking.

Recovery has given me so much more than I ever expected. One of the greatest gifts has

been the chance to reconnect with my family. We have rebuilt relationships that were once strained and broken, and today, those bonds are stronger than ever. My sons and I have been on wonderful sober holidays together, making memories that I will treasure for the rest of my life.

Three years ago, I took a leap of faith and enrolled in college to study English and History. It's something I have always dreamed of doing, and I can honestly say I am loving every minute of it. Sobriety has given me the courage to step outside my comfort zone and pursue the things that truly bring me joy.

Of course, not every day in recovery has been easy. Life still brings its challenges, but I have learned that I do not have to face them alone. My AA meetings and the friendships I have built within the fellowship have been a lifeline. I have a circle of support that I know I can rely on, no matter what. Most importantly, I have developed a relationship with my higher power, whom I choose to call God. Every morning, I ask God for help to stay sober, and every night, I thank Him for another day.

Today, I live a life filled with gratitude, connection, and purpose—all things I never believed were possible when I was drinking. Recovery hasn't just given me my life back; it's given me a life worth living.

If you're struggling, know that there's hope. The road back may not be easy, but I promise you, it's worth it.

Alison F



UNITY | SERVICE | RECOVERY



I came into my first AA meeting in December 2008. I was in a detox program after being brought to my knees by alcohol abuse, combined with other substances.

I had used alcohol since aged 14 as an energy and self-confidence booster. It was an easily available solution for escaping from my paralyzing fear of other people, especially groups of other people.

I see now, however, that my using alcohol the way I did throughout my teens, 20s and 30s, inhibited any natural ability to mature into a person capable of managing my life's overload of chaotic circumstances. I actually just created more and more problems for myself by acting out of my rampant character defects, which were directing my decisions and life choices for all those years.

By 2012, I was basically back behaving as if I still had untreated alcoholism, despite having five years of sobriety. I had gone through the steps twice with two different sponsors and gone to regular meetings during my first three years.

In hindsight, I can see that during that period, I had been treating the AA program as a sort of 'hobby' or social club, and in reality, I was actually still dangerously dishonest, with arrogant ideas about 'my sobriety'. I had a fairytale idea about God, but I was still acting as my own boss. I was still blind, and worse, - I thought I could see!

I relapsed and was so deluded I kept convincing

myself that I wasn't 'that bad' anymore. Now - (after so long sober...!), that I could surely have the odd drink, after all life, had thrown at me lately. I had been badly abused in a relationship, and I felt more than justified to assume a victim role, which fitted in with my entitled defensive pride. I was different to other alcoholics and had enough reasons to tell myself I could now drink 'normally'... unaware that I was in such denial (yet again) that I had never been able to drink 'normally' in my life!

So I slowly became reliant again on alcohol. It took another three years for me to reach a new deeper rock bottom and resign to getting into a treatment centre. This was a 16-month long program, but by then I was homeless, brainless, childless, and so physically damaged I could hardly walk or see. I only knew I had to do this, even just for a roof over my head, or I'd end up in jail, or dead. I wasn't capable of much thought at that point, but God was carrying me even as I was totally unaware of this truth. It was during my time at this facility that I came to develop my relationship with God. Who, for me, is the only God. I cannot possibly attempt to understand His magnitude, but I came to truly believe in this Power, so much greater than myself.

I completed that program and came skipping out into the sunlight, saved and delivered. I thought, NOW I am recovered! I didn't need AA, I had the real God and I was going to church. I had forgotten that one of God's most amazing creations is the spiritual program of Alcoholic Anonymous, and that I am just a work in progress...

Life became the never ending struggle again with entanglement in abuse, the 'people pleasing' consequences, and resentments, all feeding into my awaiting 'victim persona' defect still within me. The death of a life-long loved one on top of my already overwhelmingly adverse circumstances, was all I needed to once again justify the selfish choice to numb myself with alcohol.

God in my life became outgrown in my personal priorities of focus by my self-centred drive to control my own life, according to my distorted perceptions.

I started going half-heartedly to a few daytime meetings, but I was too sad and broken and obstinate to surrender my option to choose for myself, whether I took a naggin to bed, and deal with the shakes when, and if, I woke up. I was lonelier than I could imagine, in a self-imposed prison of deception, forced to hide, from shame about what my reality was really like.

I was merely surviving in my 'mother' role, and my kids knew and felt it. To add to my shame, I knew I was robbing them of the mother they should have had and deserved.

But I was praying to God, every desperate tear-filled night, I would be kneeling, sobbing out pleading prayers, assuming I might not be heard given the terrible grief I was causing in my self-destruction. Somehow, I didn't lose faith that God would save me from my never-ending mistakes, but WHEN? I needed a miracle right NOW!

Eventually, of course, my relapse got to an ending stage. My parents were convinced I would be found dead any day now, and getting me to try to hold a pen to sign guardianship papers and other documents that I was only aware of not being able to cognitively recognize the seriousness of. I remember my eldest daughter crying at my bedside, and I remember a dream I had of myself being in

some hospital, experiencing the feeling of being actually brain dead. These were catalyst wake up warnings for me.

I was extremely blessed to have my strong healthy selfless father come to stay with me and barricade the door of my flat, while I went through my worst fear of that time-the absolute physical hell of withdrawal from alcohol which lasted two weeks, of hour after year-long-hour of torture in my mind and body. He read to me and talked and tried to get me to eat, I didn't deserve such a nurse, and dumbly took on board all the fatherly admonishments along with the love that touched my soul and sparked my desire to heal.

I stumbled purposefully into my local AA group in early April this year, bought a new Big Book and a 12+12. The warmth and gentleness of the other members was so encouraging. I finally felt the weight of all my reasons for lying and sneakiness lift, by a feeling of safety among these strangers, all of whom knew exactly the desolation I had just crawled out from.

I got some glasses from the opticians, as my eyesight had deteriorated so severely, although it wasn't just the glasses but a totally new way of seeing I had become ready for at last!

Total surrender this time. I had one choice left, as God says in Deuteronomy, "I put before you Life, or Death - Choose Life!" And it certainly wasn't me who gifted me the rare shaft of light that illuminated my choice.

I am currently seven months sober thanks to our God given AA program and our members help.

I am newly appreciating this precious treasure that life is. I try to be fully present and aware with others, and without the egoic preconceptions, able to see all things anew, moment by moment, and enjoy all the humour and interests I had been missing in my fearful



self-absorption before. Humility and receptivity are the key to growing up in my life at last, and becoming a useful person, as God intended. I now have a peace that is sustainable through adversities and trials and challenges, and many wells to draw from, for a vast array of forms of help, advice and support from the fellowship of AA and other resources I have since had the courage to access.

My children and grandchild have a much improved version of me back, and the effect of my program is evidently being filtered down into their lives, and slowly they are beginning to relax again and trust in the same hopeful

light I am moving into.

It is such a relief now, to know I can be confidently honest about uncertainties, that I can be ok with not knowing the exact reality of encounters and occurrences, but I can faithfully trust that God is in control, and knows every right time, for every happening.

AA was waiting for me to fully immerse myself in the program, and only when I was finally ready and willing to let go of myself could I enjoy starting to become transformed.

J, Dublin

**ADDICTION IS
GIVING UP
EVERYTHING
FOR ONE THING.
RECOVERY IS
GIVING UP
ONE THING FOR
EVERYTHING.**

When I arrived at the doors of AA having spent seven years in Al-Anon I knew I had finally found the only place I really needed to be. That's not to say that I arrived singing, dancing and full of willingness..... I certainly didn't. I thought my life was over and I was doomed to a future of dull meetings and miserable non-drinking bores. How wrong I was. The only friend I thought I had was alcohol and I didn't think I would ever laugh again without it. In the

past 16 years my life has changed beyond all recognition. I have a life I wouldn't even have dared to dream of. Full to bursting point of joy, love, peace contentment and beautiful reality. In exchange for one thing I got everything. I cannot ever be grateful enough.

