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I Am Responsible

When anyone, anywhere, Reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. to always be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Compassion

I've now been blindsided twice in A.A.—by compassion! Living in a small mountain town in Southern California where there are 5,000 residents – and only 40 professing alcoholics – I've lived a somewhat sheltered life in these middle class, pine-scented rooms. For example, I was two years sober when for the first time a friend of mine with almost three years identified as a newcomer. What? What? He wasn't yesterday, how can he be today?! It took him sharing about the night before, when he'd drank an entire bottle of Irish cream whiskey, for me to understand that he'd "gone out."

As he shared – shaky, tearful, and obviously devastated – I empathized with him, feeling his pain, remorse, and guilt in the pit of my stomach. He was at the time little more than an acquaintance, but we'd shared a hundred meetings together, including one two years earlier when he'd offered to kick my butt if I mentioned drugs one more time. That night, the unseen but growing bond between us was revealed. Because it was an unfamiliar emotion in me, it took a while for me to recognize my response as genuine compassion, which I now see as another gift of the Program!

Thanks to the Fellowship, I've experienced compassion in smaller doses on numerous occasions. One of my cherished more-will-be-revealed moments came when I was four years sober, and my sponsor suggested that I pray for the well-being of [eleven] oldtimer A.A.s on my 8th Step list. He said the book recommended praying for 14 days, but he'd found that 30 days worked better. At first I prayed at them, then gradually for them. As I prayed for men whom I either didn't like, thought inferior, or judged to be defective characters, animosity was slowly replaced by feelings of good will, improving tolerance, and – that's right – compassion! I also learned that resenting authority figures for thirty years "out there" need not be applied to the Elderly Statesmen and Bleeding Deacons "in here."

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Primary Purpose

I really enjoyed the July article, "Primary Purpose." But when I sometimes despair at the possible future of Alcoholics Anonymous, I must always remember: A.A. came into existence by God's Hand and will survive the same way. It will exist for as long as it serves God's purpose. I remind people that there used to be a Washingtonians and an Oxford movement. I presume they survived for as long as they were needed for God's purpose. A.A. grew out from those fellowships.

I'm not fond of the saying that came out of one of our conventions years ago: "When anyone anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there and for that I am responsible." (It was written by a former editor of the Grapevine and adopted as the slogan of the 1965 International Convention.) It implies power that I do not *personally* have.

I came here an atheist and the 48 years of sobriety I've been blessed with was a pure and simple gift from a Higher Power I didn't even believe in at the time. The only requirement was a desire to stop drinking and a willingness to work the 12 Steps the best I could – at the time. As time went by my honesty, open-mindedness and willingness grew exponentially.

I've sponsored many women over these decades, and the only problem I've really ever had in that regard was when I felt personal responsibility for their sobriety. When I was 5 years sober, I would lay awake at night worrying about them all: "Mary can't find a job. Susan has marital problems. Jane has serious financial woes. Barbara may go to jail."

I was forgetting Who got me sober, kept me sober, and solved ALL my problems! I didn't lay awake worrying about my problems – I had a Higher Power to solve them. Even if I fail in my efforts to carry the message, God will see that the message is received by those who want to hear it. This is the very essence of the A.A. program: "God could and would if

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It was like this: After several years of thinking, when Alcoholic X entered the room, I habitually thought, “Well, here’s that @#\$\$%^&+, again.” After a few days of praying for him, when he entered the room I thought, “Well, here’s that @#\$\$%^&+ I’m praying for again.” Then, after several weeks, I noticed a brand new thought: “Well, here’s that guy I’m praying for, again.” The habitual action of prayer replaced the habitual notion of animosity. To this day, if I see @#\$\$% enter the room and begin to identify him that way, I send out an immediate prayer before the ^&*+ gets tacked on.

Another major bout of compassion happened just last week, on Friday. Over the past several months, I realized that I saw my sponsor (mostly at District Meetings) more than I talked to him; that there were several other A.A.s whom I talked to more frequently than he (including my friend above); and that the growing lack of a relationship with him weakened my program. Then came the day from Hell weeks ago, when, I called everyone but my sponsor and wondered why. I’d short-listed several men to be my new sponsor and finally decided on a friend in Fresno, whom I intended to ask over the weekend.

That was, until last Friday. I was at the Thank God It’s Friday open participation meeting in Apple Valley, where raffle tickets are distributed and drawn to identify those who share (and to avoid those who always share). I hadn’t seen my sponsor in several months and was shocked to see how fragile he looked; shaky and leaning on a cane. I was not able to greet him before the meeting. Not until he feebly shuffled to the front of the room to take a cake for 31 years and wobbled back to his seat, could I stand and give him a hug. I felt embarrassed when someone whispered a compliment to me for being there to celebrate my sponsor’s birthday, when instead I was ready to replace him.

