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A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERGROUP CENTRAL OFFICE OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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Writing for the COIN

Q: Who writes the COIN articles?

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. As editors, we do not change the message.

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. Avoid long run-on sentences.
3. Use "A.A." and not "AA."
4. Carefully avoid long, run-on sentences.
5. 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".
 - *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: What about Quality?

A: Don't worry about that.

There is nothing more powerful than one alcoholic speaking with and supporting another alcoholic. Indeed, most of us never trusted a professional about our drinking. How could they possibly know about our drinking? But I believe other alcoholics. So, we are armatures by design. So never worry about whether what you write is good enough. Just speak from the heart with honesty.

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 submissions to: coin@asaanjose.org

* A few years ago, I was explaining some of the principles of the A.A. program to my brother-in-law. After I said something was in the Big Book, he said, "*That's in the Bible?*" I replied, "*No, I'm not talking about The Good Book. I'm talking about The Big Book, which is our nickname for the book Alcoholics Anonymous.*"

Letter from an Editor

Dear Readers,

A.A. has been the model for mutual support help groups for decades. There is not a single recommended way of working the 12 Steps. But we don't go rogue and do whatever we like. We get a Sponsor that guides us as a sobriety coach. Without this guidance, we may avoid the work needed to achieve sobriety and its associated benefits.

We may hear different members of A.A. give conflicting suggestions and opinions. That is just fine. But we all agree that working the 12 Steps is a solution to the drink problem. It is our only defense against the first drink, which enviably leads to more, along with the associated wreckage, humiliation, shame and unimaginability in our lives.

There is nothing more powerful than one alcoholic speaking with and supporting another alcoholic. There are several ways we may carry the message. The most common ways are speaking at meetings and Sponsoring people. Another way is to write an article for the COIN, which reaches a large audience. So, we invite all of you to contribute an article to us. We are all amateurs. So never worry about whether what you write is good enough. Just speak from the heart with honesty.

Sincerely,
Geena Louise
Your COIN Co-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 (April 2021)

Topics: Step Four, Courage & Tradition Four

Please email all submissions to coin@aasanjose.org

Step Three

A Decision and a Prayer

For some years I assumed the decision of turning my will and life over to “God as I understood Him” took place when I prayed the well-known prayer on page 63 of A.A.’s basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book). But in retrospect, I discovered that my decision had already been made! The bottom paragraph of page 62 reminded me: “next we decided in this drama of life that God was going to be our director.” The decision was made before the prayer!

The Big Book states that the astounding promises on page 63 begin to happen right away (before the prayer). My sponsor allowed near-zero time between the decision and the prayer. Immediately following Step Two we prayed the Third step prayer together.

Those promises began to manifest shortly thereafter and have continued to this day! I especially appreciate the promise of being reborn. This means to me that I can now see and act on the truth in drink. I have not had to drink alcohol since!

I like the saying: “I can’t. God can! I’ll ask Him to help me.”

The Third Step decision, followed by a prayer-of-askance, does not provide a comprehensive assurance

The COIN

of continuing sobriety. A decision minus action is only an intention. Half measures availed us nothing. Someone said: “God will help you



with the steps, but He won’t do them for you.” We are told: “This was only a beginning.”

Then we are told to launch out on a course of vigorous action. This, of course, would be to follow the clear-cut Twelve Step directions from our basic text. My sponsor was adamant concerning the Big Book timetable, not only with for first three, but as prescribed throughout all the steps. I was so lucky to be afforded a Big Book sponsor. Thank you, God!

— Bob S

Secular Sobriety

Yes, it does Work for Some of us

My name is Neil and I’m an alcoholic. I always chuckle a little bit if I get called on to share and the topic is “Faith”. Inevitably people laugh, and “ooOOOohh...” conspiratorially, expecting me to get philosophically cranky about God, or

bring an attorney's case for how Faith isn't applicable to me - because I am an atheist.