Marian M



IRISH OVERSEAS IN OHIO



I was born into a troubled society. My parents, though of modest means, were hard working and dedicated to their family and community. Growing up in a small border town in Northern Ireland, life seemed normal enough despite the conflict surrounding us. But, even at an early age, things were different in me!

From early on I struggled with fitting in and had a hard time focusing. Squirrel here.... there's another one over there. My hyperactivity was undiagnosed ADHD and my therapy was the 'Great-Out-Doors!!'(GOD). I ran everywhere. As soon as that front door was opened in the morning.... Meep Meep...road runner was off for the day!

There was a trifecta of abuse too in my early days. Physical. verbal and sexual. This left for an angry kid and what I couldn't release on the sports field came home with me. Gaelic football and hurling were my main releases for that rage. I was small but fierce and felt like a cornered rat most of the time. There was no one to talk to. The pressure cooker was on constant boil.

Mid teenage years and I was playing with the senior teams at my club as well as all I could fit in at school. I loved the sports field more than the grammar school classroom. The usual report came home with my parents after parent teacher meetings...he's got brains to burn but he won't use them. My headmaster was also my mentor and coach, and I looked up to him as a guide. It was at this time I started to work as a bartender at my club on a Sunday night and I loved it. Behind the bar ignited something

in me. I was on stage. This is it. I need more of this. This was a start to a long career in many destinations in the bar restaurant trade. I was alive and I was good at it. I knew everyone and more importantly, they knew of me.

However, the love of work and sports intertwined with my greater love for that shapeless substance that was to come and take control of my life, alcohol. I couldn't have just one even when the intentions were good. The first sip of the first pint ignited the pilot light and away I'd go again. It progressed like it does and changed my mind many a time going from a good decision of 'lets go home after one', to coming home and hour before work..if even then.

My poor parents and sisters didn't know what to do with me and I didn't know what was wrong. After all I had running mates who drank like I did...I made sure to have...sometimes those mates changed from weekend to weekend. I was one of those boys who had a wee want in him. Never finding the perfect scenario but always trying to fill the hole in the soul.

At the same time, through my early 20's I was also dealing with my sexuality. I was gay and knew it but the fear of coming out was too much to bear...so let's drink more, that will take care of it for the night!

The drunk-a-log continued until we ended up in a small hometown bar in November of 2010. I'd been deported from the USA a year earlier. After a day of drinking, I slipped on the wet floor on my way to the bathroom around 2am



and smacked my head off the poor innocent radiator hanging from the wall. A friend gathered me up after I came too and I ended up in my parents' house just around the corner. Mother's first job was to put the kettle on as dad sprayed antiseptic on my new war wound. After he went to bed, and sitting in the kitchen with my mum, the words. " I'm an alcoholic, I need some help", came out and with it an amazing feeling of freedom and hope. I had told on myself. The itty-bitty-shitty-committee in my head were silenced for the first time. From here on that downward trajectory I was on suddenly turned and started to head in an opposite, upward direction. It's been going that way ever since. My uncle, who's been a long-time member of the AA program called, we chatted and on the Monday night his sponsor came, picked me up and took me to my first willing Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. In that room that night I found kindness, understanding and a sense of belonging. I knew over half the people there. I also knew my drinking was over that night and I was willing to go to any lengths to get it.

Over the past 14 years recovery has transformed my life. My ego has had to take a back seat to humility. And no longer the smartest guy in the room-nor do I want to be. My first sponsor told me the day we started to work the steps, don't ever ever stop working the steps. He gave me a lot of good suggestions. I was listening for a change, to understand rather than to answer. They told me I suffered from a disease of opposite thinking. They told me I had a mental illness. Finally, someone was giving me some hope. Many people in the rooms shared my story. I belonged. For the first time in my life, I finally belonged!!

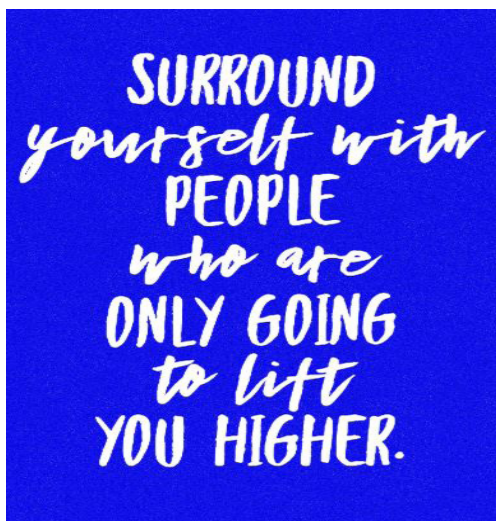
There's been a few bumps along the way. That wonderful mother and father I had both passed away inside nine months of each other, with cancer. My husband who had been with for 17 years died of cancer, some really close friends inside and outside of the AA program

have died. But I've never had to take a drink. There's nothing a drink will make any better! I've been surrounded by some of the greatest people.

So today I keep it really simple. My first spoken words every morning is good morning God; It's my way of clocking in with GOD for the day. I'm not religious but I have this spiritual way of life that I picked up along the way during the steps. It's a greater connection to higher power than I ever thought possible. The God that I have today doesn't segregate between people's color, creed, sexuality. We're all under the same umbrella.

So basically, how do I stay sober just for today. I go to many meetings, I have a sponsor who has a sponsor who has a sponsor, and I work the steps continuously. My primary purpose is to stay sober and help other Alcoholics. I do this to the best of my ability. I go to all available meetings. Today I love the person I've become. This is something I never thought possible. If you're struggling know this: you're not alone. Open your heart, and embrace the work, and miracles will happen. One day at a time, life gets better.

Sid J, Ohio USA



IT ALL STARTS HERE

My name is Seamus and I'm an alcoholic. I started drinking age 15 in the local town in rural Ireland and found what I believed was the solution to my problems. But there were consequences early on and I started getting into trouble so it was time to move on - first to Dublin where there were more problems as a result of my drinking and then to London where I could drink and live anonymously. I drifted from job to job doing any type of work that would afford me to drink like I felt compelled to do. By my mid 30s I ended up in hospital as a result of my drinking and went to one AA meeting, but didn't believe I was alcoholic or even that such a thing existed. I put the cork in the bottle got some counselling which helped me get some order in my life (a degree and a career). I picked up a drink again and decided that if I went back to drinking like I had previously, I'd know I was alcoholic and give it up.

I decided I could do controlled drinking and for the next two decades drank mainly at weekends convinced I was in control. I didn't go back to drinking like I had - alcohol for me

was indeed cunning baffling and powerful. In hindsight I had what I was to learn was a mental obsession with alcohol and was either drinking recovering from drinking or waiting to return to drinking. After short periods of abstinences I was convinced it was safe for me to drink again and couldn't conceive a life without drink.

In my late 50s I was brought to my knees by king alcohol and having got the gift of desperation I started attending AA and eight yrs four months down the road I've remained abstinent one day at a time. I had a spiritual awakening as a result of working the steps which has transformed my life and the AA promises for me have come through. I have a wonderful life now with my new found friends in the fellowship and attend AA conventions here in Ireland (where I'm now retired) and abroad. I'm so looking forward to attending my first AA world convention in Vancouver in July. I can never give back to AA that which AA has given to me but I'll try.

Seamus

A GLORIOUS RELEASE

"The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel, step two gently and very gradually began to infiltrate my life, I can't say upon what occasion or upon what Day I came to believe in a power greater than myself, but I certainly have that belief now, to acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of AA's program as enthusiastically as I could"

AS LONG AS I'M WILLING...



