



SOBER VOICES

Do you have experience with any of the steps or traditions? Our newsletter needs **YOUR experience** shared in just a few paragraphs. This can be totally anonymous, if you so desire. Our next quarters' newsletter will include Steps and Traditions 4-6. Submissions and/or questions can be emailed to Newsletter@vasouthcentral.org. The newsletter can be accessed online at website@vasouthcentral.org. Click on the icon for newsletter, if you are reading this online. A limited amount of printed copies will also be available. Together we can make **YOUR** newsletter a tool for others and ourselves.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please forward any announcements to:
Newsletter@vasouthcentralaa.org



We have a new resource for anyone in *any type* of **CRISIS**, whether it is alcohol related or life related. You can access more information if you dial 211 or ask any district volunteer.

Jefferson District 9 will host the winter meeting **January 10-11, 2020**, at 5:00 pm each day. Location for meetings is the Best Western Crossroads Inn and Suites, 135 Wood Ridge Terrace, Zion Crossroads, VA. Deadline for reservation, was unfortunately, Dec 24th.

Loudoun District 10 – 23 Annual Day of Sharing **February 22, 2020**, Crossroads UMC, 43454 Crossroads Dr, Ashburn VA 20147. Meetings start at 9am with recovery related topics occurring simultaneously from 9 am -2pm, followed by Sobriety Countdown, Raffle and Guest Speaker at 2:30 till 4. OPEN format.

The Big Book is now available in ASL. Videos can be ordered from aa.org

Phone watch volunteers are always needed. Sign up to receive calls or be someone who switches contacts for each shift.

Online Meeting Guide: <http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php>

TRADITIONS 1-3

Tradition 1 – Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity

Principle: Unity: The AA member conforms to the principles of recovery; at first because he must, later because he discovers a way of life he really wants to live.



Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

I am, for one.

Consider the following scenario: A lady age 40 is brand new, petite, brunette, well dressed. She is just out of a 30-day rehab. Trembling, she attends her very first AA meeting. This what they told her to do in rehab. The lady is out of options; she does as she is told. She's the last one to share. This young lady describes, in a quaking voice, the story of her husband, who committed suicide rather than face the wreckage of his past. At the conclusion of the meeting, a man sitting next to her identifies a strong woman in AA to act as her first sponsor. Suddenly, a different male, with many years of sobriety, approaches her and invites her out for coffee. She backs away. He rapidly closes the distance. At that point, a man and a woman trying to help this young lady step between the two of them, and the woman confronts him, sternly stating, "You're not 13th step this one to death." The male with long-time sobriety stands there and rages. The two helpers stand strong and verbally support each other. The other AA women quickly form a protective circle around the newcomer, and the angry man leaves. He does not return to that particular meeting for six months, and by then, the young lady has attained some solid recovery. She chooses, for her own safety and serenity, to sit only with other AA women, to walk to and from meetings with only other AA women. She parks her car in well-lit areas, and she gratefully relies on her sisters in sobriety.

Perhaps the First Tradition says it best: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity." Pamphlet P-43, published by Alcoholics World Service (AAWS) expands upon this by stating, "Our individual sobriety depends upon the group. The group depends upon us. We soon learn that unless we curb our *individual desires and ambitions*, we can damage the group."

So, what are these “big bad wolf behaviors” that scare (some of) us?
These are some of the signs to watch for:

- The person who’s always asking for money, yet alleges to have many years of recovery;
- The person who claims to need a new home to live in, because they’ve been kicked out of the last one;
- The person who blames everyone else for his / her difficulties;
- The person who tries to isolate another member of Alcoholics Anonymous; especially one new to AA.

