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In this January issue:
Step One, Tradition One, and Honesty

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

For this first issue of the year, we included the introductory text about the Traditions. It is so important for all of us to be knowledgeable of Traditions for several reasons.

For one, we need to practice the Traditions ourselves. We shouldn't expose another A.A. member to others such as their work colleagues. One time at work, my boss introduced to me her new Executive Assistant, who I knew well in A.A. I simply said, "*Glad to meet you Susan.*"

But, also, we are all **Guardians of the A.A. Traditions**. Sometimes we must remind or educate people outside of A.A. that may not honor our Traditions.

We do not lend the A.A. name to other groups or institutions. But, unfortunately, we lend half our name to *Narcotics Anonymous*, *Overeaters Anonymous*, and others.

Last year, a pastor at a local church, whom I highly admire, wanted to start a new 12-Step Program called *Racists Anonymous* (R.A.). I wanted him to honor the Traditions, especially in the area of anonymity. I gave him copies of the books *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. I said there is a lot here, but if you use the word Anonymous, please read Traditions 11 and 12 carefully. He told me that he invited a member of the press to the first R.A. meeting. I said the press should not take any photos. If they mention someone, it should only be their first name and no other personally-identifiable information. A couple of months later, on PBS, I heard an interview with him about R.A.

I did my best to be a Guardian of the A.A. Traditions. What happens next is out of my control.

Best wishes,
Geena Louise
Your COIN Assistant Editor

Writing for the COIN

Q: Who writes the COIN?**A: You do.**

This is a publication forum for your personal stories celebrating sobriety and recovery. We welcome your stories, opinion pieces, learnings, questions, thoughts and ideas.

Q: What about sketches, photos, art and flyers?**A: Yes, please!**

These are all welcomed and appreciated. We want to give A.A. members a chance to publish their original artwork and photos. We are not a glum lot and love humor, so please send in jokes and cartoons as well. We want the COIN to have a comprehensive listing of all upcoming events and flyers; email your event info as early as possible.

Q: What do I write about?**A: There are monthly newsletter topics that can be found in the COIN.**

Each month's topic is Step X, the Principle behind Step X, and Tradition X, where X is the number of the month. January=1 and December=12. For example, January's topics are Step One, Honesty, and Tradition One. Stories about a month's holidays or historic events are also accepted. For example, articles pertaining to a new year/new start in January, relationships and romance in February, stories about the founding of A.A. in June, independence in July, gratitude and giving thanks in November, etc. can all be fitting subject matter.

Write your stories in the first person (using "I" statements). Share your sobriety experience, strength, and hope: the wisdom you've gleaned, the mistakes you've made, the fun, the troubles, and humor you've found in recovery. If you hear something at a meeting that makes you see things in a different light, write about it. If you have stayed sober through a difficult experience, write about it. Help us teach and learn from each other. Most importantly, help carry the message of A.A.

Q: What are the submission deadlines?**A: Deadlines are published in each month's COIN.**

If you miss the deadline, you may still send materials, but they may be saved for inclusion in a future COIN publication. Stories and art are published at the discretion of the COIN editor and the Central Office executive director.

Q: Anything else?**A: Yes.**

Please keep the Twelve Traditions of A.A. in mind as you write. Take special care to respect other members' anonymity. Have fun!

Send your contributions to: coin@aasanjose.org

COIN Schedule of Topics

Newsletter Issue Month	Submission Deadline	Step & Tradition	Virtue
January	15-Dec	1	Honesty
February	15-Jan	2	Hope
March	15-Feb	3	Faith
April	15-Mar	4	Courage
May	15-Apr	5	Integrity
June	15-May	6	Willingness
July	15-Jun	7	Humility
August	15-Jul	8	Love
September	15-Aug	9	Justice
October	15-Sep	10	Perseverance
November	15-Oct	11	Spiritual Awareness
December	15-Nov	12	Service

Next Month's Issue (February 2021)

Topics: Step Two, Hope & Tradition Two

Please email all submissions to coin@aasanjose.org .

How Rigorous Honesty Must Be Devoid of All Motives to Deceive

Is there a difference between “being honest” and “being *rigorously* honest”? If not, why add the word rigorous, unless to imply that honesty comes in degrees? In A.A.’s basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book), “being honest” is mentioned three times in the first paragraph of Chapter Five “How It Works”.