As long as I'm willing to believe in something, I believe I am on the right track with Step 2.

I drank alcoholically for 10 years. I thought it was jovial, a side line to the rest of my life, something that I could take or leave. I was always an over-thinker and an analyser. As my drinking progressed, I lost the power of choice and regularly faced the 'bedevilmments'. I had trouble in my personal relationships, I couldn't control my emotional nature, I was miserable and depressed, I couldn't make a living, I felt useless, I was full of fear and I couldn't seem to be of real help to anyone. I lost jobs, relationships, money, homes, my morals, eventually my self-respect and my mental health. But, I clung to that instant relief that wine and spirits seemed to bring me, and thus I spent years on the alcoholic merry-go-round: drinking to quash and quieten problems, only to wake up and find they were worse. The blackouts started as young as 17, and I found those especially horrific, like a complete loss of control. The only way to face them was by lying to my friends/family/partner about what happened, and then taking another drink the next day to stop the worry. Little did I know then, I'd never been in control of my drinking.

As a teenager, I was lucky enough to get good grades at school. Any academic goal I'd set myself, without too much trouble, I had reached. So it was incredibly hard for me to accept that glass in hand, I couldn't concoct a solution to my own drink problem. In fact, this kept me drinking for a further two years after

coming to my first meeting. Part of my denial was that I couldn't see how talking (especially about God) would ever solve my problems. I thought that by my own intellect and will power, I'd solve them all by myself, thanks very much.

Two years after that, I arrived for my third consecutive stint in a treatment centre. I was homeless, suffering alcoholic seizures, clutching a physics book. It was only then that I knew I was powerless over life, alcohol, and that my life was unmanageable.

In the treatment centre they took away my book, and I met people who had been sober for a while. I noticed that they had a sense of direction in their life. Even though they sometimes talked of God, they seemed happy, peaceful and able to be helpful. I knew I needed to go to AA when I got out, if I was to have any hope of staying away from a drink and of getting what they had. It seemed the only thing left to try. The books of theory hadn't worked.

I went to a half-way house after treatment, and found those first few weeks tough. I prayed to something I didn't recognise or believe in for the very first time just to stay sober. I hadn't done that before. The people in meetings had said it worked, and I was so frightened of drinking, I tried it. I didn't drink.

Thankfully, after a few months in AA, I met an open-minded AA sponsor who read the Big



Book with me and was able to talk of all sorts of 'Higher Powers', such as nature and the Universe, which I could relate to. I began to see that life felt better when I believed in something, even if I couldn't see it or comprehend it. Little did I know, that staying sober one day at a time, and taking it all piecemeal, whilst doing the rest of the 12 steps, would bring me more and more evidence of a Power I could believe in. Coincidences began to happen, I found goodness in things that were difficult, I felt some contentment and peace. Life began to change.

Today, Step 2 is a great reminder that I'm not on my own. I don't face my problems by obsessively dissecting them in isolation any more, reading books upon books. Every chance I take to invite a Power into my life, to pause, to say a prayer, to talk, go into nature, to consider the bigger picture, or to listen at a meeting, I am on my way to that Broad Highway. My experience is that I don't need to define the Power Greater than myself, just believe in one. It will evolve as you stay sober - and as we rightly relate ourselves to it!

Dearbaile, Belfast

STEP

2

As I contemplate today coming to believe a power greater than me could restore me to sanity, I find myself reflecting back to the thinking of that time. Having accepted my disease and the unmanageable life, I have long since realised how the experience of others was so important to me, particularly the sponsor who guided me to a spiritual way of thinking.

I was brought up to believe in God, but I never really gave much thought to what he really meant to me. I was open minded enough to accept that a power greater than me and, in some way, would help through prayer. But when I reached this step together with my sponsor I was convinced as the 3rd pertinent idea says God could and would if he were sought, I was also coming to see that my life up to this point was run on self-will and where it had taken me to. Alcohol had humiliated me to the point I had ended up in AA, was my original thought.

But now as my mind is opening to the possibility of a new reliance beyond myself which I proudly describe today as a loving God as I understand him. I could clearly see this in my

sponsor. As he described this new way of life, we were embarking upon and the enthusiasm he displayed while explaining how it had changed his life in a very profound way. This captured my imagination that there could be a happy and contented life to be had without the use of alcohol. And together with this new relationship with a higher power this obsession I had could be lifted out of me.

As I think of step 2 today, I had a God given desire at that time and was on my way to channelling that relationship with him. Working in this step also helped me understand the insanity of this disease which centres on the mind and that one drink triggers the obsession rendering me powerless over alcohol and how this new relationship was the beginning of the process of restoring me from that insane thinking. That time and time again led me to that first drink. Yes as I write, this truly was a pivotal time in my recovery. Today I am happy, joyous and free as a result of these steps.

Mark

THE STUFF NO ONE TALKED ABOUT.....

The thing that haunted me once the fog lifted when I came into AA was all the sex I had during my drinking; sex I didn't remember, sex I didn't want to have (I had to re-name that rape), sex where I vomited during it and sex where I just tuned out until it was over. It wounds the inner depths of a soul, giving away, or having taken away, the parts of your body, your spirit, in this most intimate of ways. "Be prudent in your sharing", the AAs would say, which I took as, "don't talk about shameful things in meetings lest you have a trail of unwanted admirers after an AA meeting", so I was left with the shame. My Higher Power and I, dawdling along carrying a big bag of shame about alcoholic sex, and I couldn't seem to find the right words or people to talk about it. This is the area of my recovery that has taken the most work to drop the rock of shame around how I feel about myself, in relation to sex, my body and in forgiving myself in it.

After I shared all the gory details of myself in step 4 and 5, oooh my sex inventory was cringe worthy, I hated writing it, I hated saying it, I did not feel still much freedom about it after step 5 but it was a huge relief to sit across from my sponsor and for her to say "that happened me too", "I did that too", I suddenly did not feel like the misfit of all the misfits, suddenly I was one of many. I believe that I needed to be extremely hard on myself in the very early days to keep me away from drinking and the harmful behaviours, like escape in sex. After this however, I have needed to become more compassionate with myself in this area. I wrote. I wrote and I wrote and I wrote about some of the sexual encounters I had, about the rape, the abuse, the things that were taken from me and the things I gave away. Writing somehow seemed to cleanse something deep in me. I gave it continuously to my higher power, I'm talking 500 – 1000 times a day. I gave that

shame to something else, to something a lot more kind and benevolent than me, because it became too much to carry.

As the time passed, as I treated myself and my body in a much softer way, much more gently, I, little bit by little bit, feel so softer towards my younger alcoholic self. Sometimes I wrap that girl, that young woman, that grown woman, in a blanket and I say to her "you're sick not bad" and I wish her well and assure her I'll be there for her on the other side, the side of right, the side of recovery.

If I was to write to this woman, my younger self, I would say to her the following:

"You'll take many wrong turns, you'll have some more pain to go through, some more cuts and grazes, some more hurt in your heart, but know this, someday, you won't be able to take any more pain and you'll walk through the doors of AA and bit by bit, you'll become a version of you that you learn to love, your body will heal, your mind will heal and all that you're carrying will lessen because you'll hear the birds singing again, you'll feel the cold water of the ocean in January and you'll realise, that this gift, the gift of a sober 24 hours, is yours to have again and again, if you do the work. Much love. D xx"

Duana

“

Healing takes courage,
and we all have courage,
even if we have to dig a
little to find it.

TORI AMOS



Heard at Meetings

The alcoholics mind is like a dodgy area, don't go there alone!

Recovery is not for people who need it - it's for people who want it

The elevator to sobriety is broken!
Take "The Steps"!

