



Sara-Mana InterGroup

The February 2017 Issue
District 4, Area 15

AASRO.org

The Importance of Fellowship

I was sober for several years before I learned the real importance of friendship within AA.

I got sober in a large east coast city after years of hard living in the military and an early business career. After several years of working the AA program, my life improved in so many ways – my wife and I found happiness, we had two little girls and my career was blossoming.

My home group was large and diverse but being an important man and a sharp dresser, I hung around with similar type of young, upward, professionals. (YUPIes) mostly ignoring the blue collar folk that also inhabited the room.

Then 'life happened' – my beautiful and happy wife got a bad diagnosis. It was aggressive and terminal. An aunt moved in to care for the girls but my world crashed. I stayed sober for my dying wife's peace of mind and continued to work to pay the bills but all the joy was gone.

One early morning I was leaving the hospital after spending the night by my wife's side when I saw Charlie, the bread truck driver, C in the lobby. After saying hello, I asked Charlie why he was at the hospital – he responded that "I'm here because my brother is in trouble." When I asked who his brother was, he simply said "You are!" I completely 'lost it'!

After I stopped crying, Charlie and I went for coffee and wisdom. He taught me about strength during adversity, dignity and honor, acceptance and serenity and most of all service to others.

Life went on – my girls are successful women with their own families, my career

resumed, I remarried later on and Charlie and I remained lifelong friends. All thanks to the friends in the fellowship.

Young Tom B.

Learn more about the AA Grapevine/ LaVina!

AAGRAPEVINE
The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous

Would you like to be more active in AA Service work and help to "spread the message" of AA recovery through the "Meeting in Print" of Alcoholics Anonymous? You can do this by signing up to be your homegroup's Grapevine/La Vina Representative and then attending District 4 Grapevine/La Vina Committee meetings the last Tuesday of each month at the Central Office at 7 PM.

In this position as a trusted servant you will be able to do the following:
--Announce the latest issue at your meeting
--Talk about the magazine's content – the stories make great topics for discussion
--Encourage your group to participate by sending in stories, art work or jokes
--Spread the word about Grapevine's new services and products

How to get started:
Offer to be of service - let your home group know that you are interested.
Sign up on our website at www.aagrapevine.org/GVR

You will receive a complete information kit from the Grapevine office.

Nichole's Story

I am 27 years old and I am currently serving a five year prison sentence. I'm more than halfway done. I have an addiction to anything that makes me feel good. However, I know this, and only with the help of AA can I be successful.

I have no access to meetings, where I am currently housed. I read literature and have a cell phone, which is how I get my meetings.

I didn't have a clue about how or why I chose this life until my first AA meeting, brought into my former prison facility by an amazing man. I sat in the back of the meeting, not quite sure why I was even there, but I was desperate for an answer to something everyone called 'freedom'. You see, freedom from behind the walls starts with your mind.

As I sat in that AA meeting and listened to this man speak, my eyes filled up with water. I couldn't quite understand why I was crying or feeling overcome with pain. I was hurting bad. That very day I decided I wanted something more out of my life. I wanted to be free like this man standing in front of me was free.

If that man hadn't come to the institution, I'd still be in misery and wouldn't know there was another way to live. I found a piece of freedom that day that has continued to grow.

Since that meeting I carry the message to others and I am now trying to start an AA meeting inside this facility.

If you haven't had the time to go to a prison meeting or are too busy, try to the make time. It will move you in a way

(Nichole's Story – Cont'd)

I can't explain, because I've only been on the inside. I'm pretty sure it's incredible.

Thank you to all AA members and the future AA members. Because of you I am learning how to be free.

Nichole S

Help Keep the Doors of Your Central Office Open!

Contribute Today!

Open Envelopes available at your meetings and at the Central Office!



"Pardon me, is this where I get the message?"

Newcomer's Nook

This section is dedicated to the newcomer – contributions are encouraged!