I’d, in fact, lost a conscious contact with my sponsor. It started out as just not calling, and ended up in my thinking something was wrong with our relationship, which merely suffered from lack of exercise. Last night I called him and arranged to meet an hour before his home-based Cedar Street Big Book Study meeting to talk to talk about sponsorship and everything I’ve just shared with you. As we hugged goodbye, he said that I should pray about whether I should find another sponsor. I told him that God had already answered that prayer: In the revealing light of compassion, the right action is bright and crystal clear.

This morning at 6:00 a.m., he was there in the parking lot when I pulled in to unlock the door to the Phelan Good Morning meeting. My sponsor-shopping days are over. I don’t need a new and improved sponsor; I just need to love the one I’m with.

Thanks for letting me be of service,

Ed L., Wrightwood, CA

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sought.” And anytime I forgot that, I had a sober husband to remind me.

And working with all these women gave me life-long friends that I didn’t have when I got here: Connie, sober 42 years, who I made the original 12th Step call on and still see at least once a month. She was one of the “502” Club’s Class of ‘71.’ Maureen, sober over 40 years now and Bobbie with 38 years. What gifts! They give me far more than I’ve ever given them. All by admitting I didn’t have any Power. Every single one of those Promises has come true in my life – *all of them*.

And yes, like the old joke: opinions are like you-know-whats – everybody has one! If one has nothing else to offer, he/she can always come up with an opinion on everything from world hunger, politics, and the state of the economy – to sobriety. (Now, he may have only been sober since last week, but he has an opinion on how it works . . . or at least how it *ought* to work – according to him!)

Of course, I don’t get a lot of newcomers anymore, maybe because I don’t do “treatment-center-speak.” My program has come right out of that Book that I thought was so hokey when I was a newcomer: “This is too simple. This cannot possibly keep me sober.” But it has – and very, very well. I “carry the message” to fulfill the requirement of the 12th Step, not to be a do-gooder. I’m a selfish alcoholic – I work the Steps to stay sober by staying on an even keel, spiritually. By doing so, a lot of people have been helped. But make no mistake: I do not waste time with anyone who does not “want what I have.” God bless ‘em – let them find what they want elsewhere.

Thanks for the opportunity to sound off. If given a hundred years, I could never repay all that A.A. has given me— (including that wonderful husband, George, who I met at my very first meeting. We were married one-day-less than 42 years when he died 5 years ago this month.) All by checking my brains at the door and doing what I was told – even when I *knew* it wouldn’t work. THANKS, A.A.!

Kathy F., Hesperia, CA
Back to Basics Group

*“Faith is not believing
God can; it is knowing
that God will!”*

Minutes of the Intergroup Meeting 19 July 14

The meeting was opened at 9:31 a.m. by Doug H., who led us in the Serenity Prayer. Helen M. read the Twelve Traditions. In attendance were Doug H., Bill P., Betty B., Craig B., Vanessa C., Helen M., Maria B., Ted B., Jim F., and Joey R. Ted B. read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Bill P. gave the report in the absence of Chad F. As of June 30, 2014, there was a balance of \$13,936.67 in savings, \$7,113.92 in the C.D., and \$6,710.77 in checking. Income for the month of June was \$3,350.92 with total expenses being \$2,542.88. The net June income before literature was \$808.04. June literature sales were \$1,394.27, with literature purchases being \$1,665.00. Total literature was thus a negative <270.73>. The net June income was \$573.31. In June, 14 people contributed \$498.00 to P.Y.M.W.Y.M.I. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Public Information Report: Vanessa C. gave the report. The High Desert Public Libraries have been very receptive in receiving A.A. information. [Big Books], (both English and Spanish) have been delivered to all the [libraries] except the [Wrightwood's and Phelan's]. Also, A.A. directories and literature have been delivered to the [libraries], except for [Barstow's and Lucerne Valley's]. The A.A. information booth for the Juneteenth event at [Victor] Valley Community College did not happen due to a SNAFU in the paperwork. Future public events where A.A. may have a booth are the Victorville Harvest Festival in the fall and the San Bernardino County Fair next summer. Vanessa is looking into distributing A.A. information, especially meeting directories, to hotels, hospitals, and the San Bernardino Sheriffs' Department. [She] will also look into Public Information Announcements at the level of radio and newspapers regarding A.A. information.

Ways and Means Report: Joey R. gave the report. Joey is planning a tentative event, depending on H & I's Roundup, for September. This event would be centered around horse-shoes at Doris Davies Park. She is also looking into the possibility of a spaghetti dinner in December.

Webmaster's Report: Jim F. reported that he had no updates at this time except that he had, to the best of his knowledge, gotten the new H.U.G. information on the Website.