For someone who doesn't think a lot of myself I certainly think about myself a lot

We have to give it away to keep it

Of course I think about drinking sometimes, I'm an alcoholic, what am I gonna think about, bananas?

Service News

JAN - MAR 2025

Conference 2025

Conference 2025 was held in the Carlton Hotel in Santry on the weekend beginning 7th March.

The meeting was attended by representatives from all around the country and was chaired by John T. (World Service Delegate).

Conference began on Friday 7th March with an inventory meeting of Conference. This was chaired by Gerry C., a former member of Conference. There was a lot of robust discussion and the general feeling afterwards was that this Inventory would be highly beneficial to the running of the actual Conference meeting.

Conference itself began on Saturday morning, 8th March. There were many items for discussion and decision. Among the highlights were:

- New date for receipt of motions to Conference will be November 1st.
- The voting process for motions was amended.
- The General Service Office will now be able to publish details of special interest meetings on the website.
- New subcommittees are to be set up to investigate how we can better encourage members into Service and to examine the whole Service Structure in Ireland to see if it is still fit for purpose. Both subcommittees are to report back to Conference 2026.
- A new pamphlet "for professionals" was presented and agreed at the meeting to replace existing pamphlet with the same name.
- Update was given on the upcoming All-Ireland Convention to be held in the Clayton hotel in

Sligo from 11th to 13th April.

- It was agreed that James Mck (Ulster) and Jenny K (Leinster) would attend the Great Britain Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in York in April.
- Conference 2026 will be held on the weekend of the 6th to 8th March 2026.

Company AGM/EGM

The AGM of the General Service Board of Alcoholics CLG was held online on Thursday 27th February 2025. The Annual Report was agreed at this meeting and the accounts for the year ending 31st October 2024 were presented and accepted. Ronan Kilbane of RBK Auditors presented his report and was available to answer any questions. Sean C. (Connaught) and Moira S. (Leinster) were welcomed to their first AGM as Trustees/Directors.

Following the conclusion of the AGM, an EGM was held. The purpose of this meeting was to make a number of minor changes to the Company's Constitution.

This meeting was chaired by Tony O'C (Munster Trustee/Director) in his first official function as the new Chair of the General Service Board. We wish Tony well during his term.

GSR Pack

A new GSR pack which was agreed by Conference is now available to order from the website or from the AA shop. This should be a great help to all new GSRs.

Group Information

We would like to issue a gentle reminder to all groups to update their information with GSO on a regular basis. This can easily be done online



by filling out a Group Information Sheet on the website. Maybe your meeting details, including venue and/or times have changed. It's often the case that the names we have on file are no longer members of the Fellowship which can cause difficulties when we are trying to contact members for 12th Step calls. Even if your details haven't changed recently, it's good practice to update the form anyway, at least every two years. We would really appreciate your help with this.

National Public Information:

The National PI committee visited Stormont Buildings on Monday March 24th to host a presentation for MLA'S and other interested parties on Alcoholics Anonymous, what we do, what we don't do, how to contact us, and how AA works. The committee sees this as important work to get the message of recovery out through third parties, in this case the Northern Ireland legislature who could in the course of their work come in contact with problem drinkers in their constituencies. The public information presentation was also attended by Northern Ireland dept of health.

Area Committee Officers

Chairperson

He/she should have considerable AA experience at Group and Area level. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions and, better still, have the know- how gained by applying these guides to local problems. They should be able to lead and motivate others while still acting as a trusted servant of their Area. The Chairperson should be able to instil in others a keen interest in Conference Service and local services. They will keep in touch with local area sub-committees (Hospitals, Public Information Committees. etc.)

Secretary

The Secretary needs a good AA sense so that he/she can sift through thousands of words at meetings and get the kernel for inclusion in his/her minutes. The Secretary ought to keep their Area Committee informed of all communications received from Intergroup, Conference and the Board, as well as from other Groups in their Area. They need to keep up-to-date mailing lists and get minutes out on time for every Group in area to have the opportunity to discuss issues. GSRs, Intergroup reps and delegates also need to be copied on minutes. Many Groups, areas etc. now use recording devices to record meetings. Such devices should only be used with the agreement of meeting participants. He/she should ensure that a copy of the Area minutes is emailed to GSO using the Area Secretary's official AA mailbox.

Treasurer/Finance

The Area Treasurer must be a careful guardian of the AA funds in their care and keep accurate records of financial transactions in their area. Written reports must be given at each Area meeting. This report should be circulated with the Area minutes to all Groups, GSRs and delegates in Area. A copy must be sent to GSO for record-keeping and regulatory purposes. Surplus funds should be transferred to Intergroup in a timely manner, in order to prevent unnecessary accumulation of funds in Area accounts. An Area Treasurer will keep their Area committee aware of our self-support tradition. The Area treasurer must promptly pay all expenses of the Area and make sure that the Area is properly insured and has member to member liability cover. Sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve should be the Area's guiding principle. It is preferable that Area funds are kept in a suitable account with two signatories required for all transactions. Expenses incurred by a GSR or other officer in attending an Area Committee Meeting will, if required, be borne by the Area Committee.

Conference recommends that we maintain our self-support tradition and refrain from running raffles at any AA events.

Intergroup Representatives

Each area is entitled to elect four members to represent the Area at Provincial Intergroup. Intergroup Representatives may continue to hold Area positions at the same time.

Qualifications

Intergroup representatives should have at least three years continuous sobriety in AA and have served for at least one year at Area level. A good knowledge of AA traditions and principles and a working knowledge of the Service Handbook are essential. The Intergroup Representative should report all Intergroup discussions and decisions to their area and attend all Area Committee meetings and visit as many Groups as possible in the area they represent. Their term of office will be two years. An Intergroup Representative has a voice and vote in the Area Committee that they represent.

Election of Officers

When electing officers, there are occasions where consensus cannot be achieved. In such circumstances the Third Legacy Procedure may be invoked. All members of the Area Committee are eligible for election; the Chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve and withdraws those names. Remaining names are displayed. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All GSRs and committee members of the Area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is displayed. The first candidate to receive Two-Thirds of the total vote is elected. After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds on the first ballot), any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the Two Top Candidates must remain. (In

case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain). After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except the Two Top Candidates remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and second-place candidates remain.). A fourth ballot is conducted. After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the Chairperson asks for a motion, second, and majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over, and we go to the 'hat' immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted). If no election occurs by this time, the Chairperson announces the choice will be made from the hat. Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one "out of the hat" becomes the delegate.

Sub-Committee of Area

Sub-committees of area such as prison, public information, hospital etc. are comprised of and chaired by, members of area and, as such, are always answerable to Area. Regular reports on sub-committee activities should be presented to area. Others who attend Area Committee Most Area Committees will have formed Public Information, Hospital, Prison or other committees in their local area and the Chairperson or Secretary of these will be required to attend Area meetings to keep Area Committee aware of their activities, needs and problems. These sub-committees should always be answerable to the Area Committee in their area and, through the Area Committee to the Groups and AA as a whole (see Tradition 9). While under Concept 4, "Right of Participation" the representative from the sub-committee should be allowed a voice at Area meetings, it is suggested that, where the number of



sub-committee representatives is 25% or less than the number of GSRs the former should be allowed a vote. However, the decision

on whether they have a vote or not should be decided by the Area Committee Group Conscience.



For anyone willing to be of service and wants to do service in prisons, the requirement is two years sobriety and you will also need to be Garda vetted.

Prison Service can enrich your own personal recovery and help you to stay grounded.

For those interested in getting involved with prison service please send an email to the team on:

leinsterprisonservice@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

IMPORTANT REMINDER

If you are leaving this publication in a public place such as a treatment centre, prison or doctors surgery - please be sure to remove the centre pages beforehand.

