



February 2021
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A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERGROUP CENTRAL OFFICE OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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Step Two, Tradition Two,
and Honesty

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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: What are the style guidelines?**A: We strive for consistency.**

We accept writings from a variety of authors, then edit them for style, length less than 900 words, correct spelling, fonts, and more. It is challenging to publish each issue in a timely manner. If you can follow some style guidelines, that would help us out a lot. Below is a non-exhaustive list of basic style guidelines.

1. Break all articles into several paragraphs, instead of one big paragraph.
2. Use "A.A." and not "AA".
3. Carefully avoid long, run-on sentences.
4. In referencing A.A. books, please use the full titles for the first reference. Optionally include their nicknames for later references. Please italicize the full titles. Use "&" in "12 & 12", not "12 X 12", which indicates that there are 144 items 😊.
 - *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book)
 - *A.A.'s basic text Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book)
 - *Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous)*
 - *A.A.'s basic text Alcoholics Anonymous*, affectionately nicknamed the Big Book
 - *12 & 12 (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)*
 - *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (or 12 & 12)

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@asaanjose.org

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Wishing you all a sober, joyous, and safe holiday season as we close out this incredibly eventful year of 2020. Thank you to the many members who contributed to the COIN this past year. I am extending an invitation to the rest of the fellowship to send your stories, artwork, cartoons, and ideas. You will notice some changes to the format of the COIN moving forward.

Geena Louise has joined the COIN team as a fellow editor, and I am incredibly grateful to her for all the work she has put in over the last few months.

I could never have imagined how abundant and beautiful a sober life could be. I did not believe you when you told me. It has been something I have had to experience for myself. The beginnings were painful, but I held on to what a fellow A.A. told me my first week of sobriety ~four years ago. She told me to hold on, "It gets better." It has, and it does. As we continue to shelter in place here in Santa Clara County, I pray for blessings and peace for our fellowship. Happy Holidays to All!

Sincerely,
Mel M
COIN Editor

COIN Editors: Mel M and Geena Louise

Central Office Executive **Director:** Bruce K, **Website:** Phil: Phil

Sunlight of the Spirit **Art Corner:** Elizabeth M, **Cartoons:** Alicia L.

The COIN is published on behalf of the Santa Clara County Intergroup Service Group of Alcoholics Anonymous (Intergroup). Opinions expressed are the writers', and publication of any article, event, or other information does not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous, Intergroup, or Central Office. Quotations from A.A. books and pamphlets, and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

COIN Schedule of Topics

Newsletter Issue Month	Submission Deadline	Step & Tradition	Virtue
January	20-Dec	1	Honesty
February	20-Jan	2	Hope
March	20-Feb	3	Faith
April	20-Mar	4	Courage
May	20-Apr	5	Integrity
June	20-May	6	Willingness
July	20-Jun	7	Humility
August	20-Jul	8	Love
September	20-Aug	9	Justice
October	20-Sep	10	Perseverance
November	20-Oct	11	Spiritual Awareness
December	20-Nov	12	Service

Next Month's Issue (March 2021)

Topics: Step Three, Faith & Tradition Three

Please email all submissions to coin@aasanjose.org

A Deep Hole And a Way Out

An alcoholic fell into a deep hole and couldn't get out. A business person went by. The alcoholic called out for help. The business person threw him some money and told him to buy a ladder. But the alcoholic couldn't find a ladder in the hole.



A doctor stopped by. She gave him some drugs and said, *"Take this, it will relieve the pain."* The alcoholic said thanks, but when the pills ran out, he was still in the hole.

Soon, a renowned psychologist stopped by and heard the alcoholic's cries for help. The psychologist asked *"How did you get in there? Were you born there? Did you parents put you in there?"* The alcoholic spoke with him for an hour. Then the psychologist said he had to leave, but he would be back next week.

A priest came by and gave the alcoholic a bible. He said that he would pray for the alcoholic. After he left, the alcoholic read the bible. But he was still in this deep hole.