Now let’s consider scenario #2: She’s young, tall, and as one old-timer says, “has crazy eyes.” She’s the fantasy of old men; she’s the fantasy of all men. Broken and needing protection, she has been evicted from her parents’ home. Later, further investigation yields repeated charges of attempted murder. Within ninety days of their initial meeting, she has moved into a fellow AA’s house and attends meetings sporadically, but remains unwilling to recover. All of a sudden, she decides it is time to explore the country. She boards a bus to Houston, TX, and later calls her AA roommate to inform him she has found herself with a man who is trying to murder her. She convinces her roommate to buy her an airline ticket and returns to his house in Virginia. All goes well until she attempts to murder him.

It’s important to note that predators are not always male. Women prey on men in recovery too, often financially and emotionally, as illustrated by the previous example. The second tradition states: “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.”

Finally, let us realize that the Traditions exist to protect the AA groups as well as the individual. If we truly are the loving, compassionate individuals we say we are, ever willing to “do the next right thing,” we need to be willing to counsel each other. When we readily observe danger to the individual, there is also imminent danger to the group. Submitted Anonymously

Tradition 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.”

Spiritual Principle: When we come to understand the wisdom of the group decision and the necessity of patiently awaiting developments, the real and permanent leadership of A.A. can offer the *quiet* opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolve a crisis, leading by example, rather than driving by mandate. (Group Conscience)



When I was asked to write about Tradition 2 I was a bit intimidated because I do not consider myself to be an expert. However, I must confess that it happens to be one of my personal favorites because it protects our sacred organization from power imbalance and keeps the egos of us all in check. Isn't it wonderful that our founding members of Alcoholics Anonymous had the foresight to

understand that given the opportunity most human beings, especially defiant, ego driven alcoholics would surely charge at the opportunity to assert their wisdom and experience and dominate the rest under the pretense of doing the "right" thing. Only a loving God (or higher power if you prefer) as expressed through our group conscience...brilliant! Genius!

I don't know about you, but I know that my ego has often told me that if people would just do things my way everything would run smoothly. It's never fun nor does it create a healing, loving environment when only a few. Rigid, "know it alls" attempt to decide for everyone else that they are the only ones who know what is best for the rest. Most of us who have been attending AA meetings for a few years can spot them. The ones who resist change, wearing smirks and rolling their tired eyes at modern change and long for the way things used to and should always be. Treating the others as if they were helpless children who would fall apart if they had to handle the responsibility of decision making. Or how about the energetic ones who discovered their own power and righteously decide that they are the only ones who could possibly save their shrinking home group! After all, look how many sponsees they have! Never mind the fact that they themselves really do not need to be completely accountable or honest with a sponsor of their own!

Group conscience the ULTIMATE authority? What a radical idea to be born out of ego driven alcoholics. Everything is constantly evolving; AA is no exception (thank God!) Our group conscience is the voice of God or if you prefer, higher power and the greater good for a society based on saving lives, families and entire communities. Every single person's vote in our organization holds the same weight. It took much trial and error for all this to be worked out and just one business meeting attendance should explain why! AA has been around for a long time now and is still thriving which proves to me that there is incredible wisdom in all of our traditions.



Tradition 3 – “The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Spiritual Principle: When confronted by the fear that is the true basis of intolerance, we need only ask, "What would the Master do?" (Membership)

