

BETTER TIMES



Produced for A.A. members, by A.A. members in the Greater Toronto Area
NOVEMBER 2020

Feelings of loss, exhaustion or desperation may prevail during a pandemic, feelings only too familiar to the alcoholic.

Comfort, hope and the connection we once so freely enjoyed, is needed now more than ever. It is available to us all, one need only be willing to reach out.

We draw strength from one another; one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic. Together we shall survive these difficult times to once again flourish!



So Long, and Thanks For All the Fish!

"Be a valley, buddy," is what a friend of mine in the fellowship once told me. "Try not to be the mountain." I am an alcoholic and my name is David. My home-group is [Birds of a Feather](#) and my date of sobriety is March 28, 2017. For the past 16 months, I have served the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup as Chair of the Communications Committee (C.C.). I was pretty new when I took on the job (still am!) and quite often in the early going felt like I was in over my head. Once a month I would bump into Nina L., our current Operating Committee Chair, at the Intergroup meeting and she would tell me what a wonderful job I was doing. My response was always the same: "But I have no idea *what* I'm doing!" We would share a good laugh, and I always felt much lighter for it. She may have thought I was kidding.

When I joined the C.C., most of us came on board to support the GTAI newsletter [Better Times](#), which was in desperate need of both writers and editors. I quickly turned my attention to the Chair. I learned my first and perhaps most important lesson, and I hadn't even begun to do the job yet: to keep my colossal ego at bay, my will out of the way, and to allow other people more capable than I to do what they are qualified to do. We are all trusted servants, with a common goal and a role to play.

With the formation of the new committee, positions were henceforth claimed, and the first order of business was to forego any summer break and dedicate July and August to getting our feet wet and up to speed. We were up and walking, though it sometimes seemed more like wading. Or, dare I say, trudging?

As we settled into our roles, improvement ideas were tossed about for the website. The *Better Times*, always a vital resource especially for those still struggling with our disease, in my opinion, has never looked or read better.

As we entered 2020, COVID-19 struck, and the world turned upside down for most of us virtually overnight. Self-isolation, a poisonous manner of living for a great many of us who depend on daily meetings, was about to become a function of reality. This virus ushered in a very busy time for the Communications Committee. At first, we were inundated by meeting closures, then the shift to online meetings, and with them the emergence of "Zoom bombings", creating incredible work for our Web team.

I am reminded of that part in the Big Book which

speaks to the early underestimation, then the subsequent stellar performance of alcoholics in active service during WWII -- how they were not only reliable in the face of such atrocious conflict, but a great many excelled, performing above and beyond the call of duty while maintaining their sobriety. Over the past 8 months, we have come to know the meaning of the word pandemic. Many faces, once so familiar to us have vanished, but unfortunately that is nothing new to us. I came to realize that, as Communications Chair, it was the well-being of my fellow committee members, these driven and dedicated people, that concerned me most of all. Therefore today those words toll louder for this alcoholic than ever before, and have indeed become my very *raison d'etre* --

When anyone anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there, and for that I AM RESPONSIBLE.

The part of this job I will miss most (which had already been taken away by COVID-19) is distributing the new issue of the *Better Times* the last Tuesday of every month at Timothy Eaton; it was easily my favourite part of the position. The true gift, has been seeing the growth in others who have served alongside me in this endeavour, and seeing them see the growth in me. I shall be ever grateful for the opportunity to witness the miracle of the program in action. I look forward to fulfilling the remaining few months of my commitment as Outgoing Chair as we welcome the incoming Chair, Carla T.

As I vacate the position of Chair I am reminded more than anything else of that very first lesson about my EGO, then about the virtues of patience, love and tolerance which these Twelve Steps, and working them with my sponsor and my Creator have given me. Have I heeded my friend's advice and been a valley? I certainly strived my best to be, and perhaps for that reason I sometimes do feel like a mountain.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all the wonderful people who gave me a story when I asked for one, and those who have worked with the committee since I came on board. You are all excellent at what you do, and it has been an honour to represent you within this wonderful fellowship. Thank you for my sobriety.