I know that when I first was faced with the challenge of being honest, I wasn’t against being honest and I was willing to give it my best shot. *Could I attain perfect honesty? I think not.* I could, however, reign in my lying about things that mattered, but that still left me with, what I felt was, a half-measures approach which did not sit well with me. If I was willing to be dishonest about anything, I was leaving myself opened to rationalizing and still I was conflicted. If I could lie once, wouldn’t that be like taking just one drink? The second lie comes easier. Was I dishonest if I embellished the size of the fish that I caught last weekend? All these questions ran through my mind, and many more before I came upon an approach

that worked for me. It all seems to rest upon what my *motives* are.

I was attending a discussion meeting one evening and the topic was “rigorous honesty”. Many of these questions were discussed without resolution until a gentleman defined the word *honesty* to mean communication *devoid of all motives to deceive*.

That meaning of the word gave me the latitude to practice that principle in the spirit that I believe the founders of A.A. would approve of. If you read the Big Book and the 12 & 12 (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*) you will find some overriding principles concerning these dilemmas. One that comes to mind immediately is that we cannot buy our own peace of mind at the expense of others. (Step 9 in the 12 & 12). I would add *my own self-righteousness at the feet of my loved ones*



If the definition of honesty is “communication devoid of all motives to deceive” it leaves me with room to be kind during those innocent moments when my wife

returns from the hairdresser and asks me if I like her new hairdo. I always like her new hairdo. The being-kind clause trumps the rigorous clause, and I am not trying to deceive anyone. What are hairdos supposed to look like anyway? Honesty without sensitivity is brutality.

There is one area where I must be rigorously honest and that is with myself. I must not let *overriding principles* get stretched out of proportions to the degree that I start to *rationalize and become deceptive again*.

The *trust and respect* we gain when we follow these principles do not come easy and if we compromise it, we may never get it back. Step 9 also makes exceptions where full disclosure would cause actual harm. When in doubt, I can enlist the help of a trusted advisor and I can be *rigorously honest with them*. I can live in the spirit of these principles and still have *honest integrity*.

– Rick R

Getting Honest - Step One

In Alcoholics Anonymous, there's no specific literature that speaks to "Step Zero." I have

heard members speak to this "unwritten" step as "the step before taking the first steps." For me, Step Zero was the point at which I *acknowledged* that I had a problem AND that point at which I became ready "to do something" – to take action – about my alcohol problem.

Given that pain is a great motivator, alcoholism can often seem much easier to acknowledge and accept when the evidence of its impact begins to mount. Consequently, I had to get honest about what alcohol was doing to me:

- Endless hangovers (I used to be sick for days, and repeatedly suffered with alcohol poisoning requiring medical intervention)
- Black-outs (walking and talking while drunk, yet not remembering a damn thing – this was my dilemma, and the source of constant remorse, guilt, and shame)
- DUI's and incarceration (I was repeatedly pulled over by county Sheriffs who reluctantly let me off with dire warnings – but that was many years ago, when I still lived on a farm)

- Failed marriages (sadly, I've had 3)
- Lost jobs (none "yet," but alcohol did play a negative part)
- Damaged finances (absolutely)
- Destroyed relationships (both with family and friends)
- Enlarged livers, diabetes, and heart disease (I've certainly had my fair share of health consequences, though long-term sobriety has reversed much of that)
- Time in institutions (from failed suicide attempts, affording me the opportunity to escape death, the ultimate consequence)

Interestingly, even in the face of such horrific mounting evidence, countless practicing alcoholics CONTINUE to remain in deep denial, as I did, refusing any help or any admittance of their active and voracious disease, and their clear failure to navigate, or effectively manage life.

There are alcoholics who've been able to achieve some outward success. I managed to graduate from college with honors, secured high-paying jobs, won awards, got married, had a

child, and yet always felt "never good enough." Despite outward success, an utter dependency upon alcohol stifled much of the joy and life that might have otherwise been enjoyed – this was my truth, but I could NOT get honest about this for quite a while!

For me, denial was an especially potent force! My first sponsor had me look up this word in the dictionary. This is what I found:

Denial: *the action of declaring something to be untrue; the refusal of something requested or desired; unwillingness to accept reality; acting as if something painful does not exist; defense mechanism in which confrontation with a personal problem or with reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem or reality.*

In some instances, initial (short-term) denial can be beneficial. Such denial affords us the opportunity to adjust to a difficult, painful, or distressing situation or issue. Regrettably, for me, the denial about my alcoholism had a deep, and very dark side: I could NOT get honest! And this

dishonesty kept me chained to my misery!