A Book or A Hug

When I was asked to write this article, I said I would write one for the next newsletter. It was suggested to me a few twenty-four hours ago that I must become willing and take action on that willingness to stay sober. I've been able to do that for quite some time so why stop now? I think we become complacent in our recovery thinking “that won't ever happen to me”. Therefore, I'm writing this article. My first thoughts are what do I say? Of course I'm looking to make that profound statement so people will like me (fear and ego). Sound familiar? Instead I think I'll just share my experience, strength and hope. I will be forever grateful to the person that looked at me one day, before I got here, and said “I don't know whether to throw the Big Book at you or give you a hug”, See, we had shared our experience with each other about our drinking adventures. That very day I cried all the way home because I finally knew what was wrong with me. I had that moment of clarity when I realized, in my heart that I am an Alcoholic. This person was already in Alcoholics Anonymous, so I figured I would check AA out. I remember that first night walking into a meeting feeling scared and alone. A member got up approached me and asked me if they could get me a cup of coffee. I was relieved that someone made me feel as comfortable as I could be at that point. I seem to remember looking up and seeing the twelve steps of AA on a scroll hanging in front of me. All I could see was the word God. My thoughts were, here we go, the God thing again. My take on God was he was punishing me for all the things I had done in my life. Needless to say I began to become skeptical of this AA thing. I wanted to run out of the room but something kept me there. Today I know what that was. I made it through that first meeting, by the end I had relaxed a little. There was something about the aura of the room I couldn't quite figure out. The one thing I did hear was keep coming back. I felt somewhat at ease by the end of that first meeting and even picked up a white chip, I had heard bits and pieces of my story. A lady handed me a meeting directory with some phone numbers on it. The people were so friendly after the meeting. I left that night feeling good about the

choice I had made to go to AA and believe it or not, wanted to come back. I continued to come to meetings. Along the way I got a sponsor, home group and did ninety meetings in ninety days, as was suggested to me.

My sponsor went through the Big Book with me and by doing so I had inadvertently took the 12 steps of AA, even though later we went to Back to Basics and I got to take the steps more thoroughly again. It was a life changing experience for me. I became what our Big Book refers to as God consciousness. I no longer feared the God of my past. I felt loved and cared for by him. I had a new Creator. He is my guide and I'm to follow, except when I take my will back and then I usually feel that gut wrenching tug in the pit of my stomach). I get no relief until I turn it over to Him. When I wrote down my inventory, I was so far in denial about myself; it really didn't affect me that much. The storm came when I had to share it with my sponsor who pointed out patterns and behaviors. I could no longer deny the selfishness and self-centeredness. I didn't know how to even make a start at changing. My sponsor pointed out that was God's place to take away those liabilities that had been holding me hostage. I just should do the next thing in front of me and the rest would follow. The beginning of that for me was making amends. I sure did a lot of geographical changes when I was drinking. I stayed so drunk I couldn't take you back to half the places I had lived. A lot of the people I had harmed had moved and I didn't know where they were now. I had a lot of living amends to make and still do. The ones I stole from, I was to donate money to charity. That is what I did. I was very fortunate I had not burned any bridges with my family. I still made direct amends to all of them for my behavior when I was drinking. On page 280 of the BB there is a couple of paragraphs that describes me and I'm grateful that the bottom came up and hit me.

Everyday is a new adventure in AA, never a dull moment. I try to be the best person I can be for that day and if not, right back to amends process, so I can be O.K. with me. I pray for others on a daily basis, as the Big Book tells me not to pray for myself unless it's in my usefulness to others. Seems that I always fall short on the meditation part. I'm still learning how to take time for God's answers. My God works through people most of the time. I have sponsees now, but I was concerned that I would not be able to share what I have been given. I was wrong about that, as I have been with many things in my life. If there is one thing I've learned in AA, I'm not powerful enough to keep anybody sober or get him or her drunk. I take the 12th step on a daily basis, most of the time I'm not even aware I've done it, as well as praying, trusting God and cleaning house. Today, I have an amazing life and I have both the Big Book and get Hugs on a daily basis. What a difference a few twenty-four hours can make.

Submitted Anonymously

Steps 1-3

Step 1 – Admitted I was powerless over alcohol and my life had become unmanageable.

1st Step Spiritual Principle: *Honesty* – After many years of denial, recovery can begin when with one simple admission of being powerless over alcohol – for alcoholics and their friends and family.

1st Step Prayer: I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

1st Step Prayer: I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

1st Step Promise: If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

I walked into that room, my first meeting; it was a room full of old men. But at twenty-three, anyone over 35 was old. I knew, walking in there that I was powerless. And I knew my life, as I knew it, was over. My fiancé was dead, I had climbed into the bottle, sat on the bottom and could not get out without help.

