



On the web at aasrq.org

Sara-Mana Intergroup

POBox 3075 1748 Independence Blvd. #B2 Sarasota, FL 34234

God
grant me the
serenity to accept the
things I cannot
change, courage to
change the things I
can and the wisdom
to know the differ-
ence.

MARCH 2016

Central Office (941) 351-4818

Sara-Mana District 4, Area 15

How A.A. Helped Her Find Herself

By Lisa M.

I came into the program January 10, 1983, broke, with elevated liver enzymes and a job in a treatment facility as a family therapist at just 5 months sober. I was lucky to be alive. At a year and a half sober, I married a man in the program just seven weeks behind me in sobriety. My liver enzymes were now normal, my career was taking off, and my husband and I bought our first home at two years sobriety.

For the first time in many years, I was very happy. I had money in the bank, and more important, the respect of my colleagues and family again.

In my third year of sobriety, I was plagued with nightmares from an abusive childhood. Feelings of anger, self loathing, and guilt over the people I had hurt when I was "out there" moved in like a creeping fog. I was doing my fourth and fifth steps with my sponsor. I started to see my character defects in stark relief and began to understand how these defects in character had fueled my alcoholic drinking from the ages of 11-27. It was
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Without You, There is No "We"

Though many of us have had to struggle for sobriety, never yet has this Fellowship had to struggle for lost unity. Consequently, we sometimes take this one great gift for granted. We forget that, should we lose our unity, the millions of alcoholics who still "do not know" might never get their chance.

Bill W., Letter, 1949

c. 1967 AAWS, As Bill Sees It, p. 297



—"As her drinking progressed, she failed to notice the quality of her dates was diminishing at an alarming rate."—Vinnie D., Salem, MA (from a Grapevine caption contest).

When Should You Attend a Meeting?

"We have also found that going to meetings is not something to be done only when we feel the temptation to drink. We often get more good from the meetings by attending them when we feel fine and haven't so much as thought of drinking. And even a meeting which is not totally, instantly satisfying, is better than no meeting at all." —Living Sober, p. 81

Central Office Fund Drive Seeks \$30,000

Once again we are asking Individual AA members to send a contribution to support your Central Office. These contributions—the target total is \$30,000—enable us to staff and maintain what we feel is the best Central Office in South Florida.

Why Intergroup Is A.A.'s Frontline

By Betsy B, former Intergroup Chair

Isn't it great to have our Sara-Mana newsletter available every month? What about having the *Where and When's* in print 3 times a year and updated continually online? How about the number of people assisted by the Helpline (300+/month) or the food and fellowship provided by the Gratitude Dinner? Did you know that all of these resources and services are the responsibility of your District 4 Intergroup? That definitely qualifies it as A.A.'s frontline.

Carrying the message, it's a step, it's a tradition, it's a responsibility, it's a principle, it's how this recovery thing works and it's what Intergroup is designed to do, WITH YOUR HELP. Sara-Mana Intergroup is supported **only** through the participating groups in its district. Out of approximately 200 groups in District 4, about 20-30 groups are represented at the monthly meeting while about 30 groups send regular contributions (monthly, quarterly, or annually), specifically to Intergroup.

So, what can **you** do to support Intergroup's effort to carry the message? First, see if your home group has an IG rep, if not, then volunteer or find someone else! If your group has the funds to support IG through group contributions find out if they are. Most groups which are financially stable will contribute following the 30-30-30-10 suggestion. That means they contribute 30% each to Central Office, Intergroup, local General Service and 10% to GSO New York.

You can also join one of our committees to help with the newsletter, the *Where and When*, the Helpline or
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Nancy's Notes

Program Bared Her “Trap of Self”

Nancy B. keeps a daily journal, and enters thoughts about the A.A. program triggered by her morning readings.

It was through Steps 4, 8 and 9 that I learned how trapped I had been in my myths of people pleasing and people helping. The steps opened the doors and gave me permission to admit my perfectionism as I had admitted my alcoholism and to see it for what it was: control based in fear that did more harm than good.

I felt normal with my defect and my new commitment to hand it over to my Higher Power because I am in a close fellowship of people just like me. I've been experiencing that wonderful freedom so many A.A.'s who came before me talk about. I love the freedom to be wrong knowing now that I am still a good person and that I can make amends if I harmed anyone.

What a life sobriety and A.A. have given me!

How She Found Herself

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beginning to dawn on me that these major maladjustments could make my life just as unmanageable in sobriety as my drinking did.

At 4 years of sobriety, my husband and I purchased a brand new car. Three days after Christmas, I pulled into traffic, tearing the nose off the front of the car. Crying, I called my husband and told him the dreadful tale. He was angry. “You wrecked that car because you are sabotaging yourself!!! Whenever things start to get good for us, you throw a wrench in it.....!!!!”

Stunned at the awful truth of what I had just heard from a man that loved me in spite of my attempts to run him off, I met my sponsor to discuss this pattern of undermining myself. She said my impatience and low self esteem from guilt and shame were going to keep hurting me until I forgave myself for the “sins” committed during my addiction. “This is precisely what the 5th step is meant to accomplish!!! “She went on to say.

