District 16 Summer 2018



**SOBER VOICES**

This is your newsletter. Would like to have short articles (about 300-600 words) written by AA members telling of their experiences with the 12 Steps and Traditions. You may also send any announcements for your group to put in. The newsletter will be sent out to the district website four times a year. There will also be printed copies available for each home group.

If you have any information for the website, please send it to this email address: website@vasouthcentralaa.org



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**HAPPY SUMMER!!**

Be sure to keep coming to meetings…it can be difficult on a nice summer day or evening to stop what you are doing or want to do and get to a meeting, but it is so very important that we “keep coming back”!!

Going on vacation? You can always find a meeting wherever you go! If you are camping/hiking in the middle of nowhere, have your readings with you. Talk to your sponsor before leaving. You can pray in the woods the same as you do in the city!! Always be prepared!!

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**An important message from a newcomer:**

I’m new to the program and not familiar with the way things are done and want to do things right. At a recent meeting a topic was brought up and was discussed. After a few moments of silence a member of the group spoke up on a new topic, on which I had a question. After a deep swallow to get the lump out of my throat, I asked my question. I knew enough by listening to the group that when I was finished with my question to say something like “I pass” or “Thanks for letting me share”. I hadn’t finished my thought when someone started giving me their answer. I wasn’t familiar with the phrase “cross-talk” so I didn’t know that was what they had done. They said something, and I challenged the statement. After me speaking the Chair took back the meeting very agitated, stating that this was not the topic and there would be no cross-talking in the meeting. I was totally humiliated and angry at myself that I couldn’t do anything right. I had decided that because I had made such an idiot of myself and had gotten called out by the Chair for not staying on topic, then and there I had decided not to return to any meetings. I knew enough about the program and I’m committed enough to my recovery that I would continue with my sponsor but no more meetings.

After talking (ranting) at my sponsor, it was explained that what the Chair meant was the older AA person, who should have known better, did wrong, cross-talked, did not give me the chance to finish my thought. The feeling of embarrassment is still there. It’s going to be hard to walk back in the meeting this week, but I will do it. Will I ask a question anytime soon? Probably not. But then I’m a talker so we’ll see. There is no permanent damage done, my pride got dented, been done before and sticking with the program it may happen more often.

What I’m wanting to say to the seasoned members is to be a little mindful of who is in the room. We are new to this program and our lives depend on whether we come back or not. You don’t now when we walk out if we’ll come back. Hell, we don’t know that. And if we don’t return, do you pray that we found another group where we are comfortable, that we can continue to recover, or do you judge us and say we weren’t “READY”? Did

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you ask yourself - Did I say something when I had my three minutes of floor time that might have scared them off?

We are like children in the beginning, we watch the “adults” in the room, we size you up like all kids do with anyone in authority. And that’s what you are - the authority, the knowledge of AA. We watch you, we don’t trust well, we are suspicious of everyone and everything and since we are newly sober we still remember all the tricks, loopholes and every excuse to make it someone else’s fault for us not to return.

We watch you, we see the ones that come in with a smile on their face, and notice if you acknowledge we are here. Do you say hi, glad to have you, offer use a cup of coffee? We might want one but don’t know if we are ALLOWED to have one. We are there to learn so we listen, we hear the under-breath comments about others that to us sound like they are on a loudspeaker. We see the childish “flipping of the bird”, the faces made behind another’s back. Others might say “Oh, that’s just so and so’s way of getting attention” or “Don’t pay them no mind”. Well we do. So just maybe for the first few times you see us you could put away your childish ways and stick to the program. I’m going to recover with or without your help. Some of our younger ones might not have the strength, confidence or courage to do so yet. They are watching you. I’ll pass.

**A Newcomer**

**JAMES**

And it was even his co-founder friend Bill Wilson who spoke of the studies of James, the Sermon, and Corinthians; the reading of these passages by Dr. Bob’s wife Anne to Bill and Bob; and the fact that—as Bill put it —“James was our favorite.” And he added that many favored calling the A.A. fellowship “The James Club.”

The author Dick B. is a hardcore supporter of AA’s Christian roots, being an AA member who got sober in Akron, heart of the Bible belt.