A recovering, sober alcoholic happened to pass by. The alcoholic in the hole, again, cried out for help. Right away, the sober alcoholic jumped into the hole with him. The other alcoholic said, *"What are you doing? Now we're both stuck in this hole."* But the sober alcoholic said, *"It's okay. I've been here before, and I know the way out."*

True Humility and an Open Mind

Step Two is the Rallying Point

Alcoholism is an incurable disease contracted by, you might say, 10% of the population. It is an incurable disease, but it can be arrested. It is no respecter of age, gender, intelligence, religion, or economic status. Why, you might say, 90% of the population can drink with impunity is hard to understand. But we who have been in the A.A. program for a while know that you can adopt a way of life that removes the obsession to drink without the white knuckling side effects and you will be comfortable in your own skin without self-medication.

The symptoms of alcoholism are a combination of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The alcoholic awakes every morning to face, “The hideous four horsemen, Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.” (pg. 151 *Alcoholics Anonymous or Big Book*.) Doctors, Counselors, Priests, and Ministers, when afflicted, come to A.A. to get relief from this horrible disease. When our desperation out-weighs our denial we show up at the doors of A.A. and discover a road map to a life of peace and happiness that we believed did not exist.

Alcoholism is a progressive disease and the A.A. program is a progressive solution and not a quick fix. These desperate alcoholics find a degree of hope and comfort when first exposed to the A.A. group and the laughter and lighthearted banter going on between the members before the meeting even starts. They hear members sharing about Guilt, Shame, Fear and Insecurity and they identified with these symptoms. They hear laughter when a person describes a horrible incident in their life and they think they are laughing at the horror. But, in fact, they discover that the laughter was focused on the absurdity of our alcoholic thinking, at the time, and they all identify with it.

If they are fortunate, the long, slow process has just begun, and each day becomes better than the last. They begin to understand *why they did the things they did* while under the influence of alcoholism and in the grip of alcoholic thinking. They begin to understand how their irrational fears influenced their decision-making and discover that the solution to that problem is to live by unselfish and proven principles. They begin to understand that guilt, shame, fear, and insecurity were the core issues that could be put to rest by sobriety. Halfway through their second drink everything seemed right with the world. The world had not changed, but their perception of it had.



To compensate for the fears and insecurities, they had to protect their turf. So, they learned how to rationalize those established behavioral patterns they were not proud of. Family responsibilities

took a backseat to the boozing and their family let them know about it so, back to the bar they went. The guilt and shame weighed heavy on their mind and to drink would take care of that temporarily.

In the program they come to learn how to admit their mistakes and make restitution for all those faulty behaviors and get on the positive side of the ledger. "...Selfishness---Self-Centeredness! That we think is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion self-seeking and self-pity we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate". (Big Book pg.62) Can you blame them?

There are 12 steps in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and each step is preparatory to the next. If we give due diligence to every one of those 12 Steps, we evolved into the person we always wished we could become. We can't stop drinking if we can't stop the alcoholic thinking. Again, In the program, each day seems better than the day before. One day at a time. One issue at a time. One solution at a time. I can't explain my A.A. experience any better than that.

— Rick R

Focus on Women:

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Turn it Over to Life

We often want to defend ourselves from harm when we feel that life has cheated us, or people have betrayed us. We try to control them. This is really an illusion of control. So, we continue our addictions, leading to even more isolation. Often, alcoholics believe the solution to isolation is more isolation.

Without something to entrust, life is very difficult without being able to trust anything and anyone. Can we come to believe that we can something can be a positive reinforcement for us? Can life itself support us?

Many of us in A.A. found the courage to believe that our sobriety sisters, Sponsor, and a Higher Power can support us very well. It takes some experience in the A.A. program to accept this idea. Truly, life would be significantly easier if we didn't have struggle along by ourselves.

We can set aside this illusion of control, and it is just an illusion, if

allow a higher power to enter our lives. As said many times, we don't have to get sober by ourselves in isolation. We found that when we start to trust, we become more at ease and comfortable.

