

BETTER TIMES

Produced for A.A. members, by A.A. members in the GTA



IF NOT NOW
THEN WHEN?

Alcoholics
Anonymous

JANUARY 2022



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INTERGROUP**

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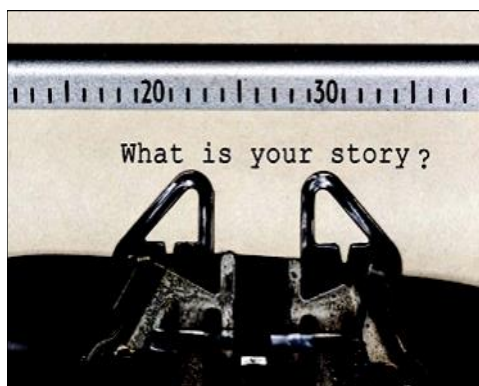
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MEETING CHANGES

This pandemic has brought about incredible changes and quickly; please don't forget that our website and meeting list updates are dependant on you letting us know [here](#):

<https://www.aatoronto.org/update-or-change-a-meeting/>



Opinions expressed in *BETTER TIMES* are those of the authors and don't necessarily reflect those of the GTA A.A. Intergroup. The Editor reserves the right to edit for length, content and grammar in accordance with lay-out and quality purposes. Submit group news, medallions, other event noticesto:

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Letters o articles to the Editor (200-500 words) for *BETTER TIMES* at bettertimes@aatoronto.org

BLANK SPOT

I was just 77 days shy of my 5 years of continuous sobriety. The world was on lockdown, A.A. meetings online only, and I had lost much of my self-help and care routine. My number one priority was my son getting married. He was my first born, most like me emotionally and we know how to push each other's buttons. Yet we have a very strong bond. I was very anxious and stressed although I couldn't name it, and everyone reminding me of how happy I should be. I felt like I was losing my son and I worried that my new daughter-in-law didn't like me.

I suffer from a disease of perception. I need validation. I need to be the centre of attention. I want to be the writer, director, actor (with top billing). My character flaws were blaring but I compartmentalized them away and listened to others saying how happy I should be.

The isolation that Covid allowed and all my daily routines thrown out with the bathwater left me feeling vulnerable. I was attending a meeting a day, sometimes two, doing service, talking to my sponsor and sponsees but I was not connecting with the God of my understanding. I was not reading the daily reflections, no prayer or meditation. Step 11 was on hold. I felt subconsciously like I didn't need it. Slowly I peeked out into my backyard and there my disease was cunningly doing push ups, getting stronger as I became baffled by its call. I didn't acknowledge it. I didn't talk about it with others.

This would never happen to me; I would never relapse. I was Miss A.A. 2015. I had been the group director at my home group. I was a revered member. I was strong. I was invincible. I was a sober alcoholic who was clearly full of pride and ego.

On July 10, 2020, I was tossing and turning in bed, and came downstairs to watch TV. I instinctively grabbed a wine glass from the cabinet and poured myself a 9-ounce glass of red wine that had been sitting on the counter for a few days, left over from family coming over for dinner. There was no cork or screw top. It was just sitting there doing

push ups. I drank the wine as if it was an elixir sent down from the heavens. I had reached the blank spot. I got an instant buzz. I poured the remainder of the bottle and drank while I sat and put 'pen to paper', writing to a sibling a 'why do you hate me and treat me so bad?' letter. Thankfully I didn't press send. The bottle was empty and I wanted/needed more. I found another hidden away and opened that and poured and then had an epiphany. "What the heck are you doing? You just threw away five years of sobriety. OMG." I poured the remainder of the wine down the sink. I woke my husband and we decided that it would be best not to tell anyone and that my children, sponsees and the fellowship would never forgive me and I could never look at them again. This was the complete opposite of what my program tells me to do and what I say when a fellow has relapsed. We embrace them and welcome them back.

I fell into a dark trap very quickly. The endless lying, shame, guilt, all those old feelings of unworthiness, unlovable, feeling a fraud in my own life brought me to that place of parasuicidal ideation. I truly felt a cancer growing in my soul and eating me alive. In early June I started a Sunday picnic in-the-park A.A. meeting for women where we could meet outside and have a 1-2-3 discussion meeting. The insidiousness of my relapse while pretending to be coming up to five years was too unbearable and in September I admitted to my therapist, sponsor and fellow members that I had relapsed. I could only explain that I had fallen into the Blank Spot, like the guy that drinks milk and whiskey. It took me a long time to feel comfortable sharing in Zoom meetings and showing my face as I couldn't stand the sight of it. I felt so flawed. I was picked up and held by so many in the fellowship and members who had had the same experience as me. They reached out and I was able to rebuild my program and look at what happened. I started at page 1.