While denial is a legitimate psychological coping mechanism that provides the normal drinker with time to adjust to distressing situations, it's very different for the alcoholic. Remaining in denial – staying stuck – can interfere with treatment and the ability to tackle life's challenges. Inevitably, alcoholics in denial face institutionalization, incarceration, or death!



When in denial about my alcoholism, I tried (however ineptly) to “protect” myself by refusing to accept the truth that something painful (and potentially life-threatening) was happening to me because of my alcohol dependency. I really struggled with the concept of honesty. Lying

– to myself and others – was what I did!

I had to hit a very hard, and very painful, bottom – a violent rape at gun point – before I would admit to having a problem with alcohol. It took this bottom for me to see the truth of my drinking, and to comprehend the depth and breadth of the harm it had inflicted on me, and those who loved me. This horrible bottom catalyzed my anguish into a cry for help that ultimately led me to A.A.

Even with a high level of catalyzed anguish and misery, few alcoholics actually **do** anything to seek help. Bear in mind, this is much like the Third Step decision – many make the decision, yet without the essential **action** following it, most will return to what they know for comfort: alcohol, and then, alcoholic oblivion.

Fortunately, I came to Alcoholics Anonymous with the “Gift of Desperation” (my first “GOD”) and quickly discovered relief from my alcoholism. Desperation got me willing to work with a sponsor and to look at my life - and my part in it – honestly. Once I conceded to my innermost self that I was an

alcoholic, for which *entire abstinence is the only relief*, my life began to change. Getting honest had that effect upon me. For that, I am hugely grateful!

Today, some 27 years later, I know that I seriously **needed** a spiritual intervention and awakening in order to get, and stay, sober. A.A.'s basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous*, affectionately nicknamed the *Big Book*, reminds me that I get a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition. While no human power can help me with my disease, God can, and will, if sought! So, I've learned to honestly, and earnestly, seek God – the God of my own understanding. And THAT has made all the difference.

– Francine B

Step One Powerless and Unmanageable

I first began using alcohol to numb out to life at the ripe age of 13. Not being able to understand or accept why I was the target of my parent's abuse. Running to a friend's house, to convince strangers to buy us liquor, as

frequently as possible. It was just easier to get black-out drunk, nightly; then make sense of what was happening. At age 16, my grandfather bought me a car. I finally had an escape. Quickly after, moved into my car. I wouldn't admit it was a problem; because it was the only way that I could function.

I ended up finding a place to live, on the condition that I join A.A. In so doing, my friend's mom, saved my life. Quickly at A.A. meetings, I heard the truth and reasoning behind my disease. I was confused thinking that the bottle was helping me function. It was the enabler of my dysfunction. I sobered up for over 10 years, I'm not aware of my date of relapse.



After my car accident and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), I didn't realize that I was an alcoholic. Which is total crap! My

vanity and ego did not allow me to listen to my gut saying, “*this is wrong.*” I tuned out my inner frequency, because it was much easier to black out than to feel.

I fell victim to my own character defects; I allowed patterns from before I first found sobriety. Allowing everyone that I was codependent on dictate everything, even how I was allowed to feel about myself. It took me getting blasted on a Friday night; then having the same *need*, not *desire* to repeat the following Sunday; for me to recognize my sick behavior. I actually called that friend’s mom, from all those years back to ask if I was allowed to go to an A.A. meeting. I didn’t find any reason prior to this to admit that I was powerless over alcohol and drugs.

My disease couldn’t allow me to accept the reality of actually feeling my life. I couldn’t accept any feelings that weren’t distorted by my addiction. It is interesting how Step One is admittedly beating your ego with serenity. Ultimately winning the battle of self by choosing to take care of yourself and not create further damage.

Through the First Tradition of *welfare through unity*, we can reduce our egos until we can accept that we actually *aren’t* in control. I need to remember that the disease has the leg up. That it doesn’t necessarily take much, for it to be back in control, leading my life. That I need my community in Alcoholics Anonymous, as much as I need my apparent self. My character defects are always there, just waiting to brim to the surface. If I am not stating my step prayers, in contact with my sponsor, and living my life by A.A. rhetoric: my defects are merely germs waiting to attack, when given the chance.