Office Manager's Reports: Craig B. reported that there were 78 visitors to the office in June. There were 151 information calls and two 12 Step Calls. There were 69 call-forwarding calls and four 12 Step calls. The totals were 219 information calls and six 12 Step calls. All office volunteer positions are filled at this time. Craig worked on the credit card convenience fees in June. There is more logistics and information to sort through on this matter, so Craig thought it best that we table this discussion until the August meeting. There is a paid A.A. advertisement in the Daily Press newspaper. But it is not located in the community section. Vanessa C. will look into the matter. In October, A.A. World Services is going to raise the literature prices. At this time it is not known

what those prices will be. The Office Manger's Report was accepted.

Newsletter Report: Betty B. gave the report. If there are any problems with [Central Office information in the newsletter, contact the office and not the newsletter itself].

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

The next Intergroup meeting will be August 16, 2014 at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.

[**Announcements:** Craig B. celebrated 25 years today, and Vanessa C. is celebrating 4 years! Congratulations to A.A.!] Doug H. motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

Ted B., Secretary

For Today. . .

Perhaps more often than we think, we make no contact at depth with alcoholics who are suffering the dilemma of no faith.

Certainly none are more sensitive to spiritual cocksureness, pride, and aggression than they are. I'm sure this is something we too often forget.

In A.A.'s first years, I all but ruined the whole undertaking with this sort of unconscious arrogance. God as I understood Him had to be for everybody. Sometimes my aggression was subtle and sometimes it was crude. But either way it was damaging – perhaps fatally so – to numbers of nonbelievers.

Of course this sort of thing isn't confined to Twelfth Step work. It is very apt to leak out into our relations with everybody. Even now, I catch myself chanting the same old barrier-building refrain: "Do as I do, believe as I do – or else!"

As Bill Sees It, p. 146

Bill Cleveland

*"Life is ten percent what you make it and
ninety percent how to take it.*

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*Failure is the opportunity to begin again
more intelligently.*

~Henry Ford

<<< >>>

*Today, I will act on my best understanding
of my Higher Power's will for me.*

~Inner Harvest

Correction to
July's Birthdays:
Les P., as 21
years, not 19! My
apologies, Les.



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Walt B. \$35.00
Betty B. 24.00

Upcoming Events

Our Intergroup Meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office. Call 760-242-9292 for further information.

**October 4—5, 2014
Celebration with Love at The Place, 32794 Old Woman Springs Rd., Lucerne Valley, CA.
Speaker Meetings both days are from 9:00 a.m.—8:30 p.m., with breakfast kickoffs at 7:00 a.m. There will be a lunch both days at noon and a Potluck on Sunday at 5:00 p.m.**

February 5—8, 2014
51st International Women's Conference, Palm Springs, CA. For more information, or to be of service, visit
www.internationalwomensconference.org, or email Judith Donahue at
51stIWCPublicity@gmail.com

Thought to Ponder

I cannot add to the peace and good will of the world if I fail to create an atmosphere of harmony and love right where I live and work.

**If you would like to receive the newsletter via email, send
Your email address to:
newsletterforthefellowship@yahoo.com**

Central Office Activities

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>JULY</u>	<u>Y.T.D.</u>
Visitors	106	626
Info. Calls	158	1,650
12 Step Calls	3	7
<u>Call Forwarding</u>		
Info. Calls	111	663
12 Step Calls	3	14
<u>Totals</u>		
Info Calls	269	1,334
12 Step Calls	6	21

Removing "The Ground Glass"

The moral inventory is a cool examination of the damages that occurred to us during life and a sincere effort to look at them in a true perspective. This has the effect of taking the ground glass out of us, the emotional substance that still cuts and inhibits.

As Bill Sees It, p. 140

My Eighth Step list used to drag me into a whirlpool of resentment. After four years of sobriety, I was blocked by denial connected with an ongoing abusive relationship. The argument between fear and pride eased as the words of the Step moved from my head to my heart. For the first time in years I opened my box of paints and poured out an honest rage, an explosion of reds and blacks and yellows. As I looked at the drawing, tears of joy and relief flowed down my cheeks. In my disease, I had given up my art, a self-inflicted punishment far greater than any imposed from outside. In my recovery, I learned that the pain of my defects is the very substance God uses to cleanse my character and to set me free.

Via, *Daily Reflections*, p. 232

And Finally . . .

Brenda O'Malley is home making dinner, as usual, when Tim Finnegan arrives at her door.

"Brenda, may I come in? he asks. "I've somethin' to tell ya."

"Of course you can come in, you're always welcome, Tim.

But, where's my husband?"

"That's what I'm her to be telling ya, Brenda. There was an accident at the Guinness brewery . . ."

"Oh, God, no!" cries Brenda. "Please don't tell me."

"I must, Brenda. Your husband Shamus is dead and gone. I'm sorry."

Finally, she looked up at Tim. "How did it happen, Tim?"

"It was terrible, Brenda. He fell into a vat of Guinness Stout and drowned."

"Oh, my dear Jesus! But you must tell me the truth, Tim. Did he at least go quickly?"

"Well, Brenda, no. In fact he got out three times to pee."

Submitted by,

Kathy F., Hesperia, CA