Many major life events have happened since my relapse. The wedding was beautiful, I quit my job and my marriage is tenuous and I have some major life decisions to make which I can and will do as a sober woman, just for today.—Unah G, [The Hill](#)

HOW WILL I HAVE FUN?

Here's the thing about the concept of fun—we get to define it for ourselves. What was fun to me as a toddler was not necessarily fun to me as a teenager. The same goes for a frat boy's idea of a good time compared to that of a senior citizen. I had to square up my idea of fun against the accepted societal definition giving that the only kind of fun we can have as adults involves alcohol and drugs. That the only way to ring in the New Year, or de-stress after a long workday, or celebrate a birthday was with a drink, and if I don't drink, yet New Year's Eve and birthdays come along annually, does that mean I'm no longer able to have those experiences? Will I never be allowed to ease my stress with a drink? And then I'm off into a whirlwind of 'poor me'.

The last time I celebrated New Year's Eve I was asked to leave the party I was at because I couldn't stay upright. I rang in the new year standing on the sidewalk freezing and waving frantically for a cab. My last birthday party I was so deep in a blackout that I don't remember anything from the night.

And I never eased my stress with one drink after a long day at work—where someone might have one drink and then eat dinner and chill for the rest of the night. I'd drink the whole bottle, forget dinner and get totally trashed. How could one drink ease my stress? I needed complete obliteration or nothing!

When I got sober I had to forget about everything my friends or the world had told me about what fun was, because that fun doesn't exist for me anymore. My drinking was a full time job. Casual drinks on a patio were out of my reach. No bartender could legally serve me the amount of booze I needed.

In sobriety I have discovered that fun can be a private and quiet thing. I'm not going to list various sober activities here, that's something everyone figures out for themselves. To hold onto this idea of fun would have stopped me from staying sober. Being sober means deciding for myself, not adhering to the mob mentality of my wild circle of friends.

No one wants to end up the stumbling old drunk at the party, but we're all headed there if we don't choose our own path.

The stillness that comes with sobriety has seeped into all aspects of my life. So I have fun but it is not fueled by hysteria or shrieking or hurricane force winds blowing through my brain. Everything about recovery is new, that's how I'm able to stay sober, because I learn every day how to live in the world and I discover things about myself and about life that are miraculous and gentle and whispering. None of that can be experienced in the mayhem.

I turned down the amp, but I can still hear the music and I'm the only one who can choose how to move to it. —Ivy K

IMPRESSIONS

I try not to use the same sort of foul language at meetings that I used as a thirteen-year-old to impress my parents that I have finally *grown-up*. This might leave the newcomer with the impression that I am not to be taken seriously.

It feels good to share “let it all hang out” at discussion meetings. However, if I do not share how the Twelve Steps are working in my daily life (my experience, strength, and hope), I leave the impression that AA is limited to a group-therapy solution. Bill Wilson wrote: ***“Sobriety—freedom from alcohol—through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an [A.A.](#) group.”*** Group therapy is good, so far as it goes, but AA is better than that! We have a Twelve Step solution that really works.

I try not to spend my time during the important ‘*meeting after the meeting*’ with my regular friends and ignore the newcomer. I don't want to leave them with a negative impression of A.A. I need to have A.A. literature ready for them with a robust welcome before they dash out the door.

I try and maintain a neat appearance at meetings—something I am not always so good at! A general outsider conception is that AA is comprised of skid row bums. Newcomers are happily impressed to find this is not so. After all, if I am to be trudging the road of happy destiny, shouldn't I be dressed for the occasion? --Bob S

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless
over alcohol - that our lives had
become unmanageable.