I followed this visit up with a visit to my local Catholic priest. I spent hours with this priest recounting all the reasons why I should never be forgiven for all the wreckage of my past as a result of my drinking, explaining to him this was what Alcoholics Anonymous called the 5th step in recovery.

He simply looked at me and said, “If God has forgiven you, why can't you forgive yourself?..... You are being SPIRITUALLY ARROGANT.” It was apparent it was now time for me to stop playing God in sobriety, relying on my intellect to solve all my problems, and take my rightful place as a human being.

God had led me to meet and marry the love of my life in Alcoholics Anonymous and also have a fulfilling career. I am blessed with wonderful friends and colleagues. God has forgiven me for the wreckage of my past. As long as I stay “right sized” or human, I can receive the gifts of the program without having to destroy all the success and goodness the grace of God sends my way.

Back of the Book

Empty on the Inside: Page 512

The stories in the back of the Big Book were believed by Bill Wilson to be the most important part of the tome, yet they are often overlooked. Readers are invited to supply a favorite passage, thought, or theme from a story.

On page 516 of the Fourth edition, the author of “Empty on the Inside” writes: “...I finally got on my knees and asked God for help. I couldn't go on the way I was living. I had been in the apartment since August and hadn't bothered to unpack. I wasn't bathing. I couldn't answer my phone. I couldn't show up on weekends to visit my kids. So I prayed. Something made me go dig through a box, and I found the Big Book my father had sent me years earlier...”

“...I read Bill's story again. This time it made sense. This time I could identify. I slept, holding the book like a teddy bear. I woke up feeling rested for the first time in months. And I didn't want to drink. I had reached my point of surrender.”

No matter which path we take in getting to that point, many of us reach that critical moment when our deception, denial and despair fold inward, verging on implosion.

I was finally able to surrender and that led me to the doors of A.A. In taking Step 1 and through my initial identification with other alcoholics, my hopelessness slowly turned into hope, honesty and acceptance. From there, my recovery became possible. —Anonymous

Service Work: “Chop Wood, Carry Water”

I am a believer and I practice the “chop wood, carry water” method, to help relieve stress and sometimes to help solve problems. If, for instance, I feel a resentment towards someone, I try to wait until emotions have subsided. Then I seek to do something kind for that person. To “chop wood or carry water” for another is one form of service work. One of the benefits of doing this sort of service work for me is that it helps me to look upon that person with love and tolerance and my resentment usually dissipates.

Some may limit their view of service work to only being part of a committee, but it is much more than that. There are all sorts of services to perform, such as making coffee, setting up meetings, and sometimes just sharing our experiences.

According to one member, service work saved her life. Another believes it is our legacy. Yet another feels it helps them to know people on a more personal level. And still another feels it is a duty or responsibility to keep passing it on. This sort of selfless service work is one of the ways we help heal others and help heal our sick selves. Most times in service work, the only gain in it for the server is of a spiritual kind. But to gain and grow spiritually is one of the purposes of A.A. — to heal the spirit of the alcoholic. And in turn, for them to bring this message of spiritual healing and awakening to other alcoholics so that they may regain life. So far as I know, there is only one way to bring this message of hope and healing to other alcoholics— through service work. —By Anonymous

Profanity in A.A.

I entered the rooms of A.A. on March 19, 1991. When I came out of the bars I had a foul mouth and a bad attitude. I was used to using a lot of profanity. I didn't think anything of it – good or bad.

When I started going to meetings, I didn't hear a lot of profanity so I wouldn't really use it when I shared. But I still used it outside of the rooms.

Flash forward about ten years. I had been going to a lot of meetings and working the steps when I decided that profanity was a character defect for me. As a result, I made a conscious effort to stop doing it altogether. It's been about 15 years now but I have totally given up profanity. Now when I hear it, either in meetings or not, it is like a non-smoker smelling smoke – it sort of stinks.

I read a long time ago that “profanity is not a sign of spirituality.” I prefer not to hear it in meetings today.

It's said that God has a good sense of humor and I know it's true. Last September I was in a speaker meeting. The speaker was talking a lot about God and then started a long string of profanity. I found I had to leave the meeting. This did not go unnoticed. I spoke to my sponsor and was at peace with what I had done. Well, about three weeks ago this same person asked me to be his sponsor and all is going well.

Summing up, just be conscious of the people around you. —*Jim W.*

Lucia T.

It is with great sadness that we report that our dear friend Lucia T. passed away March 6. Lucia was sober for 59 years and a very active member of our fellowship—she will be missed.

Delegate's Report to Be a Potluck on May 14

The delegate's report on the general conference proceedings this year be a potluck of Districts 1, 4(us), and 15. Location TBA.



“You don't say! They wrote a whole book about you?”