I'm all too happy to disappoint them.



I was practically raised in A.A., having gotten sober at the age of 18. But I grew up in a secular-humanist household. I was never indoctrinated into the church, or religious teachings and had little interest in adopting them. Nonetheless, I was quite interested in achieving the freedom from drugs and alcohol that my group appeared to enjoy, let alone the ease at which most of you laughed. And so, I did your steps.

When we got to step three my sponsor had me kneel with him on the lawn in front of our home group and we held hands as we recited the 3rd step prayer. Far from feeling a nearness to my "Creator," it just felt humiliating.

I knew from that moment forward that I was going to need to reinterpret some key points in the steps if I was going to be able to stay

here. To put them into a language that worked for me while honoring the principle at hand in the step in front of me.

The principle in step one was Honesty, and its spirit became "I need help". Step two followed that with Hope, translated to "You have a solution?". Step three became "I'll give it a try!". For me, Faith was never about trust in a doctrine, or unquestioning worship of an ideology, or a God. It was about the evidence in front of me that if the steps worked for you, they could

work for me too. It never demanded that I surrender my ability to think critically. Far from it. One of my greatest skills is the ability to pick fights with a concept to test its soundness. Your lives working be-



Commitment to Excellence
— Ben N

came encouragement for me to dive into a 4th step using that critical thinking with my sponsor as a guide.

As I grew in the program, I began to have faith in the principles and the steps. If I applied them to the next person, situation, or belief I might be struggling with that they probably weren't going to let me down. If only I take that next leap.

— Neil L

Focus on Women:

Step Three

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

When we feel that life is taking us to places that we don't want to go, it can be depressing. We may be overwhelmed by other people's demands of us. We may try controlling things or people we cannot control, fighting back. Letting go of this burden is what Step Three enables us to do. We let a Higher Power take over, letting us have a new freedom and a new happiness. We let go giving us the power to be creative in new ways.



Some of us believed that if we tried to control people and things, we can avoid more pain. It didn't work, so we drank. The idea of

letting go can be frightening and can make us anxious. Are we really responsible for everything? No, our responsibility is just our own attitudes and actions.

Will everything fall apart if we stop trying to control? Maybe some things are supposed to fall apart. Trying to prevent that is tiring. Women often fall into the trap of being the dispute broker, interceding in conflicts. Being a peacemaker will never end since there will always be conflicts.

Why is it your responsibility to manage everyone else's feelings?

What would happen if you focused on your own emotional needs? If you stop trying to "fix" the problem, it might move in a surprising new direction.

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

Women are expected to support others, handling their details so they are free to live life. Society expects us to worry. We worry about maintaining our household, remembering birthdays, keeping our family and friends close, and more.

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.

I finally realized that other people have a Higher Power that takes care of them. We can practice self-care if we can worry about others less.

Let's be aware of the difference between surrender and submission. When there is a force that's trying to control us and we give in, that is submission. When we let go of controlling, that is surrendering to our Higher Power.

Women are expected to be submissive allowing our husbands, life partners, parents, and bosses to take control of decisions. We may hear that we are a devoted wife or model employee. We need to avoid letting these breadcrumbs of praise to encourage our submissiveness. Step Three does not ask us to be submissive, but to surrender trying to control.

The *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book) says, "We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He

provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well." This image of a dominating father figure is very difficult for some women to accept. Entrusting our lives "to the care of God as we understood Him" suggests that if we are well behaved and passive, a male authority figure will save us.



Instead, we need to have a loving relationship with a Higher Power that will guide us to good decision making. We can't get sober being passive. Twelve Steps are a program of action.

Self-Forgetting can be a Defect of Character for women. "How persistently we claim the right to decide all by ourselves just what we shall think and just how we shall act." says the Big Book. Actually, women rarely do this. We have been selfless in supporting others.