GOD AND SANITY

I'd have read Step 2 many, many times. For me it was the "HP step", carefully worded so those of us who struggle with the concept of a Christian God can still open the door to spirituality. Thank God for that eh ;-)

Thankful was I for that wording; the huge hurdle, the barrier to entry, had been this God business. My belief, often espoused whenever AA came up in conversation, was that the whole AA thing was a back door hack, a bait and switch to recruit fallen Christian souls. I got sober in Singapore, a secular place with a Christian backbone, there was no Lord's prayer in meetings and no picture of Jesus on the wall. So that helped in the early days, it was harder for me to use those God "triggers" to stay out, fall off the beam, or to relapse.

So this was Step 2 for me - all about God.

And then, in a meeting a few months in, an older fellow started breaking down the Step into its component parts. And I was stunned, stopped in my mind wandering tracks and brought back into the room like a rusty boiler falling through a rotten ceiling.

Did he just say I'm mental !?!

Back and forth he went across the Step, shining a light, bringing my HP to life and allowing me to see, for the first time, that I have been truly sick, that I have had a mental illness, that I have been insane.

Here's what I learned that morning - Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Came to believe - So we didn't believe, we have been unbelievers, whether Church going or atheist or in the middle somewhere, we didn't believe in God or a Higher Power enough

to be sober.

That a Power - "a Power"; loads of room here, no mention of Jesus, Allah, Buddha. Simply something (much) bigger than me. He suggested that the rooms themselves were a good starting point for anyone struggling.

Greater than ourselves - This Power is (a) not you ! and (b) bigger than you. Far beyond our petty worries and fears, far beyond our tragedies and failings, further even than our hopes and dreams.

And the punchline....

Could restore us to Sanity - we have been insane ! WTF ?! I was both horrified and indignant, but it was also immediately clear to me how true this was. I felt a reordering of myself, like my mind and body was being twisted into something new, or maybe that I was only seeing myself properly for the first time.

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. We will be able to believe that our newly found all powerful, benign and kind God will make us sane.

I think it's still my favorite Step. I need the bluntness of my insanity to be laid in front of me often (constantly) so that I can give up whatever insane things I am doing or thinking. So that I can hand over my will and my life to my God, and ask only to know his will and to have the power to carry that out.

God Bless

Mark L





Finding Connection, Faith, and Strength in AA

Nine months ago, I walked into the Clonsilla Lodge meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, not really believing I was an alcoholic but feeling an undeniable pull toward the stories I heard. As soon as I entered that room, I recognised the isolation, the loneliness, the sense of being an outsider that had haunted me my whole life. Anxiety and depression had always been constant companions, and I had struggled for decades to fix it, to understand it, to make it go away. But nothing ever quite worked.

What I heard in that meeting amazed me. People spoke openly about how they had once felt the same—lost, hopeless, and stuck in patterns of self-destruction. But then, they worked the Twelve Steps, came to terms with their struggles, and found a way out. Many were now living a life beyond their wildest dreams. That idea—that people like me could actually heal and change—was something I had never truly believed was possible.

Three days after that first meeting, my life imploded. I lost my temper at home, and my wife decided to separate. We had two very young children, and I was absolutely heartbroken. In that moment, AA became more than just a place to listen—it became a lifeline. A good friend brought me in, and even though I still wasn't convinced I was an alcoholic, I recognised the thought patterns in my head as the same ones I heard in those rooms. I was desperate for something to hold onto, so I followed his suggestion to do 90 meetings in 90 days.

At the same time, my family had to leave Dublin. We relocated to Mayo, where living costs were lower, but I was suddenly more isolated than ever. My wife moved on quickly, and I was left trying to support my family from a distance while grappling with the devastation of my life as I knew it falling apart. Online meetings became my refuge, and after three months, I took on a service role. I threw myself fully into AA, praying daily, meditating daily, and working through the Steps with a sponsor I had met online—a man from America who guided me through the first three steps.

A Spiritual Awakening

When I reached the Second and Third Steps, something profound happened. I had grown up Catholic but abandoned my faith in my teenage years. Before AA, I had spent years searching for meaning—studying Eastern religions, practicing meditation and yoga, fasting, attending ten-day silent retreats—always looking for some kind of answer. I had assumed that my moods, my struggles, were simply part of who I was and that I would always have to endure them.

But in working the Steps, I confronted my concept of God. I realised I had rejected the faith of my childhood because I had only ever seen God as judgmental, punishing, and impossible to please. Now, with everything I had been through, and with my newfound understanding of surrender, I was able to look at it differently. I had always wanted to believe in God—but in hindsight, I see that my belief

had always been more of a hope than a true conviction.

Then, strange things started happening. A priest showed up at my door, encouraging me to visit a local church for forgiveness and healing. So, I did. I started going back to Mass. And then other coincidences started to pile up. At first, I told myself I was just grasping at hope. But deep down, I began to see these moments as something more—a sign that there was a higher power at work.

Surrendering to this idea wasn't easy. My life felt like it was spinning out of control, and my will was completely at odds with reality. I wanted things to be different, but I had no power to change them. I had to learn to truly let go, to trust that there was a purpose behind the chaos. The more I leaned into this trust, the more I saw these "coincidences" unfolding. I started reading the Bible, and for the first time in my life, I began to truly hand things over to a higher power.

Hitting Another Bottom—and Rising Again

Despite this deepening faith, the isolation and emotional turmoil were taking a toll on my mental health. A fellow AA member encouraged me to check into St. Patrick's Mental Health Services, and after much hesitation, I did.

I spent a month there, working with psychologists to understand my childhood issues. I explored inner child work—something my sponsor had introduced me to—and as I faced those deep wounds, I started to feel a shift. The strange coincidences continued. It felt like God was pursuing me, pushing me to surrender even more, to trust even deeper.

By the time I left St. Pat's, I felt stronger, more grounded, and more accepting of my reality. I was still struggling in many ways, but there was now a sense of order to it all. I wasn't fighting against life the way I used to. I was learning to let things be as they were.

A New Way of Living

Now, I am just about ready to move on to my Fourth Step. I still attend daily meetings, speak to my sponsor regularly, and stay deeply involved in service. But more importantly, I feel a profound shift in the way I live.

I worry less. I don't try to control everything. I trust that whatever is happening, even when it's painful, is part of something bigger. Of course, my mind still falls into old habits—I catch myself worrying about the future or resisting what is. But when I do, I remind myself to hand it over.

What I have found in AA is something I never thought possible: peace. I spent decades trying to fix myself, trying to figure out why I felt the way I did, trying to escape it through alcohol, through spiritual seeking, through endless self-analysis. But in the end, the answer wasn't about fixing myself—it was about surrender. I don't know what the future holds. But I do know this: I don't have to do it alone. The community of AA has been my rock, reminding me every day that I am not the only one who has felt this way, and that healing is possible. The connection I have found—with others, with my higher power, and with myself—is something I never expected.

Service has become one of the most important parts of my recovery. When I help others, I help myself. I always thought I had to face life alone, but now I see that real strength comes from connection.

If you're struggling, if you feel lost, if you think there's no way out—I promise you, there is. I've seen it in the rooms of AA. I've experienced it myself. And today, I am grateful beyond words.

