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Step Two

If Step One can be considered as the door to recovery, Step Two is certainly the key to open that door. Just as Step One takes up the entire third chapter of the Big Book, chapter four is exclusive to Step Two. In fact, the second page of chapter four states that the “main object” of the book is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself that will solve your problem. Note it is the Higher Power that solves the problem that restores you to sanity – not your own efforts. Note, also, that the Step does not say, “Came to believe in a Higher Power.” We came to believe in what that Higher Power could and would do for us.

Like many, if not most of us, I came to Alcoholics Anonymous with a strong belief in God. I was raised in several different churches and had been quite active in them until my mid-twenties. Coincidentally that was when I began drinking alcoholically as well. I always knew that there was a God of the universe – an all powerful, all-encompassing God who set the stars in motion and breathed life into all living things. What I forgot was that this God was also vitally interested in me. It seemed rather egotistical that God would use His precious time looking after me. He had given me a sound body and mind so I could do that myself. But I am an alcoholic and have proven to myself that I cannot manage my own life. So how did I come to believe that God would help me return to sobriety, heal my pain and dry my tears? How did I come to realize (again) that God cared about me?

The revelation, which could also be called a spiritual awakening, came as a series of “coincidences” that could only have been guided by the Hand of God. I had been out of detox and off of pill for about ten days and was attending intensive out-patient therapy at Kaiser Fontana. One this particular day, my wife had come down with me as we needed to go to the pharmacy to pick up some prescriptions (narcotics by the way) for our daughter who was living in Anaheim and [was] quite ill. I had been struggling with the idea of going back to A.A. meetings, which I had fallen away from. I had not had a drink in over 16 ½ years but had fallen prey to the prescription drugs. Did I belong back in A.A.? If I went back, should I change my sobriety date?

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Tradition Two

A.A. is both a democracy and, in Bill W.’s words, “a benign anarchy.” A group elects its own officers – who have no power to *order* anybody to do anything. In most groups, most of the slate rotates out of office at the end of six months, and new officers are elected.

If a group wants to be a part of the whole A.A. service structure, it elects a G.S.R. (general service representative, with a two-year term). G.S.R.’s elect area committee members and then join them in electing a delegate from their area to the annual General Service Conference. The Conference is about the closest approximation of a government that A.A. has; it produces opinions on important matters of policy; it approves the choice of some trustee nominees for the General Service Board and directly elects others. But neither the Conference nor the board can give orders to any A.A. group or member.

Then who’s in charge around here? A.A. is a spiritual movement, and so the “ultimate authority” is the spiritual concept of the “group conscience.” Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a decision. The result rests on more than arithmetic, a “yes” and “no” count. Minority ideas get thoughtful attention. What about that annoying character who’s always sure she’s right? Better listen – maybe, just this once, she *is* right. If she’s wrong, then she will – if she remembers the First Tradition as well as the Second – go along with the decision of the group conscience. Does this notion seem too cloudy? Let’s think back to our first meetings. The presence we newcomers felt in those rooms was the same as the group conscience. And it was *real* – welcoming us in, setting up no barriers of rules. . . .

With permission, The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

Walking Over the Bodies

As Heard by a Newcomer

One of the meanest things my sponsor told me when I was fairly new to the program (and trust me – there were hundreds of mean things she said) was, I needed to “learn to walk over the bodies.” The topic had come up after someone had gone out, gotten drunk and died. It was one of my first experiences in Alcoholics Anonymous of somebody doing this. I mean, once you get to A.A. aren’t you supposed to stay away from booze? How could anyone drink so much they died? And how in the hell are you supposed to just “walk over the bodies?” I thank God I had sense enough at the time to ask her to explain to me how that was done, and I thank God she took the time to explain it to me in a way I could understand.

I am going to paraphrase what she said. Remember now, this is coming from a newcomers recollections. I’m almost positive she would remember it quite differently:

“Well, Betty, that’s what alcoholics do. They drink! It’s abnormal for any of us to be sober. But what happens when some of them drink is they die. Whether it’s a physical death, a mental death, or a spiritual death, you need to walk over the bodies. You stay sober no f_____ matter what. That way you can be there for the next newcomer gal who walks through the doors and wants to get sober, and you do it on life’s terms.”

I still thought it was a mean way to look at things. Where was the compassion? Where was the willingness to help? Walk over the bodies? Gross! But I hung around long enough to figure out for myself what it was she was trying to teach me.