We eliminate self-will, self-centeredness, and self-gratification. We embrace self-love, self-care, self-worth, and self-esteem. Without a sense of self and not knowing ourselves, we cannot

image a power greater than ourselves.

We don't do this program alone. We develop a balance between others and ourselves by learning from other sober women that are accomplishing this for themselves.

- It is as impossible for humans to demonstrate the existence of God, as it would be for Sherlock Holmes to demonstrate the existence of Arthur Conan Doyle. – Frederick Buechner
 - Our pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses our understanding. – Khalil Gibran, Christian Philosopher
 - It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. – Thomas Jefferson
 - Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step – Lao Tzu
- Geena Louise

Turning it Over Letting Go

In the previous step, Step 2, we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. With Step 3, we are invited to make a decision to turn our lives over to the God of our

understanding. For many of us, this presents itself as a pretty tall order.

It's said that the first three steps can be summarized as, "I can't; God can; so, I think I'll let God!" Yet it's impossible to take Step 3 until we've taken the first two steps. So, I must ask myself, have I fully acknowledged the fatal powerlessness of my disease, and have I come to believe there is a solution to this fatal disease? In my case, the answer to that question has proven to be a resounding, "YES!."



If I want to be free of my killing disease, then I MUST accept help – without reservation – from a Power greater than myself, and I MUST begin taking the actions that will allow me to receive that help. In other words, I must surrender, deciding from here on to follow spiritual guidance in all that I do and say.

My first thought may continue to send me into "stinking thinking," given I'm stuck with that same brain that thought consuming massive quantities of alcohol was a good idea, but I now have an action that I

can take that frees me from my addled thinking and ultimately fatal disease – I can let go and let God!

It is said that this third step is simple, yet not easy. It's not easy because for this alcoholic, this third step decision means that I must now adopt a new (unfamiliar) way of thinking and acting on life. I must let go of my preconceived notions about what is right for me (and others) and I need to STOP playing God. Instead, when faced with choices, I must earnestly seek guidance from my Higher Power. And when that guidance comes, I need to act upon it!

This new way of life begins with a willingness to adopt a whole new attitude about myself and the world around me. I begin to live life on life's terms, not on my own self will (run riot).

While the only relief I will ever know from the disease of alcoholism comes from entire abstinence as stated in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (or Big Book). I also know that faith without works is dead. I MUST take action! Having put down the bottle, I now need to pick up a spiritual tool kit that enables me to live sanely through good times and bad. But to do so, I will need to continue to take actions as outlined in the remainder of the steps within our Twelve Step program.

Having made the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of the God of my understanding, I now have access to a limitless source of wisdom and guidance – what I like to refer to as infinite possibilities for my happiness, my health, and my healing (and for the benefit of the entire world around me).

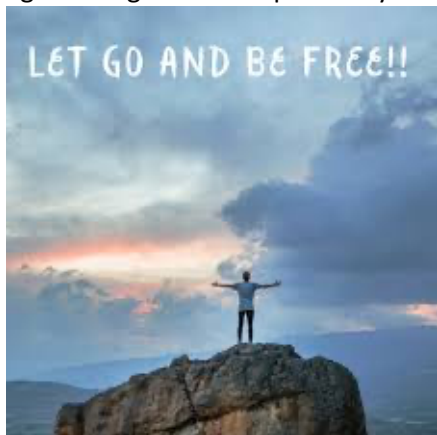
Amazingly, intuition begins to grow – it's God's direct line into my heart (mind and body). Previously, my out-of-control obsession with alcohol and drinking interfered with that connection.



And yet, by working these Steps, the interference begins to be removed and my intuition begins to function properly, helping me to focus on God's will – not my own – so that I can proceed to live life in harmony, with compassion, grace and dignity.

Each and every morning I'm faced with a new day. It lies before me, untainted and unknown. I can consciously choose to surrender my will and to focus on what God would have me do and be. That's when things just seem to work – when I step into the abundant flow of God's wisdom, love, and guidance – when I live from my heart rather than from my head.