Beginning the Steps

When it came to my doing Steps 1, 2 and 3 I learned these were steps that were taken very fast and could essentially be done in a very short period of time. I actually took longer as my sponsor and I read the appropriate sections of the Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions when I first took to learning the Steps of AA.

I think my best tool I learned about

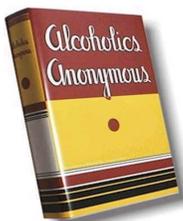
the steps 1-3 is the simple phrase " I can't, He can. Let him" ...each one referring to a step. Digging further into this knowing the principles behind the first three steps also allowed me to "Practice these Principles in all my affairs" as the Principles associated with Steps 1-3 are 1) Honesty, 2) Hope, and 3) Faith.

I understood from the beginning I was an alcoholic (or at the very least had a strong potential for being one) as I am the only person in my family with some criminal record in my background and (Surprise, Surprise) I am also the only one who "Drinks like I do".

That was enough to make me convinced I was powerless and my life was unmanageable as no one else in my family had the consequences I did, but nor did they drink.

For Step 2 after 1-2 weeks of solid meeting attendance (which I still do to this day nearly 4 years into AA) I found plenty of Hope if a room full of Ex problem drinkers could "recover" (if only for a day at a time) and living to tell their stories.

As for Step 3, and the principle of Faith, I have always had a strong faith in my Higher Power whom I call God. AA just allowed me to re-introduce myself to him and start living the way I did before Alcohol took me for a trip that I had not planned.
Chris C.



Back of the Book What A.A. Means to Her

Bill Wilson felt that the personal stories in the back of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, would prove to be more useful than the main text. In this story, "A Late Start" (page 535, Fourth Edition

only), the writer tells what A.A. means to her in maturity:

"... A.A. has filled my days with friends, laughter, growth and the feeling of worth that is rooted in constructive activity. My faith in, and contact with, my Higher Power shines more brightly than I dreamed it could. Those promises I thought were impossible are a viable force in my life. I am free to laugh all my laughter, free to trust and be trusted, free to both give and receive help. I am free of shame and regret, free to learn and grow and work. I have left that lonely, frightening, painful express train through hell. I have accepted the gift of a safer, happier journey through life."--Edgar C.



Nancy's Journal JOURNAL ENTRIES by Nancy B. Based on readings from *Daily Reflections*

I wasn't looking for something as dramatic as a spiritual awakening because at first I was calling my Higher Power's intervention when I admitted my alcoholism to my daughter as my spiritual awakening, and that was pretty dramatic. Now I see that intervention as more of a wake-up call, maybe the beginning of the spiritual part of my sobriety but not the actual deeper awareness that I experience today. What that intervention gave me was a certainty that my HP was present and wanting me to be sober.

Looking back, I still had a long way to go to learn how to rely on my HP for wisdom and guidance and to carry the worries that were burdens to me. Through learning to live the steps of AA in all my affairs I have a sense of well-being and peace. The occasional slip into self-will rather than reliance on my HP serves to remind me how wonderful life is when I live the program completely.

Tradition Two

The following discourse on the second tradition is from Conscious Contact, newsletter of the Central Oregon intergroup:

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.”

It's Up to the Group On the first Monday of every month, my home group studies a Tradition. We do this by reading one of the essays from the “Twelve and Twelve” one paragraph at a time, and pausing for sharing or questions. The amazing thing is that our attendance does not drop off on Tradition nights, and very seldom have I seen people leave when they realize it's a Tradition meeting. There may be some groaning, but this is also rare.

One of the things I believe helps our group have exciting and informative Tradition meetings is that we have several people with extensive service structure experience passing their experience on to newcomers and those new to service. Laughter is often part of the meeting, as tales of strength and hope are shared.

Like many in AA, I did not start out as a fan of our Traditions. I was one of those who groaned and complained, saying we should be talking about the Steps and not wasting time on the Traditions. Fortunately, my perspective and attitude changed.