She who controls others may be powerful, but she who has mastered herself is mightier still. – Lao Tzu

Give up Self-Will, practice Self-Love and Self-Care

With my sponsees, I ask that they make a two-column list of "self": phrases: negative and positive. On the negative side there is self-will, self-centeredness, and self-gratification. In the positive column, there is self-love, self-care, self-worth, and self-esteem. I look in the mirror and say "I love you, Geena Louise. You are so generous and kind to people."

I also say to myself, "No good deed goes unpunished." That is one of my thoughts that I must continuously suppress for my own good. For women who have been victims of physical and/or emotional abuse like myself, I must put aside thoughts that I deserved this abuse or that I was too sensitive.

Forgetting about our idea of God from the Past

In spite of the men's Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) saying that any concept of a Higher Power will be effective, it continuously refers to a traditional Christian viewpoint. For many women who faced negative male domination such as unsupportive, non-affirming, or abusive experiences, the male wording and concepts in the men's Big Book seem punitive and oppressive. But we don't have to reject the idea of a Higher Power. We just need to adapt it to a positive image for ourselves.

Knowing what we believe about anything can be a good start, because many of us gave up our inner knowing to conform to others' expectations and gain acceptance. Quite often we sacrifice some of our most important beliefs for the sake of relationships. We get further and further away from our real beliefs when we try to please other people or avoid their rejection.

—Dr. Stephanie Covington
[A Women's Way Through the Twelve Steps](#), (Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials, 1995).

We can forget our old idea and others' idea of God and reinvent it for ourselves. We can call it Our Higher Power, Goddess, Spirit of the Universe, or simply Life.



We try to accept the steam of Life, and instead of trying to swim up stream against it, we can swim down stream and navigate life better. One of my start-up-company business advisors once said to me “The world calls the shots. We must adapt to that.”

- *“By letting it go, it all gets done. The world is won by those who let it go. But when you try and try, the world is beyond the winning.”* – Lao Tzu

— Geena Louise

Why We Do the Things We Do

One issue at a time

When born, most of us come into the world untainted and perfectly

innocent. From that time on, we are influenced by everything we experience in life, good and bad. If we are loved and nurtured, we may develop a feeling of trust and safety. But if, as it sometimes happens, we get our hand slapped when we pick up something from the coffee table, it may trigger an attitude of defiance and resistance. These two opposites are just examples of the many conflicts we encounter in a lifetime. We are conditioned to think and react in a certain way as the result of the experiences we are exposed to.

Newcomers in A.A., and even some seasoned veterans, often find it hard to grasp a concept of “a power greater than ourselves.” This is probably the biggest hurdle we in A.A. must face in our search for a happy and meaningful life. Once we get past all our resistance to the concept of a Higher Power, it becomes much easier to proceed with the rest of the program. What is meant by the word God and what God can do for us, can mean something different to just about everyone that is having difficulty with it. If God alone was the answer; why do priests and ministers come to A.A. for treatment; why not just go to church?

Alcoholics Anonymous is here for all alcoholics that want to get sober regardless of their approach to faith. Anyone that thinks that we are

trying to convert someone into a religion or out of a religion is simply misguided. The Big book (*Alcoholics Anonymous*) and the 12 & 12 (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*) have many comments explaining this, but unfortunately this old conditioning, bolstered by the ego, seems to block some of us from breaking down the resistance on this subject.

Some members may just fake it to appear to be going along with the program, but never getting the results. If we denied the possibility of a God of the different religious groups, they could not have A.A. available to them. And if we made it a requirement that we picked one of those beliefs, atheists would be left out and where would Buddhists stand?



If a person believes that he does not have a higher power, I might remind him/her that alcohol was more powerful, or else why would

they need A.A.? With this in mind, I might suggest that they may only need to find a power greater than alcohol to begin with. Then, as it says in Step 2 in the 12 & 12, "To acquire it, I had only to stop fighting, and practice the rest of the A.A. program as enthusiastically as I could."