D	Z	M	E	W	Z	I	K	V	C	N	O	I	S	S	E	S	B	O	K	Powerless
O	N	Z	L	I	C	R	E	D	I	T	O	R	Z	Q	V	K	J	H	F	Defeat
T	E	L	C	L	C	R	E	W	O	P	R	Z	I	I	D	H	A	N	J	Surrender
F	G	C	T	A	P	R	O	O	T	Z	H	K	D	J	O	E	E	S	L	Belief
O	S	R	S	S	G	N	U	J	Y	T	B	T	F	N	M	F	K	U	R	Relief
V	M	U	Y	T	E	I	C	O	S	B	P	I	E	K	T	G	F	R	Z	Admitted
P	O	W	E	R	L	E	S	S	N	E	S	S	I	I	C	N	Z	R	Q	Beginning
A	R	S	O	V	E	Z	X	P	V	D	T	U	E	T	J	I	T	E	X	Innermost
N	C	P	S	J	N	U	Y	A	M	Y	J	Z	V	V	H	N	F	N	A	Paradox
H	Y	C	N	E	I	C	I	F	F	U	S	F	L	E	S	N	X	D	B	Foundation
W	P	N	R	U	N	C	R	S	S	A	J	P	Q	B	L	I	T	E	M	Honesty
O	A	V	A	H	N	G	T	S	O	M	R	E	N	N	I	G	Y	R	D	Willingness
P	R	P	P	L	T	M	N	H	E	B	F	N	S	P	D	E	V	R	K	Taproot
L	A	S	A	F	M	N	A	I	Q	F	E	I	L	E	R	B	B	J	Z	Society
R	D	Y	C	P	H	O	V	N	L	Y	T	I	N	A	S	N	I	A	Z	Unmanageability
I	O	E	I	E	N	A	D	V	A	L	C	M	O	T	T	O	B	K	D	Providence
C	X	W	O	L	S	F	L	E	S	G	I	H	J	M	O	X	H	W	E	Silkworth
R	P	Y	U	S	G	N	A	B	E	L	E	W	H	D	Q	P	M	J	F	Obsession
O	U	W	S	O	R	T	L	K	D	R	W	A	Y	F	T	P	K	D	E	Allergy
I	C	M	P	R	T	I	L	L	E	B	F	A	B	Y	F	R	D	U	A	Warped
A	Q	Y	Z	B	D	U	E	D	T	R	R	Q	R	I	R	O	P	B	T	Jung
C	I	L	I	I	C	W	R	V	T	R	S	T	B	P	L	V	D	T	Z	Rapacious
A	F	I	H	A	O	G	G	H	I	S	H	H	H	M	E	I	F	O	T	Creditor
I	R	O	G	G	L	I	Y	Q	M	F	O	A	J	Q	V	D	T	E	X	Self-sufficiency
S	F	K	P	E	A	E	N	A	D	Z	Q	L	I	N	Q	E	V	Y	O	Insanity
X	J	N	A	F	O	U	N	D	A	T	I	O	N	E	A	N	L	E	F	Bottom
Q	X	O	P	R	B	R	D	R	B	E	L	I	E	F	L	C	C	R	N	Self
H	T	R	O	W	K	L	I	S	B	C	I	M	Z	O	P	E	P	Y	N	Freedom
O	M	G	W	I	H	Q	L	N	W	X	O	G	Z	K	X	T	M	G	R	Power

GROUPS BEGUN IN JANUARY:

Jan. 2, 1978 - [Erin Mills Group](#)

Jan. 3, 2016 - [One Paragraph at a Time Group](#)

Jan. 5, 1957- [Whitby Group](#)

Jan. 5, 1980 - [Saturday Noon Meeting](#)

Jan. 5, 1983 - [Rouge Valley Centenary Group](#)

Jan. 6, 1968 - [Six Points Group](#)