Yours in loving service,
David P., Outgoing Chair, Communications Committee

As for the Adams' citation: I'm a Pisces, and I used to drink like a fish! As a famous friend once put it, "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming..."

Call out for GTA A.A. group sign-up and volunteers for the 1st ever **WINTER SEASON VIRTUAL ALKATHON**

noon December 24th to noon December 25th

Groups are needed to step-up , sign-up and show up!

Just a one hour meeting commitment by groups is all it takes to connect one alcoholic to another alcoholic

Join the 24 hour A.A. marathon with Al-Anon/family panels

The festivities don't end there, please also consider signing up at the same time for the **New Year's Alkathon noon December 31st to noon January 1st!**

What a way to ring in the New Year!

Send an email to WinterSeasonVirtualAlkathon@atoronto.org

First Come First Serve for group meeting time preference!

You are no longer alone for the holidays!



KEEP TELLING US OF SOBRIETY CELEBRATIONS [here](#)

This is neither a prize nor a reward but a reminder to be grateful.

Please help us to celebrate the program of Alcoholics Anonymous & show the newcomer that it works!

Rarely have we seen a person fail that has thoroughly followed our path.

NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	GROUP	Celebration
Tracy C.	20	Oct. 26 2000	Sisters In Sobriety	Nov 11 2020



GREATER TORONTO AREA
INTERGROUP



MEETING UPDATES!

Help Us To Help You! Please Update Your Meetings!

Many in-person meetings have had to close down again, some remain open and are following the updated provincial restrictions.

To check your meetings status please visit the atoronto.org website. Please contact us to update your meeting details.

Visit www.atoronto.org complete the update form, it's that easy!

Prayer Fixes My Brain

To get down on one's knees and ask an invisible something for help? This is not something I thought about regularly during my million years of addiction, but it certainly was thrust upon me once I hit bottom and threw myself on the mercy of rehab.

Prayer was something I considered very much a fringe activity; strictly for evangelicals and people in life-or-death situations. At the time, I didn't fully grasp how much I was in the latter group. I had no interest in praying, but I had a deep need to get sober, so I did what I was told. In rehab we were told to be selfish, that we couldn't get sober for anyone but ourselves. But how do you get sober for yourself, the one person you've been bent on destroying with your own actions in addiction?

If we have no respect or love for ourselves it is impossible to fight the epic battle required to get our lives back from addiction. It's much easier, and more noble, to say and think I'm doing this for my husband, or my grandma, or my kids, but it doesn't stick. As we've seen in endless loops of relapse, you can't get sober for your family, or your friends, or your dog. You have to do it for you. The only way to get in touch with yourself and begin healing, and let a little light into the pitch-black darkness that has ruled your inner existence for so long, is to pray. Initially, I prayed the way a kid prays at Christmas. I was making wish lists; either that or I was bargaining—God please do this for me and I'll do whatever. It didn't work, and it always left me feeling empty, like pulling on a slot machine and never hearing the ringing bells of a jackpot.

What started to work for me was the simple suggestion to end the day by recounting three things to be grateful for. That became my entry point to understanding prayer on a deeper level. When you don't pray for things you want, but only for guidance and betterment, that is when you fill up with gratitude. There's no room for want or wish lists, only thanks. It's strange but it works. Before long I didn't hate myself nearly so much. I saw outside myself a lot more, and I began to take notice of others and to care. All revolutionary stuff.

I've been sober for four years now, and there are two things that are vital to that sobriety—the community of A.A. and prayer. If I can't make a meeting, I am still praying every day, in the morning and at night. If my only job is to get through the next 24 hours sober, the only way I can do it is with prayer. It doesn't take long, it's easier than going to the gym, there's no assembly required, it's free, and it fixes my brain. Ivy K., [Sunnyside Group](#)

My Sobriety Journey

My name is Yaakov K. I am from New York, I am here in Toronto for a while. Today, October 1st 2020, I am blessed with 3 years of sobriety.