Colm F



QUEST-EON-ING'S END

Where is the need to know
For that which is All-Knowing
And where is the need for power and control
For the Infinitely mind blowing

Where is the need to be anywhere
For that which is everywhere
And what is the need for chasing one's tail
When it follows behind without care

Why this need to reach and grab
To have and to possess
To add to the indefatigable mind
Whose nature must obsess

Always burning up desires
And replenishing them anew
Like reaching the distant horizon
To find it has eluded you

Incessant the disturbances
That plague the selfish soul
For where ego has arisen
For sure nothing can be whole

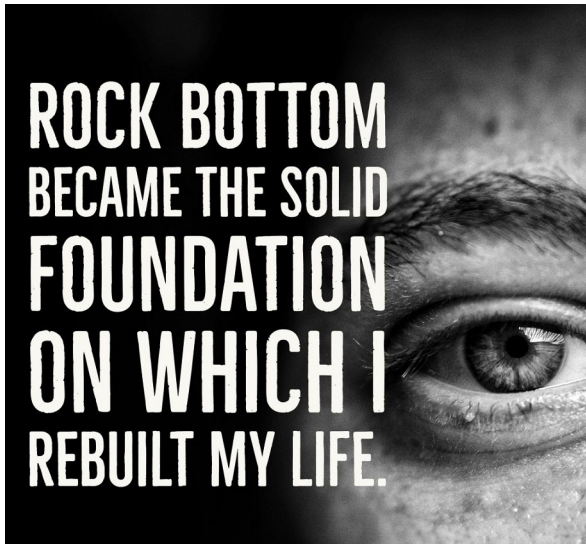
Only negating principles
Can end the selfishness
Letting go that wanting
Rooted in self-centeredness

Retreating from the mountain
Best seen in retrospect
And dropping the weighty ballast
'Cause of suffering and unrest

Surrendering to each moment
Refusing to partake
In quarrelling and in fighting
Simply quitting the great debate

Finished with the struggling
The interminable grief and strife
Taking each day as it comes
Fully living the sober life

Liam O'B



MY NAME IS BILL AND I'M AN ALCOHOLIC

If you've never been in recovery before, or you're not sure if you need to take a look at your drinking habits, just read on.

It's more than likely, that if you're questioning how much you drink, it may mean you have a bit of a problem.

But an alcohol problem is sorted out by stopping drinking.

Whereas alcoholism is all about what happens in your body from the neck up.

There a distinct difference between the two.

I have alcoholism.

Where first, yes, I had to stop drinking, and then I can start to sort out the issues in my life. The issues that exist, in between my ears.

It's very simple, but it's also a life long process. It's a never ending process of seeking and dealing.

Around my ego, selfishness, resentments, deep seated guilt, and feelings of special and difference.

Long term recovery is a gentle walk towards nothing more than not drinking 'just for today'. Where 'one day at a time' perhaps, holds the key to my longevity, and why, nothing has become more important to me than 'hand it over' and 'let go and let God'.

To think my life is now embroiled within these little sayings. Where my very existence, and time on this planet, is now guided more by 'happiness happens when results exceed expectations', than a glass of Gin.

It's a true testament to how a spirit once controlled my life. But where today a different spirit, gives me a new freedom, and a new happiness.

And a life.

Where being in tune with these recovery one liners, is just as important to me as noticing the stars in the sky, the beauty of nature and the wonders of our environment.

For the spiritual essence of recovery, is about being present, and less self seeking.

It's about being focused, and having an

awareness of these simple sayings.

Sayings the old timers, repeat, ad infinitum.

And where I see those same old timers, bless them, sitting quietly, at peace, and being totally self assured.

Where their life has evolved from passing the program onto those less fortunate than themselves. Passing on a power that was once passed so freely onto them.

It's nothing more than a relay race.

Where each in turn, passes the batten on to the next person.

Where essentially, what they're passing on, is a chance at life.

And, however many times that batten may get dropped, they never stop trying.

Picking up the batten, gives each one of us a chance.

And with each chance comes a new choice.

Being loved back to reality is what tough love is all about.

Where first rate directions are better than second rate people pleasing.

And that same, swift but honest tough love, will save a life faster than saying 'there there, I empathise with you'.

'Acceptance doesn't necessarily have to mean approval' is the spiritual life jacket, that will save you from a drowning in your own malady.

From drowning in your own ego.

It will help you to rise above fear and self seeking.

It will absolutely turn your life around. Try it.

But faith without works is dead.

Where doing the complete opposite, of what comes naturally, will alter your perception of reality.

But it's not easy.

Only the determined rise above a self centred self will, that can and does kill.

Never underestimate the true nature of alcoholism.

It's an unremitting power force, that's able to convince the strongest of characters, the most



determined self willed people, to pick up a drink, instead of picking up the phone.

Where there is more power in the disease of alcoholism, to destroy and to remove, than in all the oceans of sea.

Where there are more storms in the mind of an alcoholic, than in the largest, and grandest of an Hawaiian surf.

But found deep within the recovery process, is a power of a spirit. A power thats stronger than the power of my alcoholism.

It's an altogether, simple, easy equation.

Where seeking one power, can end a life, but seeking a different power, will extend a life.

But the answer lies, not in which one is easier.

No, that would be altogether too easy a way out.

It's all about rising above one, to accept the other into our lives.

Never again, will one choice, go on to change my life around as this one has.

Never again will I be as grateful to accept into my life, a higher power.

Where, today it's a joy to look at the blue sky, instead of gravitating towards the negative.

Where focusing on what Ive got, rather that what I haven't, becomes easier.

And where the pinnacle of success in recovery, is not so much in our serene, sober time.

But in seeing and recognising, and breathing in the beauty, that lives in the world around us.

And most importantly, to breath in the wondrous shades, and the pristine glory of the powder blue sky above me.

Bill the shirt, Bristol.

POOR BEASTS!

The horse and mule live 30 years
And nothing know of wines and beers.

The goat and sheep at 20 die
And never taste of Scotch or Rye.

The cow drinks water by the ton
And at 18 is mostly done.

The dog at 15 cashes in
Without the aid of rum and gin.

The cat in milk and water soaks
And then in 12 short years it croaks.

The modest, sober, bone-dry hen
Lays eggs for nogs, then dies at 10.

All animals are strictly dry:

They sinless live and swiftly die;

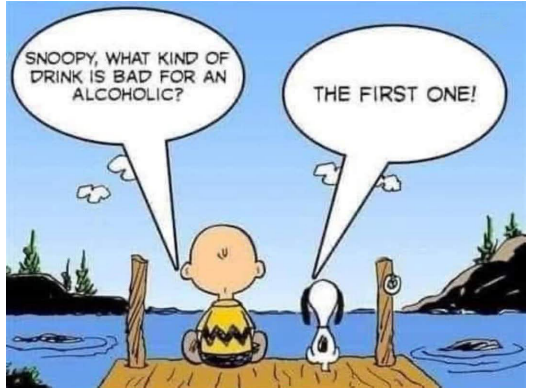
But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men

Survive for three score years and ten.

And some of them, a very few,

Stay pickled till they're 92.

HUMOUR



Q&A WITH MARTIN, TYRONE

How long have you been sober?

I'm in the 41st year of my sobriety, a day at a time.

What brought you to the Fellowship?

I came to the fellowship because I felt lost, afraid and very confused. My drinking had been out of control for a long time and no matter how hard I tried I couldn't change direction. I would make promises to myself (and others) to moderate and behave sensibly, but it was always more of the same madness. There's a line in the Big Book, Chapter Two: "We had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it." I reached that point, even though I was barely 24 years old. I was at university doing a degree, but my behaviour was reckless. People used to say to me; "You're a nice fella, but..." – then they would mention my drinking and advise me to cut down.

I was born in Lancaster in the North-West of England of Irish parents. My father drank heavily and could be violent and unpredictable in drink. My mam was anti-drink and prayed a lot. It was not a happy home. I was fifteen when I took my first drink. Up to that point, I had been full of hang-ups about the way I looked. I was small for my age. Most of my contemporaries were shaving and could get served in pubs, while I looked about twelve. At least that's how I remember it. A friend and I would stand outside an off licence and give whatever money we had to some obliging adult (usually a fella) and ask him to get us a carry-out of cider, QC wine and some cans of beer. Straight away, I loved the effect drink had on me. I felt comfortable and could express myself. I used to say that drink gave me a voice. Without it I was not a talker; with it you could hardly get me stopped.