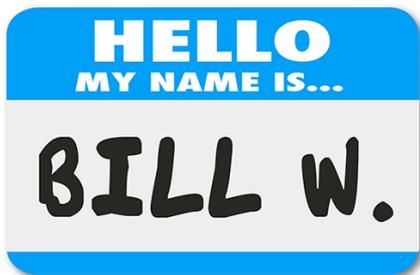
As I look back on it now, I realize that was exactly the way I found my way through this challenge. I find absolutely no conflict in any approach that one discovers on his own, only that he practices the rest of the program with enthusiasm. What it seems to imply is that if we trust the process, and just follow the suggestions, we will find a suitable understanding of a power greater than ourselves that we can do business with.

I'm still not sure what or who (if you like) I am asking for guidance from, but I'm open minded about these things. I have to let everyone find their own brand of enlightenment, without prejudging anyone else's approach on this matter. I believe that changing my perception was what put me firmly on the road to recovery. It is not that complicated. If I don't get caught up in the debate and just follow the simplest suggestions, it all works out fine.

— Rick R

Step 2: Coming to Believe We will be Restored to Sanity

Bill W did an outstanding job of choosing every single word he selected for each of the 12 steps. By example, the first word of Step 1 is “we” for good reason - it is “we” working together that enables us to get better. Our disease is born of selfishness and self-centeredness that thrives in isolation and disconnection. The “we” of our fellowship is an important aspect of its success, and an essential element of our unity and recovery. It is through our service to one another – the passing along of the message of the 12 steps that we are so freely given – that we get, and stay, sober.



On the heels of the wise wording of Step One, comes the equally well-crafted Step Two. It reads, “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” In this step, the “we” is

clearly implied, but what I appreciate is that Bill invites us to “come to believe.”

First, we must “come.” Propelled by the “**Gift Of Desperation**” (hitting our bottom) we move towards, or into a place – AA – where we come into contact with the “we” of our program: our fellows. Often, this is our first concept of “GOD” – the “**Group Of Drunks,**” with whom we share a common malady and a common solution. Then we “come to” which indicates that there is a process at work – that of changing. When we “come to believe,” we begin the process of accepting that a change in our beliefs is happening (and required) – from that of self-reliance to GOD-reliance. While it doesn’t need to happen overnight, it does need to happen for our sanity to be restored.

When something is “restored,” it’s brought back, or put back to, a former or original state of wholeness. While our drinking may have started innocently enough (providing us with the ease and comfort we sought from our troubles), it grew into an obsession that took away our ability to choose. If you’re a real alcoholic like me, then after taking that first drink, your power of choice was stolen

away. At that point, you had no control over what alcohol could do to you, or what it could take away from you. While you may not have consciously chosen it, alcohol clearly became your Higher Power (or HP).

Given my erratic, irresponsible, and ultimately destructive actions after the first drink, I have no doubt that my active alcoholism had stolen away my sanity. Coming to believe in a power greater than myself – something significantly more powerful than my ultimately fatal disease – was essential if I ever hoped to override the insanity brought on by my alcoholism.

Whereas some of us “come to believe” quickly, others (such as myself) came to believe more slowly. However, once we did come to believe, we “could” be restored to sanity. “Could” is the operative word here, and it is past tense for “can.” It’s used to indicate possibility and conditionality. We “could” be restored to sanity, provided we took certain actions, working the 12 steps)

My sponsor explained to me that I would need to choose what I wanted for a Higher Power – an option I didn’t know was available to me. She suggested I create a “want ad” for my HP – to fire my old, angry God,

and to hire a new one. And she also suggested I tear down my hand-me-down God and, instead, seek a God that could restore me to sanity.

Per her homework assignment, I wrote down my Must Haves and my Deal Breakers – everything I could ever want in a “GOD/HP” and everything I did NOT want, to be clear about what I would be willing to seek.



The Must Haves included: unconditionally loving, abundantly available (24 x 7 x 365), and provider of infinite possibilities to my problems. The Deal Breakers included: never cruel or punishing, and never abandons me!

My sponsor applauded my Must Haves and made a few additional suggestions on how I might interact with such a wonderful Higher Power

(that I call GOD – as in **Grand Organizing Design**).

Then she told me this: “Now that you’ve made it clear what you want and don’t want, you need to stop abandoning, punishing, and being cruel to *yourself*.”

That stopped me in my tracks.