Once my home group got into one of those spirited discussion concerning the Traditions, and I came out on the short end of the stick. Thinking I was full of passion but realizing now that it was anger, I ran to my sponsor for support. He didn't get excited, nor did he offer to straighten out my group. He calmly told me to read the short form, the long form and the essay for each Tradition, finding support for my argument.

The following week I went back to him and shared the things I found, and he suggested I go back through, but this time look for reasons why the group conscience was correct. He said I must always look at both sides of the coin. I did, but I still found my argument to be sound, so he suggested I write the General Service Office (GSO) explaining the situation.

A letter came back. I was hoping for vindication, but I received one of those famous letters expressing that on the one hand there is this and then on the other hand there is that, but that each group is autonomous and it is really up to the group conscience. I was then guided by my sponsor to go back to my group and share what I'd found through studying the Traditions and from the letter GSO sent.

From that day forward, that is how I've used our Twelve Traditions. This valuable lesson also showed me that studying the Traditions with others and learning from their experience helps broaden and deepens my understanding.

I'm grateful our AA pioneers took the time to develop the Traditions so we don't have to make the same mistakes, and when we do, we have a rally point to start over from. From reading, studying and discussing our Traditions I can see that issues we currently have around singleness of purpose and anonymity are not new issues at all. Most importantly, I see that our Traditions are not outdated, but relative and necessary tools that help our groups, district, areas and AA as a whole to solve problems with an informed group conscience.

- Alan S. Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Calling All Helpline Volunteers!



Meeting: February 22, 2017
@ 7:00pm - Central Office
1748 Independence Blvd. Suite B2
(use the back door)

Dear Alkie,

“Alkie” is a long-time member of A.A. His comments are based on his own strength, hope, and experience and do not represent any official A.A. position or practice.

Q. My first anniversary and I love A.A. – go to dozen meetings each week! Problem is my wife says I'm not home to help with kids and chores – just like bad days except I'm easier to get along with. How do you blend family & A.A. Time?

A. Here's a thought: 'gradually reduce the meetings you attend until you get drunk; then add back one meeting'. Seriously, your sponsor should help you balance sobriety and family peace. It's common to become 'addicted' to the program in the early, fragile stage of recovery and eventually mature to a maintenance mode once we're stable. Also, try a 'double date' with you and your wife with some AA buddies and their wives.

Q. I've been a daily social drinker for years – but never out of control. For quite a while, I've been feeling empty inside despite having a charmed life. Not happy, not sad – just nothing. A friend suggested A.A. but I'm not sold.

A. Try this; look at your life – don't dwell on your drinking. We know the feeling of being restless, irritable and discontented. If you're resentful, angry and fearful – we've been there. Every day, we work to be happy, joyous and free. Come join us – if you're not getting anything after 90 days, we'll refund your misery.

Q. Second step is about being "restored to sanity" – but I'm not crazy, just drink too much. Explain!

A. This step is really about HOPE! We struggle to manage our drinking, but repeatedly fail – frustration builds – and we become hopeless. We control other parts of our lives, so what's wrong us? Part of the answer is to stop trying to control the uncontrollable. Let go – accept that no human power alone can heal the addicted.

ANNIVERSARIES



| | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| Bay | | January | |
| January | | Barbara J | 35 |
| Rick S. | 32 | Betsy B. | 31 |
| Susan W. | 16 | Susan | 5 |
| Mike P. | 6 | Dona | 1 |
| Jim R. | 2 | | |

Lakewood Ranch 12&12

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----------------|----|
| Early Big Book | | January | |
| December | | Craig | 26 |
| Nancy L. | 38 | Pat Mc | 12 |
| Gretchen J. | 25 | Nancy O. | 7 |
| KC C. | 21 | Andrea R. | 4 |
| Kunnell | 21 | Bobbie R. | 3 |

