

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 31, NO. 5

MAY 2007

Is the AA Program a Selfish One?

Do we confuse the shaky newcomer?

IS the AA program a selfish one, as we sometimes hear said? Is it not more accurately a program of Self? Will it not tend to confuse the newcomer, sober at last but still unable to add much higher than two and two, to hear that his sponsor and the other men and women who are helping him are selfish people? How can they be selfish, when by extending the hand of welcome and friendship they have perhaps literally saved the newcomer's life? And those courageous men and women who find AA unsponsored—are we to selfishly disregard them?

We feel there is much truth in that general pattern of one's early progress in AA—for the first six months (or six weeks, the time element will of course vary) dependence on one's sponsor or, perhaps, on a few particularly good new friends; for the next six months (or weeks) dependence on the group of one's choice, or on the strength of many groups; after that, complete and utter faith and trust in a Higher Power. A pretty pattern, yes, and one with a happy ending; simple to write, and simple to read—but where lies the responsibility, if any, of seeing to it that the newcomer makes the desired progress? How far should the sponsor go in his eagerness to be of help and in his desire to see the newcomer gain and maintain his sobriety?

We are told that in the beginning, before the days of the Big Book and the many helpful pamphlets, AA members found their sobriety the hard way. It was served cafeteria style, one came and took it for one's self, it was not dished out on a silver platter. This seems still to be true. Many of us feel that the best method is to sweat it out, without benefit of hospitalization, sanitariums, shots and nerve tonics. Thus the memory is always fresh of the hideous battle of drying out—it is not tempered by recollections of induced sleep and rest, of pretty nurses and cool crisp sheets, of blessed oblivion when tortured nerves become unendurable.

But has the sponsor no duty during this painful process? Is he to be selfish, to think only of himself? Is it enough to tell the newcomer where and when meetings are held, and to shrug one's shoulders if he does not appear? Perhaps a single, simple act of proffered friendship will turn the trick: "I'm going to a meeting tonight, would you like me to stop by for you?" Perhaps we should keep in mind that as yet our man knows nothing of AA, of its power and intense interest, of the happiness in store for him in continued sobriety. He may want his sobriety and AA above all else on earth yet fear to come to meetings alone—surely we have not forgotten our own doubts and suspicions.

Now let us remember that AA is a program of Self. Wise indeed is the sponsor who senses the time to turn his new friend from himself and over to the strength of the group. Often this is difficult to do, we have become attached to the newcomer, his welfare may be uppermost in our minds. But perhaps here we may do well to remember that we cannot teach AA—we have given of it to our friend, let him now learn for himself—perhaps this is even a good time for us to return to our own studying of the program, with a sincere little prayer of thanks that we have been privileged to do God's will.

And will our new friend find complete and utter faith and trust in a Higher Power? Yes—in his own way and in his own good time. We did—why should the newcomer be different from us? This is his own particular business, his own private problem. Now he too begins to realize that AA is a program of Self. Soon the tables will be turned and he will be a sponsor—then we will say another sincere little prayer of thanks that at the beginning we were unselfish in order that now our new friend might think and act for himself.

Anonymous
East Greenwich, Rhode Island, May 1950

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

23rd Annual Tri-State Round-up

May 18 – 20, 2007
Laughlin, NV
Info: Debbie A. (928) 681-2217
Website: www.tristate-roundup.com

23rd Annual South Bay Round-up

May 25 – May 28, 2007
Torrance, CA
Info Hotline: (310) 354-7660
Website: www.southbayroundup.org

Skid Row Drifters

June 3, 2007 (Sunday)
Potluck: Noon - 1:00PM, Meeting: 1PM - 2:30PM
804 E. 6th Street (in the Park), Los Angeles, CA
Info: Clay B. (818) 703-6256

Unit A Spring Potluck/Barbeque

June 9, 2007 (Sunday)
10:00AM - 3:00PM, Meeting starts at 1:30PM
Studio City Park, 12621 Rye, Studio City, CA
Info: 505-1905

A.A. DESERT POWWOW

June 14 - 17, 2007
Indian Wells, CA
Info: SherAli J. (760) 321-6568
Website: <http://www.desertpowwow.com>

6th Tehachapi Mountain Roundup

July 13 – 15, 2007
Tehachapi, CA
Info: Andi (661) 823-0591 Kent (661) 823-0518
Website: www.tehachapiroundup.com

THE GREAT OUTDOOR BEAVER MEETING

August 30 - September 2, 2007
Beaver, UT
Info: Greg B. (818) 890-0110
Email: jojopelli@gmail.com

Registration forms for most events
can be obtained at the Intergroup Meeting
or at Central Office

Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs
telephone volunteers
for the Late Evening (9 PM - 12 Midnight) shift
and the Overnight (12 midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous
sobriety, you can sign up to do a shift
(from your home!) once per month and
help your fellow alcoholics.

Service Committee Schedule

- Apr. 16, 2006 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- May 1, 2007 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- May 2, 2007 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- May 9, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- May 12, 2007 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- May 14, 2007 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30PM Orientation
7PM Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Valley Events

TO FIND OUT
WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON
YOU CAN:

COME TO CENTRAL OFFICE
CALL US AT 818-988-3001
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
<http://www.sfvaa.org>

Service Opportunities & News

Service Opportunities in the San Fernando Valley

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE -

Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does and does not do. Could always use volunteers, especially young people and Spanish speaking A.A.'s for health fairs and to speak at various schools and businesses. Contact Central Office (818) 988-3001.

HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE -

Carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into hospitals, prisons & treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Meets the third Monday of each month 8:00 PM (Get Acquainted Workshop, 7:00 PM) at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. For more information, contact Central Office at 988-3001.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY INTERGROUP -

Elected Intergroup representatives maintain and develop policies for Central Office, and inform other IG Reps about Alkathons, fund raisers, etc. Meets second Monday, monthly, St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Orientation 6:30 PM, Meeting at 7:00 PM. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2008 Convention. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except February and March); 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA.

Central Office News

San Fernando Valley Central Office is On the Web

The SFV Central Office website is now available for Internet browsers. On the website, you can find a map to our office in Van Nuys, a listing of upcoming events in the Valley, service organization information and links to other cool A.A. websites. Our meeting schedule is also accessible on the website. Meetings are listed by day, Sunday through Saturday. Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.org>

Do you have an article for the Recovery Times?

Email it to us at: sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting April 9, 2007

Rosanne L. Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 PM

Treasurer's Report: See Insert

Service Committee information - see page 2 and 3 of the Recovery Times for more information

Old Business: None.

New Business: None

Birthdays: Terry - 2 yrs, Christine - 3 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:15 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for January is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.

*These minutes are pending approval on
May 14, 2007*

Next Meeting - May 14, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

April 2007

Anonymous	15 Years
David F.	19 Years
Anonymous	27 Years
Hal S.	35 Years
Shirley V.	?? Years
Reseda Big Book Disc.	Many Years
Learning To Live Men's Stag	Many Years

Your Birthday Gift to Central Office

Many A.A. members share their birthdays with those who need the same help and opportunity that A.A. gave to them.

By sending a donation to Central Office you share your birthday with Recovery Times readers. Send a dollar (\$1.00) a year - or \$1.00 for each year of your sobriety - or send as much as you wish to give to celebrate your birthday. The amount doesn't matter - it's the "counting" that counts.

May your special day be filled with joy from morning until night, and may the "24's" that lie ahead be especially glad and bright.

Where and When (is that meeting?)

*A behind-the-scenes glance at the effort involved
in putting together a meeting directory.*

What is an AA meeting directory? It's generally a taken-for-granted booklet that the central office/intergroup compiles, edits, and prints on a regular basis. As a worker in an intergroup, I want to give a behind-the-scenes glance at the effort involved in putting together such a directory.

The first step for the trusted servants at the central office is to extract all relevant information from the membership and then organize it in some meaningful order. Meetings are first arranged by a geographical location in the city. Then, types of meetings are given: open ones, closed ones, men's, women's, speaker, discussion, gay, smoker, nonsmoker, beginners, Step study, Big Book study, young peoples, old-timers, Spanish-speaking, signed for the deaf, plus any possible combination of these.

As the numbers of groups increase and groups continue to change, maintaining the meeting list becomes more difficult. New geographic areas must be added, as well as detox and rehabilitation centers with AA meetings. Because of all these changes, any resemblance between the printed meeting schedule and actuality at the end of the year may be slight. For an intergroup trusted servant, it seems as if mischievous alcoholics, driven by an unending compulsion that "half measures availed us nothing," are trying to establish an AA meeting on every corner of every block on every night of the week.

Some newly-established groups never last beyond a couple of months, but somehow their secretaries (if the group has one) neglect to inform the intergroup when the group ceases to function. The only way an intergroup discovers that a meeting has been canceled may be when an irate alky calls to chew out somebody for sending her to a nonexistent meeting the day before—or the address listed was wrong or the place has been boarded up. Alcoholics love to call up intergroup with information on

meetings; through experience, most intergroups will insist that the information be submitted in writing.

Once the new list is printed, all the secretaries of all the groups—who were importuned for the previous six months to make sure that their group information is correct—will call to advise the intergroup that the new meeting schedule is in error. By some unwritten law, it is axiomatic that a new meeting schedule will always have errors. Typically, Gus from the Alky Fetcher's Group on Possum Trot Boulevard will call and demand to know why the meeting of the Healthy Livers was designated as an open meeting when everyone knows it changed to a closed meeting six months ago. Or a club whose phone number is printed on the cover will call to change to a new number, and the first of many pencilled-in corrections begins. The compilers are always playing catchup.

Suppose the unpardonable oversight has occurred, and some group's schedule has been omitted. Then the intergroup hosts a stamping party to insert the information on some fifteen to twenty thousand copies of the meeting schedule. Or, to take an incident of recent memory, when someone protested the designation "gay" after the name of a meeting, the "gay deleters" gathered at the central office with their trusty black markers and, in the interest of uniformity, expunged the word "gay" from about eleven different places on six different pages of the twenty thousand copies. There was just a little grumbling here and there, but on the whole the incident gave many of us a chance to gather for chitchat and fellowship.

A meeting schedule is a flexible thing, ever-changing to meet new conditions, and never, ever, finished.

Guylene J.
Houston, Texas

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A Sobriety Play in Three True Acts

Place: An open A.A. meeting in Russia's Siberian city of Khabarovsk, near the China border. Cast: Meeting attendees, including a dozen or so A.A.s, members of a local Al-Anon group, and two American visitors—Greg M., manager of the General Service Office, New York City, and Doug R., G.S.O. staff member, who are traveling on an International assignment for A.A. World Services. Earlier in the day, Greg participated in a radio interview, during which the address and phone number of that afternoon's meeting were announced.

Act I: A meeting is held according to the usual format, which calls for a fixed discussion topic, which rotates every four weeks. During a question-and-answer period afterward, one member asks, "What happens if a newcomer arrives? Should the format be changed from a topic to a beginners meeting?" Those present share their experience and concern, and some A.A.s relate that several groups they know of would turn the meeting into one for beginners, with the focus on how to stay sober a day at a time in A.A.'s program of recovery. The clock keeps ticking, and suddenly the A.A.s and their visitors realize that three hours of sharing have flown by.

Act II: As a discussion continues, an elderly, determined-looking Asian woman suddenly appears at the

door, followed by an attractive thirtysomething man. The woman explains that he is her son and that he has "a big drinking problem." That very morning, the mother says, she "heard the radio program about A.A." and got after her son to go to a meeting: "So here we are."

Act III: The A.A.s look at each other wide-eyed. Quickly they decide to hold a beginners meeting on the spot. With everyone pitching in to carry the A.A. message, they share memories about how it was when they were drinking, what happened to make them willing to cork the bottle, and what their lives are like today—manageable, more comfortable, and full of hope and humor and love. During the fellowship period after the meeting, the newcomer is surrounded by welcoming A.A. men. They reassure him that as active alcoholics, they've "been there, done that" and give him their phone numbers. At the same time, the Al-Anon women befriend the mother and offer their help. Later, as the group members leave the meeting in twos and threes, they feel all the more in possession of their sobriety for having reached out to give it away.

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob on the Fundamentals

Alcoholic s Anonymous was nurtured in its early days around a kitchen table. Many of our pioneer groups, some of our most resultful meetings and best programs have had their origin around that modest piece of furniture with the coffeepot handy on the stove.

Grapevine Sept. 1948

Bill Wilson on the 11th Step

I've just finished re-reading the chapter on Step Eleven in our book, "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions." This was written some time ago. I was astonished when I realized how little time I had actually been giving to my own elementary advice on meditation, prayer and guidance--practices that I had so earnestly recommended to everybody else!

In this lack of attention I probably have plenty of company. But I do know that this is a neglect that can cause us to miss the finest experiences of life, a neglect that can seriously slacken the growth that God hopes we may achieve right here on earth; here in this great day at school, this very first of our Father's Many Mansions.

Grapevine Aug 1964

The Next Frontier – Emotional Sobriety

I THINK THAT MANY oldsters who have put our AA “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance—urges quite appropriate to age seventeen—prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I’ve taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse! Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy and good living—well, that’s not only the neurotic’s problem, it’s the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That’s the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it’s a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden “Mr. Hyde” becomes our main task.

I’ve recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones—folks like you and me—commencing to get results. Last autumn [several years back—ed], depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I’ve had with depressions, it wasn’t a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, “Why can’t the Twelve Steps work to release depression?” By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer. . . “It’s better to comfort than to be comforted.” Here was the formula, all right. But why didn’t it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence—almost absolute dependence—on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according

to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn’t a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing, a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God’s love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn’t possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependency meant demand—a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words “absolute dependency” may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God’s creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can’t flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

Spiritual calculus, you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any AA of six months working with a new Twelfth Step case. If the case says “To the devil with you” the Twelfth Stepper only smiles and turns to another case. He doesn’t feel frustrated or rejected. If his next case responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn’t feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his one-time prospect is sober and happy. And if his next following case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance) then the sponsor is most joyful. But he well knows that his happiness is a by-product—the—extra dividend of giving without any demand for a return.

⇒

Frontier *continued...*

The really stabilizing thing for him was having and offering love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In the first six months of my own sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not a one responded. Yet this work kept me sober. It wasn't a question of those alcoholics giving me anything. My stability came out of trying to give, not out of demanding that I receive.

Thus I think it can work out with emotional sobriety. If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

Of course I haven't offered you a really new idea—only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own "hexes" at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

Bill W.

Ham on Wry humor from The Grapevine

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San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91405

Current Information

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Address _____

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Moving ???: *We need your former address as well as your new address to correct our records. Fill out both forms and mail to the address above.*

Former Address

Name _____

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