There were no women in the rooms to help me, to take me under their wings. So those wonderful old men, including my boss, surrounded me and taught me how to stay sober, one day at a time.

Today, I am still powerless. But I am powerless over life, as are we all. And my life has become manageable. Respectfully submitted
by Georgia S.

Step 2 - “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

2nd step Spiritual Principle: *Faith* – It seems to be a spiritual truth that before a higher power can begin to operate, you must first believe that it can.

2nd Step Prayer: I know in my heart that only you can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that you remove all twisted thought and addictive behavior from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore me a clear mind

2nd Step Promise: We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

Warning: Do not try to figure out God in this step. The 12 & 12 states that some of us won't believe in God, others can't, and still others who

have had faith and lost it. I had to choose which type I was and start from there.

First, AA does not demand that you believe anything. All of the twelve steps are but suggestions. Second, to get sober and to stay sober, I don't have to swallow all of Step 2 right now. Third, all I really need is a truly open mind.

For me, I had to be willing to have a new perspective. I was told that the definition of *ignorance is contempt before investigation*. Step 2 asks us to admit we might be wrong. God is a plausible concept and it has worked for many. Some type of Higher Power has produced results for people with a hopeless disease.

Maintaining an open mind was essential for me because it allowed me to have a starting point to stop trying to run my own life. What I had been doing just didn't work anymore. To acquire this, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of AA's program as enthusiastically as I could. If I want the promises, I have to take the action. I have to stop relying on self.

I came to realize that my Higher Power had never turn His back on me; it was me that turned my back. All I did was turn back around. Step 2 created a crack small enough to allow the sunlight to shine through.

Step 3 – Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

3rd Step Spiritual Principle: *Surrender* – A lifetime of self-will run riot can come to a screeching halt, and change forever, by making a simple decision to turn it all over to a higher power.

3rd Step Prayer: God, I offer myself to Thee - To build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always!

3rd Step Promise: We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. Those who work the program will gain a sense of acceptance that allows them to process their experiences, learn from the, and move on without guilt.

“Ummm....Excuse me? What do you mean I have to turn over my will AND my life? All of it? I really wasn't doing that bad. I stayed at home and didn't really hurt anyone.” These were some of the alcoholic thoughts that ran through my mind when I first read this step. The disease of alcoholism still had me weighted in denial. My sponsor later explained to me that my best thinking, behaviors and actions had gotten me right where I was today. She told me I had to stop playing God and find a one that I could approach on a daily basis. My chances of success would be extremely limited, if any, otherwise.

The three types of alcoholics described in Step 3 are the one who will not believe, the one who **cannot** believe and the one who **had faith and lost it**. The book also states that it is often harder for the one who had faith and lost it to find it again. Thank God for defiance! When used properly, it can be a strong tool. I was in desperate need of a different concept. I had always a single perception of God taught to me. I found it extremely difficult to approach a God I was scared of, which left me with the knowledge that my chances were going to be slim to none with a Higher Power I could approach without fear or intimidation.

Every man and woman, who has joined AA and intends to stick, has without realizing it, made a beginning on Step Three. When I became a member of AA, I made a decision to turn my life over to the care, protection and guidance of AA. I had to get rid of my prejudices about the God of my youth. I also had to resign from playing God. I was acutely unqualified and did a horrible job.

Spiritual growth is absolutely necessary for my continued sobriety. Each day I have to remember I am the actor who wants to run the entire show. I have to surrender my old ways before I can gain any new, healthier, sounder ways. Remember, at this point, I have already admitted my powerless, unmanageability, and insanity. Spiritual growth, life sobriety, is a life long journey. I have found through trial and error, the extent I am willing to apply this step in my life will absolutely determine the quality of my program.

Please forward any announcements to:

Newsletter@vasouthcentralaa.org

Many thanks to those who helped get this newsletter available in such a short order!