Had I been blaming God for my own self-harming behaviors and self-limiting beliefs? How many times had I given up on myself, believing I wasn’t good enough to live happily? How many times had I been cruel to myself, calling myself vicious names? And how often had I punished myself for making a simple mistake? Too many times! What I had attempted to blame on God, was really me doing “self-will run riot.”

Not surprisingly, the word “God” appears 134 times in the first 164 pages of A.A.’s basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book). If we are real alcoholics, the Big Book tells us that only a spiritual experience will conquer our illness. We must find a spiritual basis of life, or else. For people like us, the other options are severely limited: incarceration, institutions, or death.

Lack of power is our dilemma! The main objective of the Big Book is to

enable us to find a power greater than ourselves. It reminds us that God doesn’t make too hard terms with those who seek God – that the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. My sponsor encouraged me to seek! She told me to ask God to reveal him, her, or itself to me. My job was to pay attention and to seek God. Only through this seeking could I find what I needed to recover.

Selfishness and self-centeredness had been at the root of my troubles. Alcohol was never my problem. It was my solution – albeit a lousy one! I blamed alcohol for my troubles, but alcohol isn’t to blame. My drinking was but a symptom of my spiritual malady. But now I have a spiritual solution that works!

I turned to alcohol for solution – a solution it could never provide. I thought I knew best, or better than others. I’ve foolishly played God out of fear of losing something I had, or not getting something I wanted. I don’t need to act as I once did because today, thanks to the 12 steps, I have a solution that works!

— Francine B

In Memory Of...

Jim Harville '63, A.A. Legend

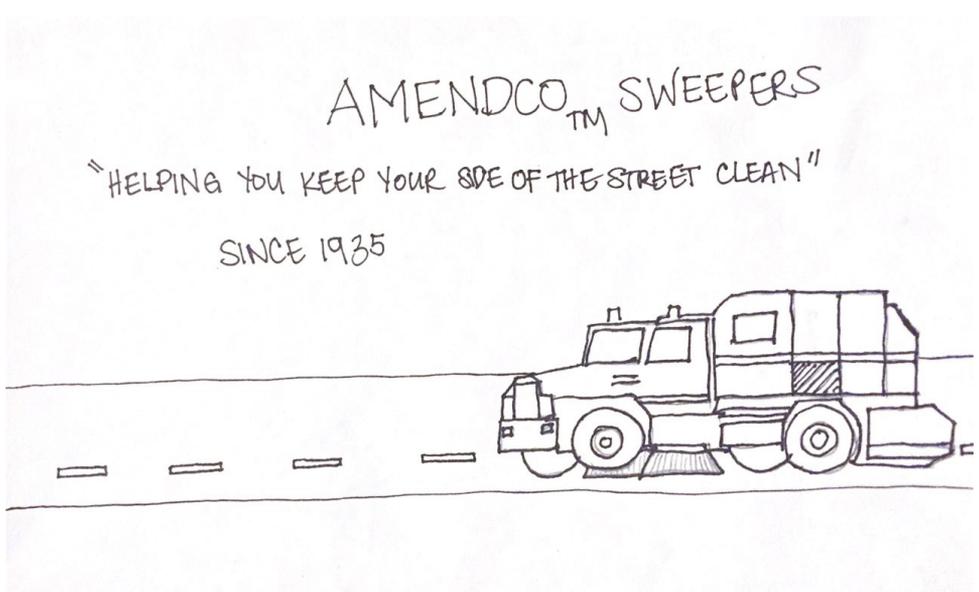
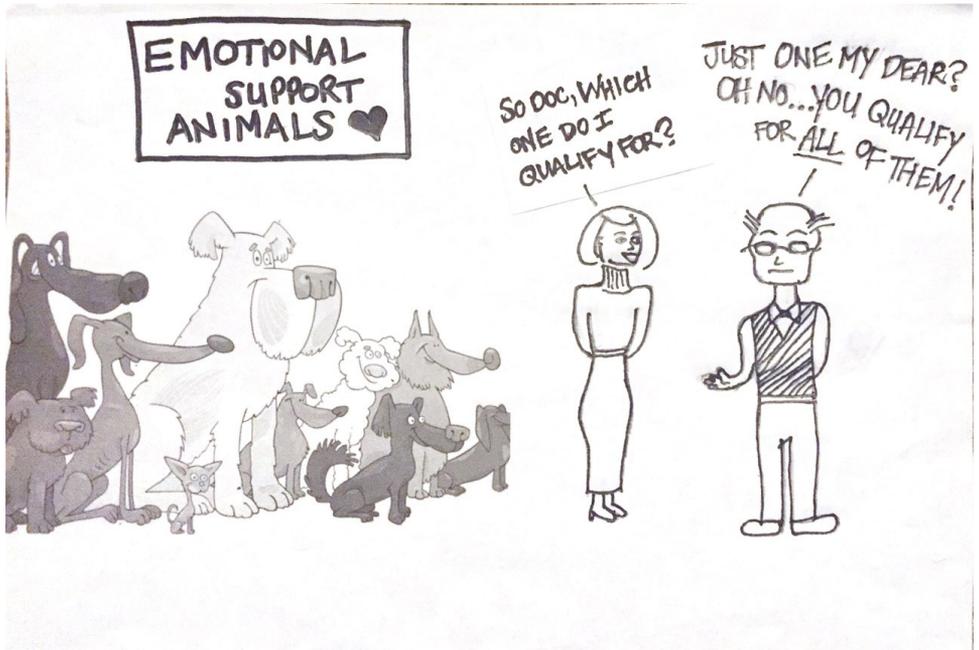
Jim Harville '63, legendary Bellarmine English teacher, Speech, and Debate coach, passed away earlier today, January 12, 2001. After being admitted to the hospital this past weekend, he was diagnosed with cancer, and died soon thereafter.