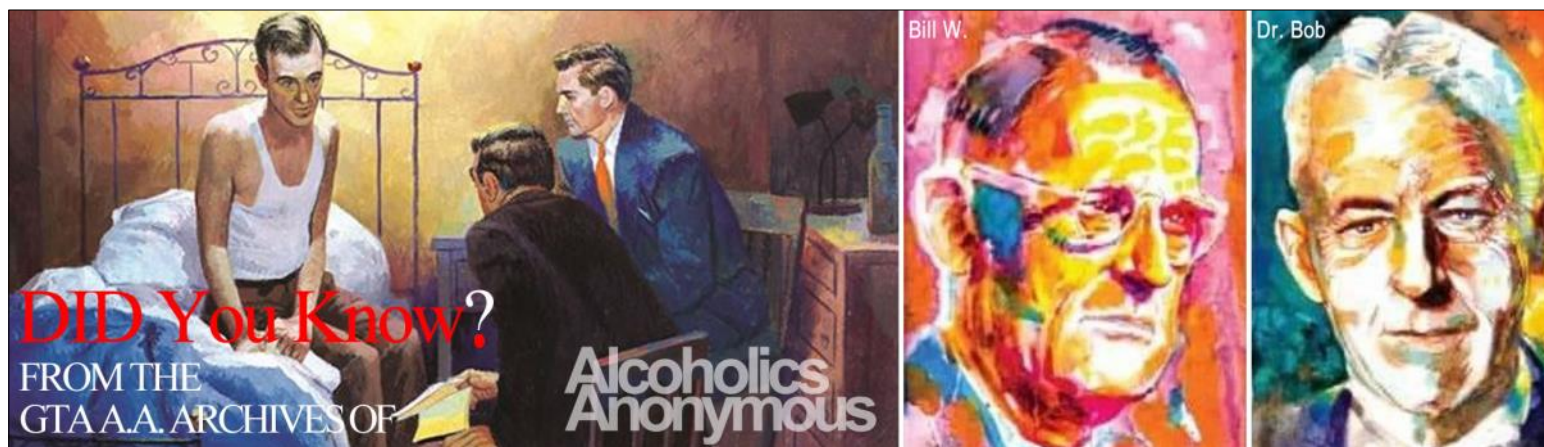
Jan. 6, 1984 - [Thornclyff Park Group](#)

Jan. 14, 1959 - [Twelve Steps Group](#)

Jan. 22, 1980 - [Midtown Group](#)

Jan. 1972 - [Parklawn Group](#)





1. In Jan. 1939, after writing of the [Big Book](#) began, it was evident that something more was needed in the form of a story or case history section. It would be living proof to identify with the distant reader in a way the text itself might not. Akron produced 18 stories thanks to the efforts of journalist Jim S. whose Big Book story is "The News Hawk." He interviewed the Akron members and wrote their stories (Dr. Bob wrote his own). Two stories came from Cleveland and one from non-alcoholic Marie B. whose Big Book story is "An Alcoholics Wife." NY members contributed ten stories that were edited by Bill W. and Hank P. over the contributors' protests. The story section was completed by late January.

2. In Jan. 1939, prior to completion of the publication manuscript, NY member Jim B.'s Big Book story "A Vicious Cycle" suggested the phrases "God as we understand Him" and "Power greater than ourselves" which were added to the Steps and basic text. Bill later wrote "Those expressions, as we so well know today, proved lifesavers for many an alcoholic." Jim later moved to Philadelphia in February 1940 and was the founder of [A.A.](#) in that city. He also helped start A.A. in Baltimore.

3. On Jan. 18, 1939, The Alcoholic Foundation Board (today known as the [General Service Board](#)) increased from 5 to 7 members (non- Alcoholics still held the majority on the board). New members were alcoholic Harry B. (whose Big Book story is "A Different Slant") and Dr. Leonard V. Strong (Bill W's brother-in-law). Harry B. returned to drinking and was replaced in December 1939 after serving a little under a year. Dr. Strong served on the board as a Class A Trustee until October 1954 (as Secretary) and Emeritus until July 1960. He passed away on April 26, 1989. After the first two alcoholic Board Chairmen returned to drinking from 1939 onwards the Board Chair has been a non-alcoholic. In 1966 the General Service Conference changed the Board Trustee ratio to 14 Class B (Boozers) alcoholic Trustees and 7 Class A (Amateurs) non-alcoholic Trustees.

4. In 1945 Bill W. was called by Barry L., later author of "Living Sober," from the 41st St. Clubhouse in NY. Bill persuaded the group to take in a black man who was an ex-convict with bleach-blond hair, wearing women's clothing and makeup. The man also admitted to being a "dope fiend." when asked what to do about, Bill posed the question, "Did you say he was a drunk?" When answered "Yes" Bill replied, "Well, I think that's all we can ask." The man was reported to have disappeared shortly after.

5. In Jan. 1951, the [Grapevine](#) published a memorial issue dedicated to Dr. Bob. It is a historical gem. Grapevine Editor Al S. had much to do with issue. In an assessment of the founders in later years Al stated, "Without Bill's drive, there wouldn't be any A.A.—without Dr. Bob's balance, who knows what it would be like?" Al was the member who drove Dr. Bob back and forth between Akron and Cleveland for the 1950 [International Convention](#). Al passed away on February 23, 1978.