When I walked into A.A. for the first time it was a big blow to my EGO. Me, YAAKOV, really you have to go to an A.A. meeting with alcoholics who drank their life away, went to jail and who knows what else! I walked in with an EGO. I had brought my fancy tablet that I ordered an Uber with and tried to look all business like. A few smiley faces and someone from my Jewish faith tradition was there. I sat down, took a few cookies after a few light pushes. We got through the meeting. I bought a Big Book which I was told is the "Bible of A.A." It felt like a brick off my back, I went phew, now I could tell myself and my Therapist - I'd attended an A.A. meeting that my therapist had recommended. I listened with an open ear. They told me not to isolate, that I can be grateful that we have cell phones and surrender is telling God I can't do it?! I asked myself what was that supposed to mean? A non-religious Jew at an A.A. meeting telling me, a religious Jew about God. Naaaa I said to myself, I'm good, I know enough about God, so I thought.

When I needed a meeting one Friday night I found an A.A. meeting close by, the only meeting at that time. If I could not get to a meeting, I feared I would go back out there and that was not an option. I met old timers with 40+ years of sobriety. After the meeting, they told me to "keep coming back" and to go to the *Sharathon* where there was a meeting 24 hours a day during the upcoming holidays. I listened to what they told me and went to 18 meetings that week. This is where recovery is and this is where I need to be NO MATTER WHAT.

One night while firmly planted in my A.A. metal folding chair, it hit me (a gift of my Higher Power). Hey, Yaakov, you are one of them! You ARE an alcoholic! You need to be here also. Your drinking has been taking over your life! WOW, I thought; I am one of them, that's me, I heard and I identified. That very night I got a sponsor and he gave me a key to the church, a schedule and we hit many meetings together. I have been coming ever since. A.A. is not my main 12-step fellowship but I go to one A.A. meeting a week. Yaakov K., [JFK Nightworkers Queens, New York](#)

Am I an Alcoholic? here are just a few A.A. Pamphlets available from [GTA Literature Store](#)

P-01 This is A.A.

P-03 Is A.A. For You? Twelve Questions

P-10 How It Works

P-24 A Newcomer Asks

P-36 Is A.A. For Me?

P-44 A.A.'s Legacy of Service

THE LOVING OTHER



The liberated youth, strong proud to be,
naive from the wisdom of all others.

None of that matters to he, you just do not see,
the pride of a Loving Other.

The tears that sat, the midnight frats,
that were shared with so many others.
I will go on, I will be strong,
the denying Loving Other.



The colours of love and the weight of our lips,
can I truly understand another?

My walls are brought down, without making a sound,
the becoming Loving Other.

The illusion of success, he's never a mess,
the ruling by many others.

None matter to me, there's only one me,
I am The Loving Other.

The Lone Wolf ~ J.S.W., [Morning Discussion Group](#)

With a child's first breath, and the times not set,
from the past of so many others.

The world will not wait, a quarter past eight,
the birth of a Loving Other.

That child runs free, with so much to see,
influenced by blinding others.

Why can't I be me, and run on the sea,
the growth of a Loving Other.



The cold dark depths, the moon with no steps,
what happened to all the others?

I now cannot eat, I now cannot sleep,
the addicted Loving Other.

The love once set, that was never half met,
from that of a loving mother.

Tip toes in the shadows, watching over his sleep,
surrounding the Loving Other.





SPIRITUAL GIANTS ON ONE SOFA

Left: Bill W. one of the A.A. founders

Middle: Helen Schucman, author of
[A Course in Miracles](#)