Mr. Harville lived a life of service to others through his work as a longtime sponsor in Alcoholics Anonymous. Sober himself for more than three decades, Mr. Harville devotedly worked with others in recovery to help them through their struggles.

“God has visited grace upon us, for he has allowed us to see where we’ve been blind.” Barak Obama said. *“He has given us the chance, where we’ve been lost, to find our best selves. We may not have earned it, this grace, with our complacency and shortsightedness and fear of each other – but we got it all the same”.*

— Bernadette P

Cartoons by Alicia L



Tradition Two

“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.”

Long Form[‡]

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

Editor’s Comment: This is the only Tradition where the long form is shorter than the short form.

Practice These Principles – Tradition Two

1. Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelfth Step jobs or other AA responsibility?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
4. Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
6. In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge

[‡]Inclusive, Agnostic Version

For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a collaborative discussion resulting in essential group consensus through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Calendar of Events

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

[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

H&I Committee Meeting

February 23, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 854 1395 3028 Password: area71h&l

INTERGROUP MEETING

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

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

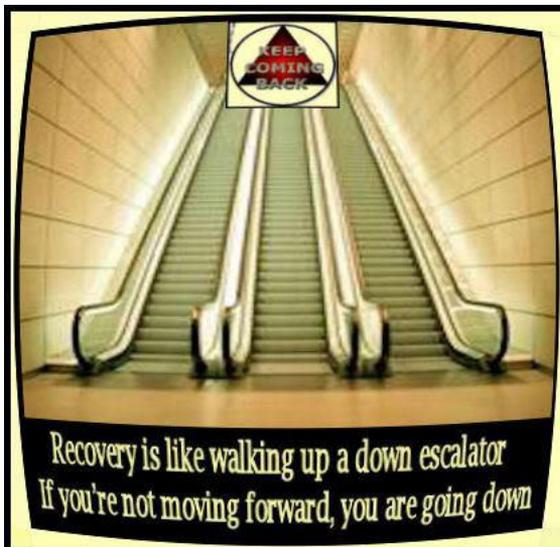
Meeting ID: 97623870155

PI/CPC Workshop & Meeting

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 745 839 980. Password: 903242

New member orientation starts at 5:30.



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. See hours above.
- We will take your order and credit card information.
- Your order will be available for curbside pick-up on:

Saturdays ONLY from 10am – 2pm