How do I know God's will? It's very simple. When uncertain, I can place my focus on doing the next right thing. I can open fully to



my inner knowing by going through my heart (and listening to my gut) rather than turning to my head – an often all too noisy place where “the committee” lives and chatters at me of things I can do that will lead me astray if I'm not connected to my Higher Power.

Self-will and self-knowledge availed me nothing. And yet a power greater than myself can restore me

to sanity – provided that I allow that Power to do what it can for me! Today, I can stop wearing myself out trying to make, push, and force everything to happen as if I were the one in charge. I am NOT God and I need to stop playing at being God!

Recovery is a spiritual process. Step 3 is when the doors of hope, faith, and trust are opened wide, allowing me, maybe for the first time, to actually take a deep, cleansing breath, and feel the expansiveness of serenity – one of the many gifts of sobriety.

The essence of step three is quite beautiful. I turn over my will, get out of the way, and am restored to reality, honesty, balance, and true peace of mind.

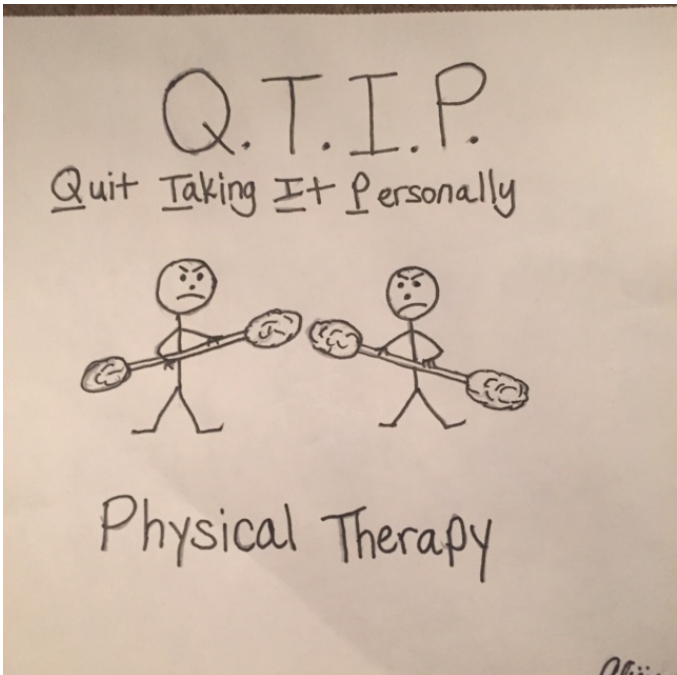
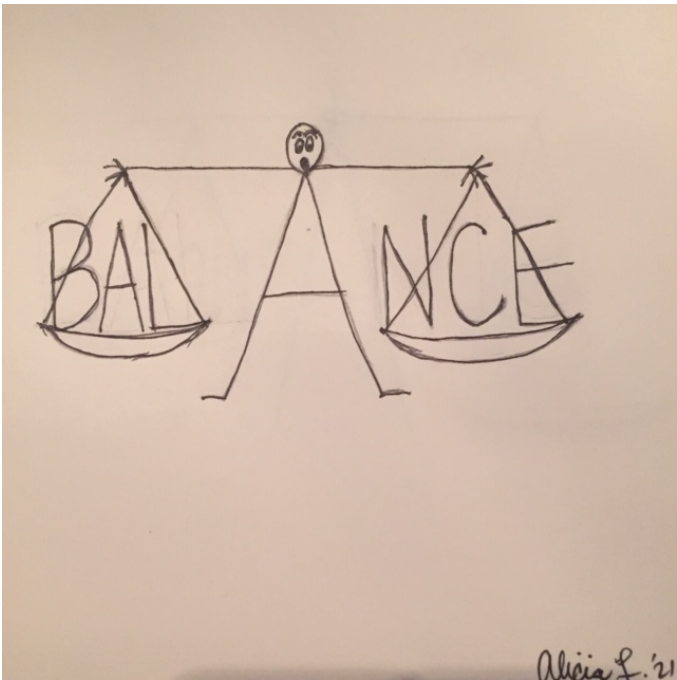
From the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 63, one of my very favorite prayers:

God, I offer myself to Thee-To build with me and to 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!