As Editor of the *Newsletter for the Fellowship*, I have been allowed to publish “Things We Cannot Change,” our form of an obituary. These are written for the people who have died sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. However, it is for those who have not been able, for whatever reason, to “get this thing” called sobriety that I write about. It is their bodies I have had to walk over.

What has this to do with anything? Let me explain.

For me, nothing is scarier than dying the dirty, ugly death that is alcoholism. A few years ago we published an article (maybe we can get it dug out from the archives) about a woman named Tommy. She died alone in her apartment from the ravages of this disease to the point that the police who, when they found her body, thought she had been murdered. Her bones were snapped, her tongue had been bitten in two and she was alone. That is not how I want to die. That is not the body I want my family or any A.A. member to have to walk over.

You see we will all die one day, and some of us may not go as pretty as we think we ought to or deserve to. I have buried several friends who have died sober in the Fellowship and some who died drunk. No matter how the sober ones have died be it cancer, automobile accidents, aneurysms, heart attacks, C.O.P.D., or plain old age, they have died in a clean, beautiful manner. They died the same way they lived with – with a calm, sober dignity that is beyond measure. Theirs are the spiritual bodies I get to take with me as I do my trudging down this road of destiny, and theirs are the lessons I keep close to my heart.

So, I will continue – with honor – to publish our members’ names who have died sober, and it will be with a prayer of gratitude that I will continue to walk over the bodies of those who did not.

Betty B., Apple Valley, CA

Things we cannot change

*“Irish” has passed away with over
30 years of sobriety.*

*Cyndy Salvini of Lucerne Valley
passed away Jan. 2010 with over
15 years of sobriety*

*Debbie Shultz of Apple Valley
passed away with over one year
of sobriety.*

They will be missed.

(Continued from page 1)

Would I be welcomed back? Would I feel comfortable in A.A.? I waited in the car while my wife went into the pharmacy. I always have something to read with me, but on that day I had nothing. I looked around the car for anything to read and spotted several old issues of the *Grapevine*, the A.A. monthly magazine. My wife has subscribed for many years and issues have a way of appearing wherever she goes. There was one issue on the floor of the car, somewhat soiled and stained with spilled soda. I picked it up; it was the May 1999 issue. I opened it at random and it fell open to a short, two page story about a man with a story nearly identical to mine. He had been sober several years, became addicted to prescription drugs, did not drink but lost his sobriety, and then was restored to sanity in A.A. There was my quiet answer from God. That a six-year-old issue of *Grapevine* with that exact story would find its way into my hands at that exact time when I was asking God for an answer is nothing short of a quiet but very effective wake-up from my own personal Higher Power. I realized that God had been there for me all along, that He had not abandoned me, and that he was more than willing to take an active role in my life again. I knew in that moment that everything was going to be all right.

I now have an ongoing daily relationship with my Higher Power that is as enriching as it is empowering. I have modified my concept of God somewhat. I still believe in God as the All Powerful Creator. But as it tells us in the Big Book, "God is everything or He is nothing." With God being everything, He has the time to take care of me as well as the rest of His Creation. I envision my God now as a loving parent. I was blessed with loving, caring parents and I understand that love as I also love and care for my own children. My God guides and protects me as my parents did and as I did for my children. I treasure the story in the Bible about the Prodigal Son, who when he returned home was met by a father who had been watching every day for him, and whose joy was unbounded that his child was alive and home. I know I could not have recovered without an active Higher Power but that, with God, I can accomplish whatever His will is for me. And His will, not mine, is what Step Three is all about.

Doug H., Hesperia, CA

Tradition One

Due to space limitations in January's newsletter, I was unable to run an essay on Tradition One. Therefore, it is being run at this time.

Our brother the noisy drunk affords the simplest illustration of this Tradition. If he insists on disrupting the meeting, we "invite" him to leave, and we bring him

back when he's in better shape to hear the message. We are putting the "common welfare" first. But it is *his* welfare, too; if he's ever going to get sober, the group must go on functioning, ready for him.

Yet he is only one rare aspect of the problem. When we do get sober in A.A., we shed a few small bits of the Big Ego: We admit, "I can't handle alcohol, and I can't stay away from it on my own." Fine so far! Then we find there is plenty of that Ego still with us. It may lead us to take other members' inventories and to gossip about their supposed shortcomings. It may lure us into hogging the floor at every discussion meeting.

Oh well, it's a selfish program, isn't it? After all the miseries of active alcoholism, why shouldn't we indulge ourselves a little? We all know one good reason why we shouldn't: Self-indulgence of this kind is an immediate personal danger; it threatens the individual's own sobriety. More than that, it threatens the very basis of our sobriety – the unity of the A.A. group. For a self-righteous gossip *can* damage the mutual trust that is vital to every group. And a compulsive talker *can* ruin the effectiveness of a discussion meeting – "I've stopped going to that group. Nobody but Joe can get a word in edgewise."

When A.A. was very young, the first members clearly saw the preservation of its unity as a life-or-death matter for themselves and for the alcoholics still unrecovered. The First Tradition states this aim, and it is the common aim of all Twelve Traditions. When A.A. reached the age of 35, the aim was restated in the theme of the 1970 International Convention:

This we owe to A.A.'s future:

To place our common welfare first;
To keep our Fellowship united;
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

Each of the other eleven Traditions explains one specific way to protect the unity of the Fellowship and the A.A. group. Those early members quickly recognized power-drivers as potential group-wreckers. And they're still around – the members who are always sure that they're always right – the members who are happily ready to assume all the burdens of leadership and grimly unwilling to share them, let alone give them up. But a group does need officers. How can we cope with this dilemma? Tradition Two provides the answer. . . .

With permission, Twelve Traditions Illustrated

What Makes God Good

As I lay in bed last evening, I was thinking about how good God is. I was thinking how we use the phrase, "God is so good." Normally we use this as praise to God's goodness only after we or someone we know has recovered from some sort of problem in life; illness, economic problem, family problem, etc. My thought was, "What makes God so good?" Was it the "recovery" that made Him so good in my mind? My conclusion was that God is so good" regardless of whether I, or my loved one, lives or dies, whether there is recovery or not. Sometimes I think we relate God's goodness to good things happening in our lives, but God is so good because he is God.

Submitted by, Sue Johnson, Tucson, AZ

Upcoming Events

February 20, 2010

Intergroup Meeting, Central Office, at 9:30 a.m. Please have your group/meeting send a representative.

March 12 - 14, 2010

26th Annual Sunshine of the Spirit High Desert A.A. Convention, The Ambassador Hotel, Victorville, CA. For more information call Donna S. at 760-792-5678 or Matt N. at 760-267-0512. For Al-Anon information contact Gail at 909-210-1403. Flyers are also available at Central Office.

March 19 — 20, 2010

4th Annual Ride for Recovery. Starts Friday with a Speaker Meeting at the Barstow Alano Club with the ride to Beatty, NV on Saturday. For more information call Abel at 760-559-1880, Rob H. at 818-929-4119, or Central Office at 760-242-9292.

May 22, 2010

7th Annual Women's A.A. Banquet, 5:00 p.m-10:00 p.m., Quality Inn and Suites — Green Tree, Victorville, CA. For more information contact Melissa at 760-2179330 or Casey at 760-983-6763.

May 28 — 31, 2010

26th Annual South Bay Roundup, Torrance Marriott Hotel, Torrance, CA. Call the Roundup Hotline at 310-354-7660 or visit www.southbayroundup.org for more information.

July 1 — 4, 2010

International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, San Antonio, TX. For more information visit www.aa.org. There will also be information at Central Office.

Become a "Faithful Fiver"

What are Faithful Fivers?

They are A.A. members who pledge at least \$5.00 each month toward the support of their Central Office to "carry the message." Many of us have spent more than \$5.00 daily/hourly on alcohol during our drinking days!

I agree to pledge \$ _____
and enclosed is my contribution.

Name*: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/ZIP: _____

**You may remain anonymous if you wish.*

New Meetings

APPLE VALLEY

Monday, 5:00 p.m.
Open Participation, Victor Valley Alano Club (AV1)

HESPERIA

Thursday, 5:30 p.m.
High Desert Young People Meeting
13482 Cedar St.
Hesperia, CA
For directions or information contact Jeni W. at 760-222-4006 or Tiffany S. at 760-514-6530.

PINION HILLS

6:30 p.m.
Women's Meeting [cl]
Hillside Church, Hwy. 2

And Finally . . .

My Living Will

Last night, my kids and I were sitting in the living room and I said to them, "I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug."

They got up, unplugged the computer, and threw out my wine.

They are such ass_ _ _ _ _!

Submitted by,
Susan B., Apple Valley, CA