Monday Nite Men's

| | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| January | | January | |
| Anne G. | 16 | Sean M. | 19 |
| Maria K. | 1 | | |
| Gail H. | 1 | | |

Friends of the Pelican

| | | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------------|----|
| January | | Beneva Discussion | |
| Benjamin R. | 2 | January | |
| | | Bob C | 27 |
| | | Mark M. | 1 |

Gulf Gate Noon

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|--------------------|----|
| December | | North River | |
| Bryce R. | 39 | January | |
| Joe S. | 20 | Annie C. | 26 |
| William G. | 5 | Rhonda R. | 1 |

Primary Porpoise

| | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| January | | January | |
| Phil C. | 35 | Jane R. | 31 |
| Lisa Mc | 34 | Pam C. | 24 |

Pass It On

| | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------|----|
| January | | January | |
| Chad S. | 5 | Jimmy Mac | 35 |
| Anne F. | 3 | Dick H. | 34 |
| Mark S. | 3 | John R. | 9 |
| Kathy F. | 1 | Craig H. | 6 |
| Peter D. | 1 | James Q. | 2 |
| Judy G. | 1 | | |
| Charles K. | 1 | | |
| Ferrell M. | 1 | | |

Serenity Room

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----------------|----|
| Happy Cookie Hour | | January | |
| December | | Dave M. | 18 |
| Karen E. | 35 | Ray B. | 15 |
| Eric | 23 | | |

Third Legacy Men's

| | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| January | | January | |
| Charlie R. | 19 | Cal J. | 33 |
| Toby M. | 14 | Elliott S. | 23 |
| Maribeth | 13 | Gary B. | 15 |
| Daniel | 3 | Joe R. | 15 |
| Patty | 1 | | |

Wednesday Morning

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Women's | |
| January | |
| Shirley O. | 35 |
| Karen S. | 5 |

Women in the Solution

| | |
|------------------|----|
| September | |
| Janet | 9 |
| October | |
| Kathleen | 34 |
| Debra E. | 32 |
| Pat K. | 17 |
| Trudi | 13 |
| Debbie C. | 7 |
| Gulie | 2 |

November

| | |
|----------|----|
| Susan O. | 14 |
|----------|----|

December

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Maribeth D. | 13 |
|-------------|----|

January

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Sam | 11 |
| Audrey O. | 7 |

***GROUPS:**

Groups: email birthdays to newsletter@AAsrq.org and put ANNIVERSARIES in the subject line. Cutoff for the newsletter is the last day of the month. Feb anniversaries appear in March issue.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform, connect and entertain. TO SUBMIT ITEMS TO THE NEWSLETTER: Anniversaries, articles and meeting notices should be sent to newsletter@AAsrq.org. Submit material as attachments or directly in an email. Include your first name, group and type of item being sent. Deadline is the last day of the month. Submissions may be edited for length or content. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily those of A.A., Sara-Mana Intergroup, or the Central Office, located at #B-2, 1748 Independence Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone 941-351-4818.

Service Work!

A male volunteer with at least one year of sobriety for a 2:00 PM meeting the third Thursday of each month at Serenity Place, which is connected to Doctor's Hospital. Two people conduct the meeting—usually a male and female. If you are interested in this very rewarding service, please contact Hilda D. at [281-475-6195](tel:281-475-6195), or Dan D. at [281-685-9932](tel:281-685-9932).

Helping the Helpline!

The following shifts are available for service work;

| | |
|----------|--------|
| Tuesday | 9-12pm |
| Friday | 9-12pm |
| Saturday | 9-12pm |
| | 6-9pm |

*1yr continuous sobriety required

JANUARY TOTALS

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| AA Meeting Time/Location | 246 |
| AA Meeting in Lieu of 12 Step Call | 12 |
| Actual 12 Step Call | 7 |
| Al-Anon | 16 |
| Special Needs | 6 |
| Miscellaneous | 29 |
| Total Calls | 316 |

Email: saramanahelpline@gmail.com for more info!