I got a lot out of the book of James myself. It was one of three reasons for me thinking of AA as “The James Gang” early on. My apologies to Joe Walsh.

The other two reasons were William James, author of Varieties of Religious Experience and much else. I learned from him the broader Northeastern roots of AA experience and understanding, and a LOT about how to be a teacher and sponsor.

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The “James” that every AA owes the greatest debt, in my opinion, is James B., who fought for the inclusion in the steps of “God, as we understood him”. Without that qualifier, neither myself nor many of our agnostic or atheist members could have joined AA.

**Tom F.**

**Reality often sucks.**

And some days are harder than others.

At nine months, things get better physically. But emotional response to the reality of our losses can beat us up.

Even today, I struggle with the "lack of". I still write "gratitude lists".

I do inventory and work on change.

Some people get hung up on the idea it all gets "better" and there are no more challenges.

That's bull-olney.

The longer you're sober, the more stuff you face. But, you face it. You fix yourself and your behaviors.

You pray your butt off. You work harder on change.

You go to meeting after meeting.

You help set up meetings.

You can find relief in being useful to those without hope.

And somehow, it gets "better".

Read the first two paragraphs of chapter 7.

First paragraph is about getting sober.

Second paragraph is about staying sober.

The farther I get from day one, the bigger the base I need.

More old timers to guide me.

More newcomers to remind me.

The worse prison in the world is my own head. I have to reach out to others.

So get grateful.

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Help others.

Do the work.

Get the reward.

If this stuff was easy, everybody could do it.

Hope this helps.

**George B.**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

The following are questions that newcomers and or those thinking they may have a problem frequently ask:

Am I an alcoholic?

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

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

Seek help. Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

What is Alcoholics Anonymous?

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

If I go to an AA meeting, does that commit me to anything?

No. AA keeps no membership files, or attendance records. You need disclose nothing about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back.

What happens if I meet people I know in AA?

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

What happens at an AA meeting?

An AA meeting may take one of several forms, but at any meeting you will find alcoholics talking about what drink did to their lives and personalities,

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what actions they took to deal with this, and how they are living their lives today.

How can this help me with my drink problem?

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

Why do AAs keep on going to meetings after they are cured?

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

How do I join AA?

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

How much does AA membership cost?

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

Is AA a religious organization?

No. Nor is it allied to any religious organization.

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

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

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Can I bring my family to an AA meeting?

Family members or close friends are welcome at 'Open' AA meetings.

Discuss this with your local contact.

What advice do you give new members?

In our experience, the people who recover in AA are those who:

1. Stay away from the first drink;
2. Attend AA meetings regularly;
3. Seek out the people in AA who have successfully stayed sober for some time;
4. Try to put into practice the AA program of recovery.

How can I contact AA?

You can call us in complete confidence 1-888-837-2034 or get a list of meetings in the district at [www.vasouthcentralaa.org](http://www.vasouthcentralaa.org)

**Back To Basics**

Introduction To The Twelve Steps

4 Consecutive Saturdays

Starting July 7th

2:00 pm at Alamo Recovery Center

35 South Market Street

Petersburg, VA 23803

Bring a Sponsor or Sponsee

or one will be provided

Your Big Book

and

12 & 12

Contact: Darryl M. 255-5330

**FORT LEE MEETING**

Starting 3 June the FT Lee AA Meeting will be held on Sunday @ 5:30pm at Memorial Chapel, and will NO longer meet Thursday's at 7pm.

**Meeting changes for Sept 2018**

6-19-18

Got this from Katherine at Emporia D-19

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Friday Night AA meeting on this list for Emporia is incorrect. It is not at the Christ Episcopal Church. The Friday night meeting is held at the 1st Presbyterian Church, same address as other meeting on the Emporia list. Confirmed by Jeff D.

The Friday night meeting is at the First Presbyterian Church, Same address as the Sunday night meeting

6-19-18

God as We Understand him –Tuesday 20a Crater Rd Has moved to Southside Regional. No room # yet

**Mark Your Calendars!!**

District Picnic

September 15, 2018

White Bank Park, Colonial Heights Pavillion #1

Food, Fun & Fellowship!!

Bring a dish to share with all