– Tara

Focus on Women: Step One

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable

We Don’t do it Alone

We don’t have to attempt recovery just on our own. We connect with other women to recover from alcoholism and maintain sobriety. Other mutual-

help programs, addressing various needs, hold up A.A. as the leader in best practices for peer-group-help programs.



In strong mutual-support programs, we can honestly speak of our challenges in life, our hopes for a life of sobriety, and our struggles and victories along the way. And we can do all this without fear of being judged by our peers, since they also had similarities in their lives. This kind of mutual understanding is a powerful force for women’s healing.

We Work with a Sobriety Advisor

We ask another woman to be our sobriety advisor, traditionally called our Sponsor. We work the twelve steps with her. We develop a network of sobriety sisters with which we can socialize and get to know. We speak with our Sponsor and sobriety sisters regularly. If we get an urge to drink, we call one of them before we drink. We call women on our list until we reach someone live.

I was a *High-Functioning* Alcoholic

“I had a successful career as a software engineer in the Silicon Valley, owned my home, and didn’t beat my kids ;). Everything looked good on the outside. As a *high-functioning* alcoholic, it was very hard for me to **see** the powerlessness and unmanageability in my life. But **alcohol** called the shots, deciding who I would be with, where I would go, and what I would do. My personal relationships were unmanageable. Fortunately, I worked the steps before I lost it all.”

Perceptions of Addicted Women

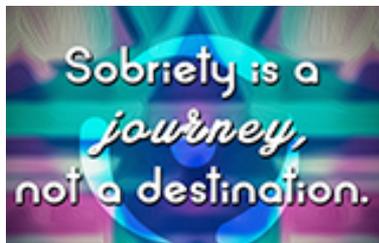
Women with addictions are judged more severely than addicted men. How many times have we heard “*Boys will be boys?*” Women are more appreciated when we don’t assert ourselves and have little power.

Career women face a **Competence-Likeably Tradeoff** that men don’t face. In the so-called “*Heidi-Howard Study*”, a senior technologist’s resume was distributed to two separate groups. But the second group got

the resume with just a one-word change: “*Heidi*” was replaced by “*Howard*.”

The group that reviewed Howard’s resume said he was a man of action, highly skilled, and would be a great guy to work for. The Heidi group said she was technically competent, but was very self-centered, not a team player, and would be hard to work with.

When we are skilled, assertive, and confident, we violate people’s expectations of us being motherly and nurturing. This kind of Gender Bias permeates all of life including recovery.



Asking for Help

Women are often expected to care for others in the home and at work. As a result, we often don’t make **self-care** a priority and lose ourselves in daily life. Asking for what we need, setting limits and

saying no are not part of our vocabulary.

I recall one woman sharing this: “*I was worried about my (1) son’s schoolwork, (2) husband’s job, and (3) father’s health. But I have to get less selfish about my problems and get into service for others.*” I noted that she just mentioned three people that were not her. Many women don’t recognize themselves, go overboard with service to others, and put themselves last. To get sober, we have to let go of that thinking.

Choices

When we’re struggling with an alcohol addiction, our choices are very limited. Alcohol decides what we’ll do and where we’ll go and how we’ll act. By taking the First Step, we regain our power of choice.

—Dr. Stephanie Covington

A Women’s Way Through the Twelve Steps, (Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials, 1995).

Once more: The alcoholic, at certain times, has no effective mental defense against the first drink, which usually lead to many more drinks. “*One drink is too*

many; a dozen drinks are never enough.” Except in a few cases, neither she nor any other human being can provide such a defense. Her defense must come from a *Higher Power*.

- Nothing will work unless you do. – Maya Angelou
 - I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. – Confucius
 - I must give up what I am to become what I can be. – Lao Tzu
- Geena Louise

A Grateful Alcoholic

I first heard these three words when I came into the rooms, I thought, *“you all are sick, I’m sorry you’re grateful to be an alcoholic”*. It took three years, hard work with a sponsor, and diving headfirst into the program to realize that I am truly a *“grateful alcoholic”*.

The best and worst day of my life was on May 26, 2017. I was dying from the inside/out from this insidious disease called alcoholism. Alcohol was my best

friend, and I did not know if I could live without it.

