

*"My grace is sufficient for you,
for my power is made
perfect in weakness."*

2 Corinthians 12:9

AA Meeting in a Pocket



GuestHouse[®]
GuestHouse.org

1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360
800-626-6910 • GuestHouse.org




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Although AA is a spiritual program, AA is not a religious program, and use of AA material in a religious connection does not imply AA's affiliation with or endorsement of any sect, denomination or specific religious belief.



The Serenity Prayer

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

Reinhold Niebuhr

AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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How It Works

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery:

The Twelve Steps of AA

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our efforts.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a.** That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- b.** That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- c.** That God could and would if He were sought.

Big Book, pp. 58-60

The Twelve Traditions of AA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Big Book, p. 562

The Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity, and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Big Book, pp. 83-84

Acceptance

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake.

Big Book, p. 417

It Works - It Really Does

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day, "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.

Big Book, pp. 87-88

Resentment

“If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, your will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don’t really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don’t mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks, and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love.”

Big Book, p. 552

Sobriety Insurance

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. Carry the message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when

others fail. Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss.

Big Book, p. 89

Just for Today

Just for today, I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do things for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today, I will be happy. This assumes that what Abraham Lincoln said is true, that “most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

Just for today, I will try to adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my “luck” as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today, I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today, I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anyone knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do – just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today, I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, keep my voice low, be courteous, and criticize not one bit. I won't find fault with anything nor try to improve or regulate anybody but myself.

Just for today, I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today, I will have a quiet half hour all by myself and relax. During this half hour, sometimes, I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

Just for today, I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

First Step Prayer

Dear Lord, I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness and unmanageability. Remove from me all levels of denial of addiction.

Second Step Prayer

Heavenly Father, I know in my heart that only You can restore me to sanity. I humbly ask that You remove all my addictive thinking and behaviors from me this day. Heal my spirit and restore in me a clear mind.

Third Step Prayer

God, I offer myself to You to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your love and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

Fourth Step Prayer

Dear God, it is I who has made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. My mistakes are mine. Please be with me and guide me as I make a searching and fearless moral inventory. I will write down my wrongs, but I will also include that which is good. I pray for the strength to complete the task.

Fifth Step Prayer

Higher Power, my inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for Your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Assure me, and be with me, in this Step, for without this Step I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help I can do this, and I will do it.

Sixth Step Prayer

Dear God, I am ready for Your help in removing from me the defects of character which I now realize are an obstacle to my recovery. Help me to continue being honest with myself and guide me toward spiritual and mental health.

Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here to do Your will.

Eighth Step Prayer

Dear God, I ask Your help in making my list of all those I have harmed. I will take responsibility for my mistakes and be forgiving to others as You are forgiving to me. Grant me the willingness to begin my restitution. This I pray.

Ninth Step Prayer

Dear God, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, being ever mindful not to harm others in the process. I ask for Your strength and guidance in making direct amends. Most important, I will continue to make amends by staying abstinent, helping others and growing in spiritual progress.

Tenth Step Prayer

I pray I may continue: to grow in understanding and effectiveness; to take daily spot check inventories of myself, watching for selfishness, dishonesty, resentments and fears; to correct mistakes when I make them; to take responsibility for my actions; to be ever aware of my negative and self-defeating attitudes and behaviors; to keep my willfulness in check; to always remember I need Your help; to keep love and tolerance of others as my code; and to continue in daily prayer how I can best serve You.

Eleventh Step Prayer

Dear God, as I understand You, I pray to keep my connection with You open and clear from the confusion of daily life. Through my prayers and meditation, I ask especially for freedom from self-will, rationalization, and wishful thinking. I pray for the guidance of correct thought and positive action. Your will, O God, not mine, be done.

Morning Prayer

God, direct my thinking today so that it will be divorced from self-pity, dishonesty, and self-seeking motives. Keep my thinking cleared of wrong motives and give me the freedom to employ my mental faculties with assurance, placing my thought-life on a higher plane. Give me inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. Guide me, providing whatever I need to take care of any problems. Amen.

Big Book, pp. 86-87

Fear Prayer

God, thank you for helping me be honest enough to see this truth about myself; and now that you have shown me the truth about my fears, please remove these fears from me. Lord, demonstrate through me and help me become that which You would have me be. Help me do Thy will always. Amen.

Nightly Prayer

God, forgive me for my failings today, and help me better live according to Your will tomorrow. Show me how to correct my errors. Guide me and direct me. Remove my arrogance and fear. Grant me the humility and strength to do Thy will. Amen.

Surrender to Win

When we sincerely took such a position (let God direct our lives), all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we become less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we become interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.

Big Book, p. 63

ABC's of Meeting Topics

- A.** Acceptance, Amends, Attitude
- B.** Behavior, Belonging, Blackouts
- C.** Care, Complacency, Conscience
- D.** Dependence, Depression, Desire
- E.** Easy-does-it, Egos, Emotions
- F.** Faith, Fear, Fellowship, Forgiveness
- G.** Gossip, Grace, Gratitude, Guilt
- H.** Happiness, Honesty, Hope, Humility
- I.** Inadequacy, Illness, Inventory
- J.** Jealousy, Joy, Judgment
- K.** Kindness, Knowledge
- L.** Letting Go, Loneliness, Love
- M.** Meditation, Meetings, Morals
- N.** New Life, Newcomers, Ninth Step
- O.** Obligations, One Day at a Time, Others
- P.** Participation, Prayer, Principles
- Q.** Quality vs. Quantity, Quiet Time
- R.** Recovery, Resentments, Responsibility
- S.** Serenity, Service, Spirituality, Surrender
- T.** Temper, Tolerance, Truth
- U.** Understanding, Unity, Unselfishness
- V.** Values, Vanity, Virtues, Vulgarity
- W.** Way of Life, Willingness, Worry
- XYZ.** Yesterday, Youth, Zest for Sobriety

#1 Offender

Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spirituality sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were “burned up.”

Big Book, pp. 64-65

Without Defense

The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.

Big Book, p. 24

The Doctor's Opinion

Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks – drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change, there is very little hope of his recovery.

On the other hand – and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand – once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.

Big Book – The Doctor's Opinion, pp. xxviii-xxix

Guest House Founder's Vision

Guest House shall be a hospital and hospice, a haven and a sanctuary for clergy and religious who suffer from alcoholism or other addictions. Charity shall be its cornerstone and mercy its capstone. Each guest-patient shall be treated as priceless in the eyes of God. ... The dignity of each guest-patient as one specially called to God's service shall be regarded, encouraged and respected from the time of entering Guest House until departure.

Austin Ripley, 1896-1974

Guest House Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide the information, education, treatment and care needed to assure that Catholic clergy, men and women religious, and seminarians suffering from alcoholism, addictions and other behavioral health conditions have the best opportunity for quality recovery and overall health and wellness.

Guest House has been fulfilling this mission since 1956. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and we rely on philanthropy from individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations to carry out our ministry.



For information, to offer financial support or to request additional copies of this booklet, please contact us at

1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360
GuestHouse.org • 800-626-6910 • 248-391-4445

AA resources are available in your community. For problems with alcohol, visit AA, Al-Anon and Alateen at aa.org and al-anon.org.

AA is not affiliated with Guest House.



Guest House is recognized as the first North American provider of residential addiction treatment programs for Catholic clergy, religious and seminarians.