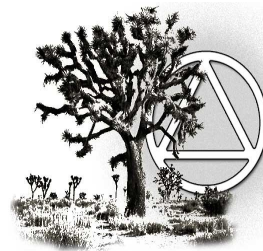


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## I Am Responsible

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

### The Origin and History of the Serenity Prayer

What is the origin and history of the “Serenity Prayer?” The short answer is, as with most A.A. “history,” we’re not really sure. We know that it is presently the most popular “A.A. prayer,” and [it] is one of the most popular prayers in the world. Its origin is generally attributed to American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, although it cannot be found anywhere in his printed works. The short form is found first in A.A. published writings in 1952 in “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,” at Step Three, page 41:

“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. Thy will, not mine, be done.”

This is the most popular version recited at meetings throughout the world, with the exception of the last line, which has been dropped. The version most often attributed to Niebuhr circa 1941 is:

“God, give us grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
courage to change the things which should be changed,  
which should be changed,  
and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.  
Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
This sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right,  
If I surrender to Your will,  
So that I may be seasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.”

Note the specific reference to Jesus and the difference in the request that is not to “me” as an individual, but to the collective “us.” Another, similar version, drops specific reference

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### Serenity

When I was about 19-years-old, me and Uncle Billy sat in a 12-foot flat-bottomed boat on a 10-acre pond outside Roanoke, Virginia, fishing. We were already on the water when the sun began to rise, revealing thin wisps of fog dancing on the mirrored surface, reflecting the Blue Ridge Mountains, with dense mats of lily pads surrounding us. As the sun continued to rise, we were regaled with subtle pops, like corks escaping champagne bottles, as the lily pods burst open and the young, pink-white flowers greeted the dawn.

Such was the scene that came to mind several weeks ago, early in the morning, as the Sunset Group in Joshua Tree, California discussed the topic of “serenity.” As one of my most captivating memories, it led me to consider how that quiet, serene pond lends itself to a metaphor about serenity, resentment, and the multitude of thoughts in between.

Not long after the sun was up and long before noon, Uncle Billy and I began drinking beer and eventually sipping whiskey. Between the rising winds, escalating clamor, and the rocking of the boat accentuating our clumsy movements, the still surfaces of my mind and the placid pond both went from mirror-like calmness to whiskey-capped turmoil. As our laughter mounted, alcoholic merriment echoed off the surrounding woods, shattering the peace and quiet. After 28 years of confusing stimulus for happiness, in 2005 my life was like a 40-foot long speedboat on a 10-acre pond, cutting doughnuts, spouting rooster tails, as I pitched cinderblocks and boulders into the frothy water, destroying the lily pads, and roiling the bottom into mud-choked mayhem.

I realized in the calm sharing of the meeting that serenity is a fleeting condition at best; there’s always some little wind stirring up ripples, even in my quietest moments. At times, I’m standing there throwing pebbles, then rocks, then cobbles, then boulders into my own quiet waters as my mind races from a single thought, to a sting of them, to resentment that eventually becomes a tirade or [worse]. Then, when I dwell on *your* poor behavior and judge you, I invite *you* to stand on my shores and heave your own smoldering rocks and boulders into my pond.

*(Continued on page 2)*

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to Jesus and replacing it with “He” and shifts back to the individualized request:

“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.  
 Living one day at a time,  
 Enjoying one moment at a time,  
 Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.  
 Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,  
 Not as I would have it.  
 Trusting that He will make all things right  
 if I surrender to His will.  
 That I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
 And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.  
 Amen.”

The Serenity Prayer does not appear in the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” in its original form. It appears once in the Fourth Edition and is referenced several times, but not quoted. It first appears at page 357 in “It Might Have Been Worse.” This story is by Chet Rude and was first published in the Second Edition in 1955. Interestingly, Rude’s version is the collective one, drops the prefatory appeal to God, and does not actually refer to God at all. According to Rude:

“The A.A. way of life is the way we always should have tried to live. ‘Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.’”

(*Alcoholics Anonymous*, “It Might Have Been Worse,” p. 357)

The Serenity Prayer is also referred to but not quoted in Dr. Paul Ohliger’s story, “Acceptance Was the Answer,” at p. 419. Note that Dr. Paul’s story first appeared in the Third Edition as “Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict.”

There are three Fourth Edition stories where the Serenity Prayer is referenced, but not quoted in full: “Because I’m an Alcoholic,” at p. 345; “A Drunk Like You,” at p. 401; and “A.A. Taught Him to Handle Sobriety,” at p. 559. “A Drunk Like You” also speaks to the author’s aversion to the Lord’s Prayer:

“The last big hurdle was closing the meeting with the Lord’s Prayer. As a Jew, I was uncomfortable with it and decided to talk to my sponsor about it. so I said, “The Lord’s Prayer bothers me. I don’t like closing with it.” “Oh,” he said, “what’s the problem” “Well, I’m Jewish and it’s not a Jewish prayer.” “Well, then” he said, “say it in Jewish.” I said, “It would still be the Lord’s Prayer.” “Right,” he said. “Then say something else that you like. Your Higher Power, whatever you call it, is helping you, and you need to say thank you.”