So, in a sense, drink set me free, but it also took me prisoner. I always wanted to re-experience

that drink induced feeling of being comfortable in my own skin. From early on it became important in my life. As well as spending my own money on booze, I begged, borrowed and stole for drink – and I lied to those near and dear to me to cover up my bad behaviour. Sometimes it was impossible to hide, though; like the time I took my brother's car without his permission and wrote it off. Carnage like that only happened when I took drink.

I had been drinking in Belfast with a fellow student. Our grants had just come in, so money was not a problem. On about the third day, he said: "Listen, I'm an alcoholic and I think I'll go back to AA. Oh, and I think you're probably one too." He wasn't the first person to say that; but for some reason I really heard it that day and wanted to do something about it. As it turned out, he didn't go back, but he showed me where the Donegall Pass meeting took place. I went on my own one night. It was an old damp building that probably wouldn't pass muster today, but the meeting room was bright, with a roaring coal fire, and I was given a warm AA welcome.

Had you heard about AA prior to this?

Yes. As a schoolboy in Lancaster, I had a teacher of Religious Education who was quite progressive; so we learned about things like civil rights, poverty and addiction. In fact, during my final year, we went on a retreat to the Lake District. The retreat was run by teachers and priests. Again, it was progressive. We talked about faith, relationships and how to grow as a person. One night a member of AA came to address our group of about forty adolescents. I didn't hear much of what he said, because a few hours earlier a few of us lads had gone to a local off licence and bought a carry-out of wine; so I was pretty much out of it. But I do recall that the AA member was listened to and a few of the more sensible teens were asking questions when he had finished sharing.



How did you feel at your first meeting?

I was surprised by the warmth of the welcome. All the names, the smiles, shaking hands... Belfast was a divided city, but there was no division in this place. There was a great atmosphere of friendliness in the room. At Donegall Pass there was a big tea pot and they used to put the milk into pot; which wasn't great if you took your tea black. I took mine with milk, so I was okay. I was the youngest person in the room and I suppose I was wondering if I really belonged. A Dublin man did the chair and shared something to which I could really relate. He was down and out in London. One day on the tube, a well-dressed man dropped a newspaper and this man shared how he bent down, picked up the newspaper, gave it back to yer man and then apologised. I knew all about low self-worth, so I could identify with both his drinking and his feelings.

Was there anything you found off putting when you first came to the meetings?

Not really, I was just so new-fangled with being physically sober. You know, days turning into weeks and then one month. Wow! I was someone who drank anytime I had money and I would be seriously drunk three and four times a week. That was the way I had been 'living' for a number of years. So it was an incredible feeling - just not to be drinking. When I heard some fella at a meeting say that he'd been off drink for a year, I'd stare at him and think: "Imagine that, a year off drink! Wonder if it'll happen to me." It was only later when my head started to give me trouble that I began to be annoyed by the member who might swear excessively when sharing, or one who would do a second chair from the floor. "God grant me the serenity..."

Which of the slogans is your favourite?

Probably But For The Grace Of God... Before coming to AA, when I was still in charge of my life, I thought of God as a sky dwelling power that I could call on in an emergency. I remember walking home early one evening, neither drunk nor sober, but broke and miserable. I began

to pray: "God, if you're up there, please put a wallet full of money in the road for me to find." On I walked, scanning each side of the road for a wallet that would allow me to go back to the pub instead of home. (Later I would discover that prayer is more about me doing God's will than Him doing mine.)

For nine years drink was the major power in my life. I needed it to function socially. Without it I was full of fear and tended to isolate. But it was a power I couldn't control and it very nearly destroyed me. Active addiction is anti-life. It's suicide on an instalment plan. It was only in AA that I came to understand God differently, as a power that actually dwells within my own heart. That's what I found in AA, and it is only by the grace of God that I came to see that. After I was sober a few years I took a job teaching in Tunisia. I got to know this English woman who was surprised that a man from Ireland didn't drink. I told her I used to drink but didn't now. "You must have tremendous will power," she said. I explained to her about AA, surrender and living free by the grace of God. "No way," she said. "That's nonsense. It's you; it's all your own achievement." I didn't try to change her mind. I just thought: "If she wants to think that way, it's okay by me. As long as I know the truth: but for the grace of God, there is no way I would even be here in her company, let alone teaching and experiencing the joy of adding to other people's lives."

Does your family feel the ripple effect of your sobriety?

I'm sure they do. I live next door to my brother and his family, the same brother whose car I took and wrecked during my drinking. I was sober a few years when he asked me to do best man duties at his wedding. It was a great day and I felt kind of carried through it. None of his three (now adult) children have ever seen me drinking and I have a great relationship with them all. An old sponsor of mine named Ernie C used to say that AA recovery is all about making "a giver out of a taker" – and it is great to be free to give to others and be



released from “the bondage of self”. For the last ten years of her life, I was my mother’s special carer. Of course, she had suffered a great deal from both my dad’s and my drinking. It was great to be there for her when she could no longer manage alone. I used to take her shopping, make her dinner and generally keep the household ticking over. During her final years she would tell me from time to time: “You’re great; I don’t know what I’d do without you.” It was in AA where I first heard about “love and service” (from a man named Sammy B) and from there it flowed outwards into all areas of my life.

Has your ability to do your job improved and how?

Well, I’m kind of retired now; but when I first got sober I was a student and everything improved – my attendance, the quality of attention I brought to classes, relationships with colleagues and lecturers. My first grade A for an assignment came when I was sober, and my essays tended to be longer, more considered pieces of work. I was no longer just getting by on the bare minimum of effort. Like most alcoholics, when I wasn’t drinking I was thinking about it. I always had this private agenda going on; I wanted to get away to do my own thing – and my thing was drinking. So I was never free to fully give myself to other activities. That changed when I got into recovery.

Last Christmas I was doing some part-time work that brought me into contact with young families who were visiting Santa. It was great to be a witness to so much joy and wonder and even to add to it by making visitors feel welcome. Before AA I was a clock watcher at work, longing for quitting time so I would be free to drink, little realising that I was not free at all. Nowadays, for the most part, I can usually be present to whatever task is before me and to the people I happen to meet on any given day. (Not all the time, mind you. I still have my moments.)

Is just taking what is on offer enough or do you feel you need to give back?

The Big Book tells us: “The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it” – and a spiritual life cannot be lived in isolation or by putting myself first all the time. The first word of the 12 Steps is ‘We’ not ‘I’. Anyone who just comes to AA for sobriety and then leaves thinking “I’ve got it” hasn’t even begun to see what’s on offer in the Fellowship and they haven’t “got it” at all; since the receiving depends on giving, and vice versa. There’s an old saying, ‘Travelling is better than arriving’. This might seem a bit grand, but I see my life in recovery as a kind of ongoing pilgrimage; one where we grow together, or die separately. I attend AA meetings and give of my time, my attention and share experience, strength and hope. But in so doing, I receive so much in return. I also belong to a group and do service. There’s a power in the rooms that can add so much to our lives (if only we’re open to receiving it) and that power (which I believe is the grace of God) will have a positive knock-on effect in the lives of so many others.

What is your message to the newcomer?

Welcome, take a seat. You are among friends. Would you like a tea or coffee? If you have a problem with drink, you’re in the right place. Of course, every newcomer is different. I wouldn’t want to talk anyone’s ear off. It’s so important to listen to the person who arrives at AA for the first time. When a person is at their first meeting, I always welcome them and I would share probably more about my drinking for their benefit. But I never share ‘at’ them, or single them out by name. If a new person was reading this, I’d say, “The road to AA is definitely a painful one to travel and alcohol addiction probably seems like such a curse. But actually, it’s great that you got here. If you keep coming back, accept you’re an alcoholic and do what’s suggested for recovery, then that curse will be transformed into a blessing. That is our experience.