6. On Jan. 24, 1971, at 11:30 pm William Griffith Wilson (Bill Wilson), age 75, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, 36 years sober (sobriety date December 11, 1934), died (of emphysema, although sometimes described as heart failure, complicated by pneumonia) at Miami Heart Institute, Miami Beach, FL. The date was also Bill and Lois 53rd wedding anniversary. Bill was the architect and author of [A.A.'s Three Legacies](#) of Recovery, Unity and Service and all the written works that explained them. It was an amazing achievement. He had no training at all as a writer.

OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE GTA ARCHIVES

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO THE GTA ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT
THE GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. at 416-536-7536.

TRADITION ONE PERSONAL RECOVERY DEPENDS UPON AA UNITY

I've been coming around for a few twenty-four hours now, and my sobriety has shifted from what can I get out of a [meeting](#), to what am I willing to put into it. That also goes for the fellowship too: are there groups I don't like? Or people I don't want to see? If you love everybody in [A.A.](#), you are obviously not going to enough meetings. That rang true for my early sobriety. I was full of resentments, hated seeing dozens of people, and there were groups I was never going back to. I spent many a restless night re-imagining the wrongs some people had done me. People were living in my head, some were living in 3-bedroom condos, and not even paying rent!

With my sponsors help, love and tolerance began to slowly creep into my sobriety. I was told to pray for those people I had resentments about. Ask your higher power to give them all the gifts life has to offer and do that for 30 days. It worked for me, slowly my head began to be less crowded, and I began to experience glimpses of what could be emotional sobriety.

We have ceased fighting
anyone or anything—
even alcohol

Attending the business meetings at my home group gave me a ringside view of principles before personalities working in group members' lives. I think that is what led me to the traditions.

These days tradition 1 plays a big part in my sobriety. I believe one of the explanations for this is written on

page 84 of the big book. "We have ceased fighting anyone or anything—even alcohol."

Today there are no people or groups I avoid. My sobriety requires me to seek those people

or groups out, stick my hand out and say, hey good to see you. My recovery depends on this. I guess you could say "do I want to be part of the problem, or do I want to be part of the solution?" —Dave R, [The Dogs](#)



GROUP SPOTLIGHT

Primary Purpose Group

The first Toronto meeting of the Primary Purpose Group (PPG) was nearly 18 years ago on March 17th, 2004. In the past, the meeting was held in the basement of Christ Church Deer Park. However as a COVID safety precaution, the in-person Wednesday open meeting has been moved into the church itself. The architecture in the old church is pretty amazing, and is definitely worth checking out if you have an interest in old buildings!



True to our group's namesake, we do everything we can to make newcomers feel welcome. As an example, at our online Monday closed meeting, we've developed a newcomer welcome package consisting of helpful links and the phone numbers of some of our group members as a way to reach out to newcomers who might be hesitant to reach out on their own. [PPG](#) is also big on fellowship. One of our longstanding group traditions is called a "watch", where on the night before one of our members celebrates their first year of sobriety, we gather and countdown to midnight to "watch" the celebrant turn one.

For the time being, our Monday closed meeting is online only. In the first part of our closed meeting we read the Big Book together, then we share on what

we have read. The second part of the closed meeting is an ask-it basket where members can anonymously submit problems they are having in sobriety. Those problems are then read aloud, and other members can share how they have dealt with a similar problem. Our Wednesday open meeting is in-person, and is also streamed online. The format of our Wednesday meeting is fairly uncommon, as in the first section we have the chairperson pick people from the audience to come up and share for three to five minutes. In the second section, we have a main speaker who shares for 30-40 minutes.

Our group has opportunities for service available to group members who meet the sobriety length requirement. These positions include crew chief, secretary and treasurer. More recently, we've begun developing a technology-related service position to help with organizing Zoom, and the simulcasting of our in-person meeting. For newcomers, we also have smaller commitments like greeting, which require very little sober time.

Our meeting is only a few blocks away from St. Clair subway station. We also have some on-street parking available. In a pinch, you can park in the parking lot directly opposite the entrance to our meeting on Heath St. West. However it costs \$6, so it's better to get here early!

WANT YOUR A.A. GROUP FEATURED IN BETTER TIMES?

EMAIL US AT bettertimes@aatoronto.org