At a young age, I remember not feeling a part of my family and different than my fellows. My father would tell me that he would send me back to India if I acted out and my mother would tell me to “buck up”, “get over it”, or “you’re fine” whenever I felt feelings. Things were swept under the rug and I learned how to cover up my feelings really well.

I was 17 when I had my first drink and I never looked back. As they say in the rooms, “it was fun, fun with problems then just problems” ...That’s exactly how my story goes. I was a compulsive liar; I drank to get drunk and I created a lot of chaos and worry for my family and friends.

Everyone kept telling me to get help after some traumatic events happened in my life but I was “fine” or so I kept telling myself so I could drink the way I wanted to. I wasn’t going to “admit complete defeat”, I was not going to look weak. I used to believe that a “true alcoholic” starts drinking in the morning, drinks from a bottle wrapped in a paper bag, and does not have a job. I kept telling

myself I had it under control...until I didn't.

I quickly became the alcoholic that needed to take that 3am shot to stop the shakes at night. I needed to drink at all hours of the day to "function" or survive one more day. I knew I couldn't live with alcohol, but I didn't know how to live without it. By 2016, I weighed 80 pounds and this disease had me in its grips.

The weekend of May 26, I had no other choice but to get help. My life was saved that weekend. My detox led me to terrifying hallucinations, *flatlining*, and *falling into a coma*. If this is what alcohol did to me then I knew it was no longer a solution for me. I proceeded to a 90-day treatment center, lived in a Sober Living

Environment and I did everything you guys told me to do.

When I got out, I got a sponsor, worked the steps, and found a Higher Power far greater than myself who I choose to call "Her".

"Grateful" cannot even begin to express how beautiful life has been in the past 3 years. I have weathered some storms but came out stronger. You told me not to leave five minutes before the miracle and I am so glad I waited. I work this program to the best of my ability every day. I turn to my Higher Power when things are good and when things are bad.

Today, I am a full-fledged grateful alcoholic, and I am honored to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

– Priya M



The A.A. Tradition

Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached.

Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone.

The “12 Traditions” of Alcoholics Anonymous are the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, “*How can A.A. best function?*” and “*How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?*”

A.A.’s 12 Traditions are seen in their so-called “short form,” the form in general use today. This is a condensed version of the original “long form” as first printed in 1946. Because the long form is more explicit and of possible historic value, it is also presented.

Tradition One

*“Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.”*

Long Form

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

A.A. Statement of Unity

This we owe to AA’s Future;

To place our common welfare first; To keep our Fellowship united.

For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

Some groups recite the Statement of Unity at the close of an A.A. meeting.

Practice These Principles – Tradition One

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

Calendar of Events

Until further notice these meetings and all future meetings will be conducted on Zoom.

[North County \(District 04\) General Service Meeting](#)

January 13, 2021 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 825 266 6518 Password: Service

New member orientation is at 6:45pm.

[South County \(District 40\) General Service Meeting](#)

January 19, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 105 811 458 Password: 007835

[H&I Committee Meeting](#)

January 26, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 854 1395 3028 Password: area71h&I

[Switch Hitters](#)

Saturday, January 30th at 5-8pm PST. Everyone is welcome.

Sober & Free is San Jose's LGBTQ+ annual AA conference.

Next Event...Switch Hitters

AA & AlAnon drag performers.

Zoom ID: 880 7150 1474 Passcode: drag

Find us at soberandfree.org

See graphical announcement, below.

INTERGROUP MEETING

February 3, 2021 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 97623870155

PI/CPC Workshop & Meeting

February 7, 2021 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 745 839 980. Password: 903242

Urgent:

PI/CPC committee chairperson needed; please click [here](#).

More information on the [PI/CPC Committee](#) page.

New member orientation starts at 5:30.

North County (District 04) General Service Meeting

February 10, 2021 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 825 266 6518 Password: Service

New member orientation is at 6:45pm.

South County (District 40) General Service Meeting

February 16, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 105 811 458 Password: 007835



About our Central Office

Central Office is *Physically* closed but open *Virtually*.

Monday, Thursday, Friday: 10AM to 4:30PM

Tuesday, Wednesday: 10AM to 6:30PM

Saturday and Sunday: Closed

Please [Click Here](#) for more Information about Central Office Holiday Hours.



Central Office now offers Curbside Service!

Here's How it Works

- **Call** Central Office with your order.
- We will take your order and credit card information.
- Your order will be available for curbside pick-up on:

Saturdays ONLY from 10am – 2pm