*Alcoholics Anonymous*, “A Drunk Like You,” p. 406

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Finally, there’s that asteroid that comes out of nowhere that strikes the center of my pond, displacing half the water, and leaving the surface foaming for days, weeks, or even years – like this past January when my friend of twenty years died of a heart attack two months before his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Such were my thoughts when I suddenly remembered a forgotten passage from my youth: “Peace, be still.” I then realized that God is always available to calm the turmoil, and do for me what I cannot do for myself. I can do a few things, like not throw new thoughts in after the old, and perhaps avoid growing resentment. I can stop dwelling on your poor behavior, instead recognizing how familiar it is because it’s also my own poor behavior. I’ve notice that when I stop contributing to my own drama (progress, not perfection), the waters quiet down quite a bit. As for meditation? It’s not what you think! Finally, for the big ones I don’t see coming, I can always turn to God and ask. “Please, let there be peace, help me be still.”

Thanks for letting me be of service,

Ed L., Wrightwood, CA

## The Heart of Spirituality

What a difficult time we have making the transition, *in our thinking*, from the conditioning we have received in a largely materialistic world, to a life based on spiritual principles. Most of the people around us have a relatively easy time of it, mainly because they aren’t burdened with the disease of alcoholism. They have a life *perspective* that is *closer to the centerline* when it comes to the fears, insecurities, inferiorities, guilt, etc., etc, that the alcoholic faces every day of his/her life. The level of discomfort, caused by these defects, seldom changes without a continuous effort, on our part, to replace them with thoughts and actions that keep these faulty perceptions in check. It is well known among A.A. members who have tried to go it alone, based on their knowledge, and have failed, that we may have to *change our whole approach*.

The transition, I referred to, is a most difficult leap to make. This is mainly because of the defiant thinking that we, as alcoholics, have relied upon to protect us from the various authority/religious/establishment figures, and *our perceptions* of what THEY were trying to get us to think and do. Normal people don’t resist these things to the degree that we do, only because *their perception*, of these things, is not nearly as threatening to them as it is to us.

For us, it should be simple to go from a material/practical line of thought to a spiritual/unselfish way of thinking, but it seems that we have to go all the way around the world in order to settle into this simple transition. Why is this so difficult for us? I believe that the word SPIRITUAL often throws a monkey wrench into the works. I believe that our *preconceived ideas*, based on our conditioning of what is meant by

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According to our “official” A.A. history book, “Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age,” published in 1957:

“Just before [A.A.’s first secretary] Ruth [Hock] left, a news clipping whose content was to become famous was called to our attention by a New York member, newsman Jack. It was an obituary notice from a New York paper. Underneath a routing account of the one who had died there appeared these words:

‘God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference.’

“Never had we seen so much A.A. in so few words. While Ruth and I were admiring the prayer, and wondering how to use it, friend Howard walked into the office. Confirming our own ideas, he exclaimed, “We ought to print this on cards and drop one into every piece of mail that goes out of here. I’ll pay for the first printing.” For several years afterward we followed his suggestion, and with amazing speed the Serenity Prayer came into general use and took its place alongside our two favorites, the Lord’s Prayer and the Prayer of St. Francis.

“No one can tell for sure who first wrote the Serenity Prayer. Some say it came from the early Greeks; others think it was from the pen of an anonymous English poet; still others claim it was written by an American naval officer; and Jack Alexander, who once researched the matter, attributes it to the Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary. Anyhow, we have the prayer and it is said thousands of times daily. We count its writer among our great benefactors.” *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pg. 1

Submitted by,

Ron M., Victorville, CA

*The Heart/Spirituality*

(Continued from page 2)

the word spiritual, is what many of us struggle with, or we *simply dismiss it as more religious dogma*. And, if we can find a way to bridge that gap, we can get on with a life that is unimaginable good.

The things we come to understand in Alcoholics Anonymous is that in order to live a happy and contented life, we have to overcome all the fear, insecurities, low self esteem, and guilt—by starting the practice of doing unselfish things in order to overcome our neediness. If we do these things long enough, we find that we are better off than before (our perception changes). Things seem to be less threatening and this inspires us – in spirit – to reach out even further and see where it takes us.

In the beginning of our A.A. journey, we are encouraged to take on service responsibilities. Sometime this is the first time that we *step out of character* and do something for others with no

expectation of material reward, but we do end up with an unexpected reward. It lifts our spirit and we finally feel that we are a part of something. Oh!!!. There’s that word spirit again. *If, for the purpose of A.A., we just replace the word spiritual with selflessness*, I think it would take all the difficult transitional road blocks out of the way. I personally can’t see that much difference in the two, for my way of thinking.

About fifteen years ago I heard a well known motivational speaker ask:

Q: “What do you get when you squeeze an orange? A: Orange juice. Q: Why? A. Because that all that’s in there. Next. Q: What do you get when you squeeze Mother Teresa? A: Love. Q: Why? A: Because that’s all that’s in there.”

I believe that spirituality is very close to selflessness.

The action that we take when reaching out to others is the first step in understanding unselfish/spiritual principles. When we do these things in the spirit of brightening the life of another, and not for recognition, we are going to receive; we heal both ourselves and the recipient. I believe that THE UNSELFISH MOTIVE (regarding what we do for, and how we treat others), IS THE HEART OF SPIRITUALITY. It would be hard to fault a person for what they do when their motive is PURE AND UNSELFISH. This, I believe, is living in the spirit of all our principles. That warm feeling in my heart is all the reward I will ever need.

Submitted by,

Rick R., Poway, CA

## Minutes of the Intergroup Meeting 16 August 14

The meeting was opened at 9:35 a.m. by Doug H., who led us in the Serenity Prayer. Joey R. read the Twelve Traditions. In attendance were Doug H., Chad F., Betty B., Craig B., Joey R., Carl O., and Lucy B. Ted B. read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved as read.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Chad F. gave the report. As of July 31, 2014, there was a balance of \$14,286.67 in savings, \$7,115.71 in the C.D., and \$5,018.41 in checking. Income for the month of July was \$2,186.97 with total expenses being \$4,392.47. July income, before literature, was a negative <\$2,205.50>. Much of the negative income was due to Federal Payroll Tax and Payroll Tax State (EDD). July literature sales were \$942.23, with literature purchases being \$160.00. The total literature sales were \$786.23. The net July income was negative <\$1,419.27>. In July, 13 people contributed \$467.00 to P.Y.M.W.Y.M.I. The Treasurer’s Report was accepted.

**Ways and Means:** Joey R. gave the report. Joey will know if H & I will have their Roundup in September after the H & I meeting August 18. With this information she will be able to ascertain if there will be a horseshoe tournament this fall. There definitely will be a spaghetti dinner in December. The

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To:

Ron M.,  
with 40 years!

*Minutes*

location and time will be announced at a later date. At the initial planning meeting for the High Desert A.A. Convention in June, 2015, Joey will try to iron out how the Convention and Founder's Day Picnic will work in unison. The Ride to Recovery event will have their initial planning meeting at the Barstow Alano Club on the third Friday of September at 7:00 p.m.

**Newsletter Report:** Betty B. gave the report. Betty says a large "Thank You" to the people responding with local stories for the newsletter. She has enough stories to last through October. To date there are 60 on-line subscriptions. One hundred fifty (150) hard copies are still being printed. Subscriptions for a hard copy are \$10.00/year.

**Office Manager's Report:** Craig B. reported that there were 106 visitors to the office in July. There were 158 information calls and three 12-Step calls. There were 111 call-forwarding calls and three 12-Step calls. The totals were 269 information calls and six 12-Step calls. There is a Call-Forwarding position opened for every-other-Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Please announce at your meetings. If interested, call Craig at Central Office. Credit card convenience fees (the amount to be determined later) will be put into effect in January, 2015.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** Craig announced that World Service will be raising the price of books on October 1, 2014. The price of Big Books and Twelve-by-Twelve will be \$1.50 each. The price increase of other books will be \$1.00 or less. It was decided at the July 2014 Intergroup meeting that, to keep prices down as long as possible, Central Office will buy (based on past book sales) enough literature at current prices to last until January 2015. Once this literature is sold, then the prices will increase.

**Announcements:** Betty B. celebrated 24 years this month. Carl O. has a "Thank you" for Jim F. (Intergroup Webmaster) for getting the H.U.G. schedules on the Web.

**The next Intergroup meeting will be September 20, 2014 at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.**

Chad F. motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10:18 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

Ted B., Secretary

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

## Central Office Activities

OFFICE	AUGUST	Y.T.D.
Visitors	85	605
Info. Calls	149	1,641
12 Step Calls	3	7
<u>Call Forwarding</u>		
Info. Calls	96	648
12 Step Calls	4	15
<u>Totals</u>		
Info Calls	245	1,310
12 Step Calls	7	22

## 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.**

October 11, 2014

Potluck and Speaker Meeting at Norman Smith Park, Yermo, CA. bar B Q at 4:00 p.m. with the Speaker Meeting starting at 5:00 p.m. For more information, call Yermo Larry at 760-254-2307.

Oct. 17—19, 2014

Inland Empire Convention, The Hotel San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA. for information visit [ieaac.org](http://ieaac.org).

April 10—11, 2015

Ride for Recover, from Barstow to Beatty, NV. More information will be forthcoming.

And Finally . . .