There are a few wise sayings, too, that are always applicable. Many meetings make it easy,



few make it hard, none make it impossible. You alone can do it, but you can't do it alone.

Is there anything you would like to add or give a short summary?

Many years ago I read a novel by the American writer Saul Bellow called *The Adventures of Augie March*. Getting through it was a bit of a slog. Like America, it's big. But at one point the main character says: "It's my job to be Augie. There's no one else to do it." I've come to see that it's my job to be this particular Martin. I had to befriend myself, instead of putting myself down all the time, or just living to please others. My drinking was a flight from relationship with myself, others and God, but the 12 steps of recovery brought me into relationship with God, myself and others.

One of my favourite prayers is:

"O God/Help me/To believe/The Truth/About myself/No matter/How beautiful it is."

That last line floored me when I first read it. Could the truth about me be beautiful? What a new idea that was! Many of us find it so difficult to believe in our own gifts. But in recovery we begin to live from a deeper place, from the heart rather than the head, and there we discover that we're already in relationship with a loving God who gives us the power to be ourselves.

Thanks for letting me share. I'm grateful. Recovery is a blast. As my old sponsor Ernie C used to say: "Honesty gets you sober and gratitude keeps you sober."

Martyrdom

Self-pity is one of the most unhappy and consuming defects that we know. It is a bar to all spiritual progress and can cut off all effective communication with our fellows because of its inordinate demands for attention and sympathy. It is a maudlin form of martyrdom; which we can ill afford.

Bill W., Letter, 1966
c. 1967 AAWS, As Bill Sees It, p. 238

Thought to Consider . . .

Poor me! Poor me! Pour me a drink.



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Join us for a weekend of meetings, workshops and fellowship



68th All Ireland Convention

11th, 12th, 13th April 2025

"Strength in Unity"

Ní neart go cur le chéile



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Hosted by Connaught Intergroup on behalf of the General Service Conference of Ireland
Check our webpage for future updates here: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Connacht Intergroup has the privilege of organizing our 68th All Ireland AA Convention this year on behalf of the fellowship across the Island of Ireland. This year's convention will take place at the Clayton Hotel in Sligo from Friday, April 11th, to Sunday, April 13th.

Our theme for this year, "Strength in Unity," celebrates the power of togetherness, support, and service within our fellowship. We look forward to welcoming you for a weekend of connection, reflection, and shared experience—we hope to see you there!

The committee is maintaining much of the traditional format, including marathon meetings with engaging themes. The convention will officially open with an Open Public Meeting in the ballroom on Friday night at 8:00 PM.

There will be plenty to get involved in, including three workshops throughout the day on Saturday. The archives will also be on display in the main circulation space outside the meeting

rooms, offering members the opportunity to explore the history of AA in Ireland.

For entertainment, Friday night will feature a disco in the main hall following the Open Public Meeting. On Saturday night, the Jesse Conlon Band will take the stage in the main ballroom from 10:00 PM, providing an evening of live music and celebration.

Additionally, Young Person Liason Officer members will be hosting a workshop on Saturday, along with three marathon meetings over the weekend.

Please spread the word! We look forward to welcoming you to Sligo, starting with the Earlybird's meeting on Thursday, followed by the official convention opening on Friday, April 11th, and concluding with the closing meeting on Sunday morning. See you there!

2025 All Ireland Convention Committee.



UNITY | SERVICE | RECOVERY

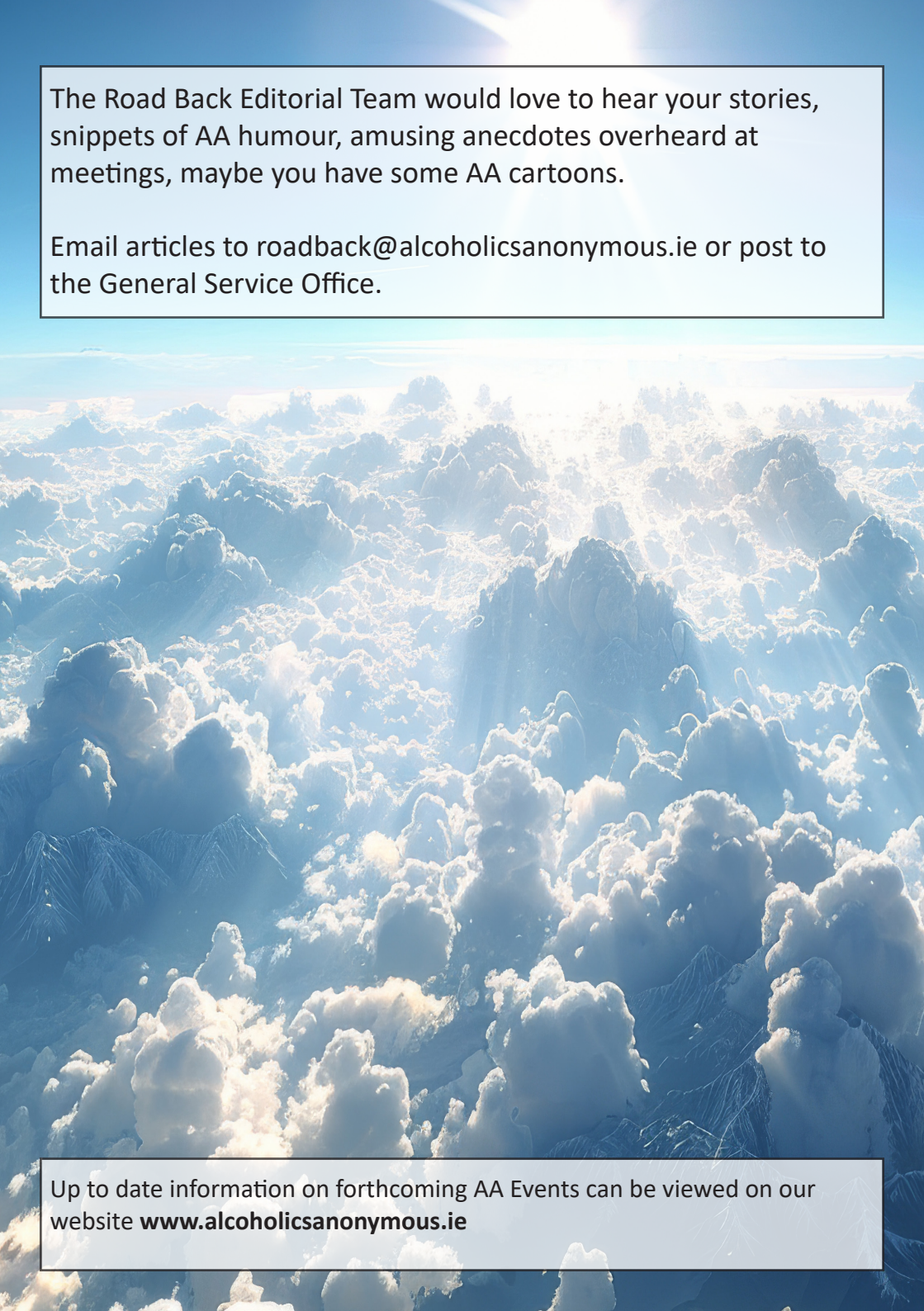
The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

The Twelve Steps

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.





The Road Back Editorial Team would love to hear your stories, snippets of AA humour, amusing anecdotes overheard at meetings, maybe you have some AA cartoons.

Email articles to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or post to the General Service Office.

Up to date information on forthcoming AA Events can be viewed on our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie