

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 6 JUNE 2007

Some Do's and Don't's on Sponsorship

For many years I labored under the delusion that I knew all the answers. Therefore it took a tremendous amount of softening up by John Barleycorn before I sought AA. On getting sober, I very quickly became a Step One—Step Twelve man, and I am still plagued with the notion that I would much rather be a teacher than a student. Each time I learn a little something (when I force an open mind) I snap it shut with the conclusion, “Now, I’ve got it.”

I have come to believe that the qualities in another that annoy me most are a reflection of my own shortcomings; for example, the know-it-all fellow seldom fails to annoy me, though I think my annoyance is diminishing in proportion to the progress I’m making.

I have a sponsor who has an unusual amount of serenity. I’ve never heard him state an idea as if his was the only proper view. None of us can lay out an official interpretation. I can say what I think I must do, but I cannot tell you what you must do. To me this is the basic difference between AA and the rest of the preachments of the world. I sometimes wonder whether we are losing it.

I wanted to pick my first contact on the first night; he pointed out that I had better wait until I had a chance to meet a fair cross section of the group before I chose my sponsor. Later, when I asked him to be my sponsor, he accepted. He still is, and I hope he will always be my sponsor, for it is one of the most wonderful relationships I have known.

I have made many initial contacts over the years, and there are probably no two that should have been handled identically, but there are a few broad concepts I have gained which I believe make me more effective:

A. *Faith*: that AA will work for anyone *if they want it*. My sponsor’s faith in that principle was implanted in me when I needed it most and when I asked him whether he thought that AA would work for me.

B. *Self Respect and Forbearance*: “Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving evidence thereof in words.” All too often through the years I tried to do all of the talking, explaining all I knew of AA to the prospect, and displaying how very much I did not know. If the new man got a word in edgewise, I’d pounce on it and tear it to bits. Some made the program in spite of my *treatment*; practically none asked me to be their sponsor, and those that did soon found less dictator-like people, God bless them. What the new man has to say is very important, if I am expecting to work with him, because:

If I listen carefully, I can hear myself talking—with the same cockeyed point of view, the same cheap excuses, the same self-pity, the same misunderstood genius, the same interfering relatives, wife, boss, know-nothings. If I can stand it, I can see myself in the raw. Sure, I have changed a little, but not really as much as I think I have; and:

Later, I have some acquaintance with the source of his screaming, and it may be on some matter in which I have found some relief.

C. *Prayer*: Just before making contact, I have learned to ask for help and guidance to say and do what’s right. Included in this prayer is the thought that “I need this new man as much as he needs me.”

D. *Friendship and Understanding*: Love for the great goodness I know is in every human being, “the noblest work of God,” should guide my thoughts. If a man was dying of thirst and I knew my onions, I would administer water to him with an eyedropper and, regardless of the impulse of showing him how much water I had, if I were truly thoughtful I would restrain myself from trying to jam a fire-hose, going at full force, down his throat.

A. C. B.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

A.A. DESERT POW WOW

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

The Delegates Report Back

from the New York General Service Conference
Saturday, June 16, 2007 2:45 - 4:45 PM
The Hole in the Sky Club
Canoga Park, CA

Son of Speakathon

Saturday, June 30, 2007
The Valley Club
Northridge, CA

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

49th Annual ICYPAA

August 30 - September 2, 2007
Los Angeles, CA
Info: (310) 216-8771
Website: www.49thICYPAA.org

56th Annual Southern California AA Convention

September 21 - 23, 2007
Garden Grove, CA
Website: www.aasocal.com

4rd Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA

October 19 - 21, 2007
Valencia, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

Service Committee Schedule

June 18, 2007 **SFV H&I**

THIRD MONDAY

8 PM Business Meeting
7 PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

July 2, 2007 **G.S. District #11**

FIRST MONDAY

6 PM New GSR orientation,
6:30PM Meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

July 2, 2007 **G.S. District #16**

FIRST MONDAY

6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church),
Granada Hills

July 2, 2007 **G.S. District #17**

FIRST MONDAY

6PM New GSR orientation,
6:30 PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

July 3, 2007 **G.S. District #2**

FIRST TUESDAY

5:30PM, 4011 DUNSMORE, LA Crescenta

July 4, 2007 **G.S. District #1**

FIRST WEDNESDAY

6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

July 5, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**

6:30PM, Central Office

July 14, 2007 **G.S. District #7**

SECOND SATURDAY

9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

July 9, 2007 **SFV Intergroup**

SECOND MONDAY

6:30PM Orientation
7PM Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

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.

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](mailto:sfvaa@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting May 14, 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: Lloyd - 4 yrs, Hank - 27 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:28 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 June 11, 2007

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May 2007

Paul H.	3 years
Howard R.	14 years
Clive E.	20 years
Jim M.	20 years
Anonymous	35 years
Reseda BB Study	a lot of years
Learning to Live Men's Stag	115 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.

What's in a Name?

"When I say, 'I'm a drug addict and alcoholic' ...I have just cut our common bond in half and, more importantly, diluted my own purpose for being there."

My name is Rosemary and I am an alcoholic. Now, that's a very simple introduction, isn't it? It tells you who and what I am, instantly, without any other descriptive additives. It immediately connects me to you, if you also are an alcoholic.

Where did this custom of identifying ourselves come from? You must admit it's a rather different approach when introducing oneself at a gathering. Did it start with the little band of drunks who first got sober, or did it develop over a period of time like some of our other customs in AA? No one knows for sure. It is thought that it probably started in the Oxford Groups. At their large meetings not everyone knew each other so before people would "witness," they would introduce themselves to the group. So, probably, at one time someone said, "I am an alcoholic" as a matter of introduction. But this is only a guess. Wherever it started, it obviously grew to be a widespread custom.

I came into Alcoholics Anonymous in March 1980. Unfortunately, I did not stop drinking until November of that year. But I kept coming to meetings, almost on a daily basis. I believe the reason I continued to come was because I knew I was in the right place. Those people certainly knew what the drinking game was all about. And I identified very strongly with their introduction, because I, too, admitted that I was an alcoholic. I also identified when they spoke of their drinking history, because that's exactly where I was at.

Over the past few years we have this custom of how we introduce ourselves change so much so that the word *alcoholic*, the very essence of our common bond, is very often omitted entirely. Some of the more popular forms of introduction are: "I'm cross-addicted," "I'm chemically dependent," "I'm powerless," or, one I heard recently and my favorite, "I'm a recovering person." I'm always tempted to say, "You're a cross-addicted *what?* You're powerless over *what?*" I need to know what we have in common. I need to know that you're there for the same reason that I'm there—recovery from the disease of alcoholism. This may seem like a moot point. After all, we know what they mean. But they leave out the most important word, the one word which connects us to each other. It's probably just a way to shorten their introduction so they can get on with their thoughts regarding the topic at hand. That's probably all there is to it. But my suggestion, to those I have sponsored, is to drop the adjectives such as cross-addicted and chemically dependent and get to the heart of why we are there. My name is. . .and I'm an alcoholic!

There is another point I wish to make concerning the way we identify ourselves in an AA meeting. A point which, I believe, puts a serious strain on our unity and on our singleness of purpose. When I say, "I'm a drug addict and alcoholic" or "I'm a cross-addicted alcoholic," I am telling

you that I'm different from you. I'm a special kind of alky. My case of alcoholism is different! I add an extra dimension to my disease which, because of our singleness of purpose, should not be addressed in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have just cut our common bond in half and, more importantly, diluted my own purpose for being there.

A few years ago when the subject of how one identified himself in an AA meeting was discussed, it was thought that after a person was in AA for a while all of the other descriptive words would fall away and we would hear, "I am an alcoholic." But I don't believe that has proved true. In my area we see people with three, four, five, and more years in AA still clinging to the jargon they were taught. They have not made the transition.

Four years ago I heard a delegate talk about this issue of dual or even multiple identification. He suggested that instead of trying to group our issues together, it would be better if we learned how to separate them and take them to the programs which were designed to address them. That is, to address alcoholism in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, to address drug addiction in a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous, to address food addiction in a meeting of Overeaters Anonymous, and so forth. When in those meetings, we should identify ourselves accordingly. He also suggested that we could appeal to the rehabs and other professional services who might instruct their patients on how to separate their addictions rather than group them together under the heading of "addictive personalities" using the phrase we hear so often that a drug is a drug is a drug!

Is the solution to approach the treatment centers? Perhaps it would help—if it were done in the spirit of cooperation and concern for the newcomer. I wonder, however, if the answer doesn't lie right within our own Fellowship! Isn't it the responsibility of each one of us to keep our program intact and unchanged—to pass it on to the newcomer as it was given to us? But can we do this with patient explanation, tolerance toward differences, and *more* patient explanation? I believe we can through committed sponsorship, strong home groups, and active service. Our new members will learn how to be a part of this Fellowship rather than a fragment of it.

Most of us have heard it said that if Alcoholics Anonymous is ever destroyed it will be destroyed from within. In my opinion, apathy is one of our greatest enemies, often cloaking itself in the guise of "live and let live." I'm not saying the destructive force lies in those members who introduce themselves as being cross-addicted alcoholics. It's in the attitude of those members who sit back and say, "So what!"

Rosemary P.

Rapidsford, New York, member of the AA Grapevine.

How Willing Would You Be?

Step Eight - Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Although my body walked, my spirit crawled out of the room where I had just completed my Fifth Step. I was so sick of myself and my character defects that I was totally willing to take the Sixth and Seventh Steps.

Then came Step Eight. The first part of this Step was easy. The Big Book told me that I had made my list when I made my inventory, so I took my list of persons I had harmed from my Fourth Step.

The second part of this Step was not so easy. "Willing," it said. There's that word again; the Big Book and the "Twelve and Twelve" seem to use that word a lot. It's written in Step Three, again emphasized in Step Six, and here it is again in Step Eight. As I looked my list over, there were many amends I was willing to make, as I could see where I had been childish, selfish, and self-centered. But there were some that brought back hurts so deep I was not willing to make amends then—and I seriously doubted if I ever would be. The words from the Big Book kept playing through my head, "We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable." I knew that, but I still wasn't willing.

Reading over the part on Step Eight in the Big Book, I saw I wasn't unique; earlier AAs had evidently been like me. This was apparent when I read the line that says, "There are probably still some misgivings," and again when I read, "If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes." (Ask God, of course.)

I kept praying about the difficult amends while I was making other amends, and it seemed like every meeting

I attended during that time was on the Eighth Step. In one of these meetings, I heard someone share her experience. She had been willing to make all her amends but one. In talking to her sponsor about it, the sponsor put it like this: If your program depended upon this one amends—that is, if you made this amends you would stay sober, and if you didn't make it you would drink again—how willing would you be then?

Hearing that, and reading again about going to any length, brought me the willingness I had been praying for—at least on all but one. Deep in my heart I knew it would take a miracle for the willingness to come for that one, and when the exact moment was right, God gave me the willingness so suddenly that it was like a physical force slammed into me. Once again, God was right on time, not a minute too early or a second too late.

Since I've been in the program, I've been told countless times that if I will take care of the possible, God will handle the impossible. Countless times I've witnessed this to be true.

It's been over two-and-a-half years since all this happened, and I'm still sober. I can only say it's because of God and not me, for the part I played has been so small in comparison to God's part. I thank God for AA, and for the fact that, just for today, I'm still willing.

*Robi M.
Edmond, Oklahoma*

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Co-founder Quotes

Bill Wilson on Freedom from Alcohol

...we can achieve no liberation from the alcohol obsession until we become willing to deal with those character defects which have landed us in that helpless condition. Even to gain sobriety only, we must attain some freedom from fear, anger, and pride; from rebellion and self-righteousness; from laziness and irresponsibility; from foolish rational-

ization and outright dishonesty; from wrong dependencies and destructive power-driving.
Grapevine Nov 1960

Dr. Bob on the Fundamentals

These tenets [The Twelve Steps] of our faith and practice were not worked out overnight and then presented to our members as an opportunist creed. Born of our early trials and many tribulations, they were and are the result of humble and sincere desire, sought in personal prayer for Divine guidance. As finally expressed and offered, they are simple in language, plain in meaning. They are also workable by any person having a sincere desire to obtain and keep sobriety. The results are the proof.

Grapevine Sept. 1948

The Care and Feeding of Resentments

I want to say a few words about the care and feeding of resentments. Why do I work so ceaselessly to convince myself (and others) that a resentment is justified? It has the same corrosive effect on my enjoyment of life whether justified or not.

I do it because nothing reaffirms my sense of nobility quite as strongly as a good, justified resentment. Whether it is the flaming variety or merely smoldering, it spreads warmth and sometimes even exhilaration.

You see, I am right and the other guy is wrong. That knowledge nourishes my self-esteem. So whenever the fires of my resentment simmer down, I toss another log on the coals to be sure I keep it alive. I review and make notes from time to time of the specifics of the resented's injurious behavior.

Occasionally anger craves action. But there seem to be only two courses open to me: Practice the "honesty" part of the program by telling the resented just what's wrong with him, or keep it to myself and keep the fires burning.

The former course would probably lead to an angry confrontation which I shrink from handling. The latter course would result in the fires spreading eventually to other aspects of my consciousness and behavior—even to unrelated areas. I can't seem to find any way to build a firebreak which will permanently confine the flames of a resentment to its specific object.

Eventually, I become so uncomfortable that I have to do something about it.

But what to do?

First of all, I must face the fact that the resentment process is not only fruitless, it is self-defeating. Justified or not, the resentment, and my efforts to bolster its justification, will eat away at my peace of mind and my enjoyment of life.