TIME TO LET GO AND LET GOD!

— Francine B

Cartoons by Alicia L



Tradition Three

“The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Long Form[‡]

Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence, we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Practice These Principles – Tradition Three

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new A.A. members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my A.A. group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at A.A. needing information or help (even if they can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what they do for a living? Where they live? What their domestic arrangements are? Whether they had been to A.A. before? What their other problems are?

[‡] At one of our women's meetings, an early-stage transwoman attended. She was wearing women's clothing, but still looked masculine. After the meeting, my sponsor told me that it seemed wrong for her to attend. In private, I asked some other regular members what they thought. Later, we took a group conscience and decided this: *The only requirement for attendance is a desire to be female.*

Calendar of Events

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

New Intergroup Rep Meeting-Virtual Zoom Only

March 3 @ 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 976 2387 0155

[Find out more »](#)

Intergroup Meeting-Virtual Zoom Only

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

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 976 2387 0155

[Find out more »](#)

Secretary Workshop – Virtual (Zoom Only)

March 6 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 976 2387 0155

Highly recommended for new Secretaries

[Find out more »](#)

PI/CPC Workshop & Meeting

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

New member orientation starts at 5:30.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

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.

[Find out more »](#)

North County (District 04) General Service Meeting

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

New member orientation is at 6:45pm.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 825 266 6518 Password: Service

[Find out more »](#)

Bridging the Gap Meeting Virtual (Zoom Only)

March 15 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 547 699 0102 Password: 481388

[Find out more »](#)

South County (District 40) General Service Meeting

March 16, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 105 811 458 Password: 007835

[Find out more »](#)

Diverter/12th Steppers Workshop is Virtual (Zoom Only)

March 20 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 172 445 181 Password: 019237

[Find out more »](#)

H&I Committee Meeting

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

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 854 1395 3028 Password: area71h&I

[Find out more »](#)

Secretary Workshop – Virtual (Zoom Only)

April 3 @ 10:00 am - 11:00 am

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 976 2387 0155

Highly recommended for new Secretaries

[Find out more »](#)

PI/CPC Workshop & Meeting

April 4, 2021 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

New member orientation starts at 5:30.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

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.

[Find out more »](#)

**EAST BAY INTERGROUP PI & CPC PRESENTS:
ALCOHOLISM RECOVERY PROGRAM**



EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY



THROUGH SERVICE

MARCH 7TH, 2021
9AM PACIFIC TIME

09:00am - 10:30am	Kathleen C.H. (TX)	Angels, Saints, & Sinners : The Pioneer Women of Early A.A.
10:30am - 11:30am	Tim C. (CA)	Taking A.A. to the Public!
11:30am - 12:30pm	Michael R. (CA)	Staying Sober Through Service
12:30pm - 02:00pm	Class A Trustees, General Service Board A.A. Leslie Backus Al Mooney PHD Nancy McCarthy	Service to A.A.
02:00pm - 03:30pm	Rodger W.	The Military and The Message
03:30pm - 04:30pm	Chase C.	Sobriety and Service
04:30pm - 05:30pm	Don L. (WA)	Emotional Sobriety
05:30pm - 06:00pm	Open	Q&A

ZOOM ID: 893-8648-8665
PASSWORD: 411

"THE ALCOHOLIC IS LIKE A TORNADO ROARING HIS WAY THROUGH THE LIVES OF OTHERS... WE FEEL A MAN IS UNTHINKING WHEN HE SAYS THAT SOBRIETY IS ENOUGH" -BIG BOOK OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PAGE 82

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