Prayers for each Step

The Sponsor's Aide web site offers a prayer to accompany the working of each step in our program. These are not part of the official canon of A.A. but are grounded in Big Book comments and are well-regarded by many long-time A.A. members. We print one prayer each month through the end of the year.

THIRD STEP PRAYER: God, I offer myself to Thee. To build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of 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.

Intergroup Frontline

(Continued from page 1)

putting on the Gratitude dinner. Other ways to help are to write an article for the newsletter; take a shift on the helpline, a weekly 3 hour commitment that gets sent right to your phone (your ID does not show up) or get on the 12 step list for those times when needed. You can volunteer to help with the Gratitude Dinner in any number of ways, decorating, serving, cleanup, etc.

Intergroup truly is our AA frontline and directly responsible to those we serve. Intergroup meets at 7PM on the third Tuesday of each month at Central Office. All are welcome.

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. I've been skipping quite a few meetings lately, what with work and family obligations. My sponsor says I'm gambling with my future and the odds are against me. I think he's over reacting since I feel fine. Your thoughts?

A. “MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN” is printed on many raffle tickets. Your chances of winning a raffle may be slim, but the odds of your staying sober are great, “IF we are painstaking about ANY phase of our development”. Complacency is a huge enemy of sobriety; just ask someone with 2 or more white chips. There are more than 300 meetings listed in the Sara-Mana *Where and When*, so “I can't find a meeting” is no excuse.

Q. A woman I'm sponsoring has been pushing back against my advice saying I'm demanding too much from her. I've not had this problem from other women I've sponsored in the past. Suggestions?

A. Tell her, “Tough love is harder for me to do than it is for you to take. But I'd rather step on your toes today than stand on your grave tomorrow.” If she still thinks you're too tough, maybe it's best she find another sponsor.

Q. Third month-third step. I'm struggling with “turning my life over to the care of God” – what does that mean in everyday life?

A. Do everything you can to solve whatever your problem of the day and don't fret about the outcome. You are responsible for the effort – your Higher Power is responsible for the outcome. As long as you've done your best, don't beat yourself up if things don't work out as you wish – and, don't claim triumph if they do.

Every alcoholic will stop drinking, but it's best if it's done while he is still breathing.—Jerry G.

ANNIVERSARIES

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. February anniversaries appear in March.



From Caring Comes Courage

...the most important term of Taoism: Tz'u, which can be translated "caring" or "compassion" and which is based upon the character for heart. In the sixty-seventh chapter of the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu named it as his "first treasure," and then wrote, "from caring comes courage." We might add that from it also comes wisdom.

- Benjamin Hoff
from the Tao of Pooh

(It is these traits that allow Kanga to save Roo and for Piglet to get help for Pooh and Owl when Owl's house blew over.)



New Women's Literature Meeting!
Thursdays, 6-7pm,
Closed/Literature/OS Last Thursday
Parrish United Methodist Church,
12180 US Highway 301, Parrish FL 34219



February 2016

A.A. Helpline Totals

AA Meeting Time/Location: 283
AA Meeting in Lieu of 12 Step Call: 16
Actual 12 Step Call: 8
Al-Anon: 7
Special Needs: 8
Miscellaneous: 29
Total: 351

The Helpline has the following shifts available: Monday 6-9PM; Thursday 9-Midnight; Friday 9-Midnight and Saturday 9-Noon and Noon-3. Interested parties should call the Central Office.

Early Big Book	Monday Nite Men's	St. Armand
January	February	December
Ann G. 15	Bob C. 5	Dick D. 34
February		Joop V. 25
John T. 53	Oasis	Yolande W. 13
Diana 30	February	Pat P. 9
Sue Ann C. 16	Helen Y. 8	Lisa M. 8
Carol G. 16	Tom C. 5	Bob M. 7
Friends of the Pelican	Gene P. 4	Don S. 4
February	Pass-It-On	January
Norman D. 34	February	Ellen J. 29
Jay C. 19	Bob R. 43	Francoise D. 27
Margie M. 7	Bob M. 16	Ann F. 20
Barbara S. 4	Merry M. 4	Stephanie R. 12
Julia L. 1	Barbara S. 4	Mary Beth C. 6
Happy Cookie Hour	Christine T. 1	Kelly E. 6
January	Serenity Room	Brenda B. 6
Barbara J. 34	January	Mike C. 4
Betsy B. 30	John R. 44	Sunrise
Susan S. 5	February	February
Joanna K. 1	Peggy F. 40	Carol D. 20
Keith 1	Bari R. 37	Jim L. 3
Lakewood Ranch	Vickie C. 34	Tina R. 2
12&12	Rick H. 19	Bernard G. 1
February	Barbara S. 8	Third Legacy Men's
Barbara 30		February
Bob J. 23		Berk A. 2
		Mike C. 1

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.



"Then he did something else that was to become an A.A. classic. It all went on a little card about golf-score size. The card read:

"Middleton Group #1, Rule #62." Once the card was unfolded, a single pungent sentence leaped to the eye:

"Don't take yourself too damned seriously."

-Tradition Four, Rule #62, Pg.149, 12&12