Meanwhile, the person I resent couldn't care less. Here I am burning myself to a crisp over something he or she may not even be totally aware of, something I can't change. At the root of my resentment is a compulsion to change things I cannot change—to wit, another person. So maybe what I need to do is take a look at changing myself.

When we first came around AA, we were urged to do just what we were told. We might not like it, we might not even agree with it. Just do it. When the action got the predicted result, we were astonished and sometimes a little annoyed. But almost against our will, we came to understand and believe. We never had been able to achieve these ends by

just thinking. Our action and its results can open the door to understanding and belief.

So maybe the thing to do about my resentment is to act.

But act how?

I was told to act "as if."

That seems to call for selling myself on two points:

In the long run I will feel better if I can get rid of the resentment. But what about the fact that I'm right? That brings me to point two.

Over time I can feed my ego and feel even more righteous by shedding the resentment than by concentrating on how right I am. Now I can ponder on how noble I am to have gotten rid of the resentment and to be treating the resented on a "Do-unto-others" basis. In brownie points, generosity ranks above rightness any day in the week.

So, there's the carrot. I will feel better if I can give myself credit for being generous.

But how do I go about being that way?

Here are several actions I am trying to take. To some extent, they seem to be working.

In many cases the resentments are traveling under aliases with passports bearing such names as "righteous anger" (everyone is entitled to that), "hurt feelings," "ungratefulness," and "honest desire" to set the record straight. Now is the time for unmasking the aliases. Is the real identity of the resentment perhaps "wounded ego," "self-pity," or "territorial imperative"? By any chance, is it caused by the fact that I did something that I felt was kind, thoughtful, or unselfish for the resented, and he is not reacting with adequate appreciation? If so, I must ask God to help me remember that anything I do with the label "kind," "thoughtful," or "unselfish" I do because it makes me feel better to do it than not to do it. How can I demand gratitude for something I did to make myself feel better?

I try to understand how the resented feels. What makes him do the things I resent? Are they intended to hurt me or are they in response to some inner compulsion of his own? Rarely do I find that the injurious action was designed to hurt me. Rather it is usually in answer to the pressure within the →

Resentments *continued...*

resentee. This concept helps me to take some of the edge off the resentment.

I must initiate some friendly contact with the resen-tee—whatever would have been a normal contact if there were no resentment. I try to act as if the resentment didn't exist.

Regardless of the reaction I get, I must pause and enjoy the fact that I made an effort to overcome the resentment.

When my wife, who has been in AA for years, read to this point in the manuscript, she suggested a fifth idea. She said, "Instead of *asking* God for help to erase the resentment, *thank* him for helping. Thank him in advance and thank him afterward. That sort of puts your commitment on the line." Good advice.

So has any of this worked for me? Not always and not totally. But I am enjoying life a lot more than when I first set out on this course. Because of my actions and attitude, the resen-tee is giving me less and less cause for my resentment. Far more important, I have no need to justify my feelings by tending and refueling the resentment. With no fuel, the resentment slowly burns out and I begin to be free.

I hate to admit it, but AA is right again.

And now, gentle reader, one final word. You probably assume that I wrote this in the spirit of sharing. Not so. I wrote it in the ardent hope that from time to time I will read this piece myself. After all, AA is a selfish program.

*B. F. P.,
Vero Beach, Florida
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Grapevine Humor

After a binge, a problem drinker went to a priest for confession. In frustration about his drinking habit, he broke down and began to cry. "Don't take it so hard, my son," said the padre. "After all, you just got intoxicated. You didn't kill anyone."

The boozier was leaving the church when he met a drinking buddy just entering. "No use going in," he advised. "Father Murphy is only hearing murder cases today."

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Asked by the doctor why he drank so much, Sam explained, "Every night when I come home, the wife starts screaming, the kids start crying, and the dog starts barking at me. Who wouldn't hit the bottle?"

"What you need is exercise," prescribed the doc. "I want you to run ten miles every morning for a month, then call me."

A month later, Sam called in. "Doc, you cured me! I'm still drinking, but I never felt better in my life!"

"Great," said the doc. "But how's the wife and kids?"

"How should I know," said Sam. "I'm 300 miles away."

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J. D. of Arkansas sent in a tale about a member, six months on the program, who was talking at a meeting. "Since I've been in AA," he remarked, "I haven't found it necessary to take a drink."

His sponsor, unable to swallow this statement, interrupted him. "Listen, Harry," he objected, "you were drinking just last week."

"I know," answered the new member. "But it wasn't necessary"

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Van Nuys, CA 91405

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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.*

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Address _____

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