- on November 16, 1950 Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith (Dr. Bob) at the age of 70, co-founder of A.A., dies of cancer at City Hospital in Akron Ohio? He was buried in Mt. Peace Cemetery in Akron beside his wife Anne. His funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Walter Tunks whose answer to a phone call 15 years earlier brought Bill W. and Dr. Bob together. It is estimated that, over his 15 years of sobriety, Dr. Bob helped more than 5,000 alcoholics. In the eulogy Bill described Dr. Bob as "the prince of the Twelfth Steppers". [A memorial issue of the Grapevine](#) was issued for Dr. Bob in January 1951. It is still available today and provides a rich narrative and photographic history of Dr. Bob.
- in November 1937 Bill and Dr. Bob met in Akron Ohio and compared notes? A.A. has 40 sober members in Akron and New York. More than 20 are sober for over a year. All had been diagnosed as hopeless. A meeting was held at the home of T. Henry Williams to consider Bill's ideas for a book, pamphlets, chain of hospitals, paid missionaries and how to expand the movement. It nearly passed by a majority of 2 votes among 18 members. The New York group was more enthusiastic. This humble group conscience decision would be the seed that grew into A.A.'s 3 Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.
- in November 1939 Hank P. (New York A.A. #2) writes Bill W. advocating autonomy for all A.A. groups?
- in 1945 at the suggestion of Earl T. founder of A.A. in Chicago (his story "He Sold Himself Short" in the Big Book, 2nd & 3rd edition), Bill codified the Traditions and wrote essays on them for The Grapevine? Initially, the Twelve Traditions were called Twelve Points to Assure Our Future.
- in November 1949 as plans for the International Convention in Cleveland in 1950 were being laid, Earl T. founder of A.A. in Chicago, suggested to Bill that the Twelve Points to Assure Our Future would benefit from revision & shortening? Bill developed the short-form of the Traditions in time for the Convention.
- in the November 1949 Grapevine the short-form of the Traditions were printed? The entire issue was dedicated to the Traditions for the coming Cleveland Convention in 1950. Two wording changes were made for the final version of the short-form of the Traditions: the term "primary spiritual aim" was changed to "primary purpose" in Tradition 6 and the term "principles above personalities" was changed to "principles before personalities" in Tradition 12.
- in November 1949 Bill W. suggests A.A. groups discuss the Twelve Traditions during Thanksgiving week?

CONTACT ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 TO DONATE A.A. ITEMS INCLUDING OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS.

WORD search

STEP ELEVEN

We 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 it out.

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SUBMIT A BETTER TIMES ARTICLE!!

Please send us in your own words, your ideas, your journey, your experience, strength and hope in 200-500 words to bettertimes@aatoronto.org *

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STEP ELEVEN

E M O T I O N S E E H I H U P P S I X O
 L Q M P O I Y C Q K B Z H G F O J C M Q
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 W O M W S S L L N C A Q E V F S M G L O
 L H U M I L I T Y B F T K M D A K I Z R

- Adventure
- Aspire
- Boundaries
- Connection
- Conscience
- Contact
- Constructive
- Creator
- Destiny
- Devotion
- Eleven
- Emotion
- Forgive
- God
- Humility
- Imagination
- Joy
- Knowledge
- Meditation
- Mind
- Nourish
- Objective
- Peace
- Power
- Practices
- Prayer
- Self
- Examination
- Sought
- Soul
- Spiritual
- Strength

Opinions expressed in *BETTER TIMES* are those of the authors and don't necessarily reflect those of the Greater Toronto Area A.A. Intergroup. The editorial staff reserve the right to edit submitted articles for length, content and grammar in accordance with layout and quality purposes. Submit group news, medallions, other event notices to: communications@aatoronto.org Letters or articles To the editor (200-500 words) for *BETTER TIMES* at bettertimes@aatoronto.org

ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE OPERATING COMMITTEE CHAIR oc.chair@aatoronto.org



COVID-19 Protocols in place, hand sanitizer, physical distancing at [Daily Reflections](#) in Oakville

GROUP SPOTLIGHT

[Only Requirement Beginners Meeting](#)

I needed an in-person meeting desperately. I checked the GTA A.A. website www.aa.toronto.org and the home page had a button dedicated to in-person meetings called "[Find an In-Person Meeting](#)" Boy was I happy to see there was one close by in Brampton on that Friday night! That night only real people, face-to-face would provide what this alcoholic needed and craved.

Proper COVID protocols were being followed with hand sanitizer, physically distanced chairs etc. What a surprise this format was. In fact I'd never been to such a meeting. Newcomers were seated at the front. An A.A. member with more long-term sobriety would give a brief talk on their experience, strength and hope then each newcomer would share on it.

The remaining A.A. attendees sat in the background, in audience so to speak. Many long-timers in attendance need to be here and remember how it was. They also once sat in the front as a newcomer and now they serve as an example to these newcomers that the program of Alcoholics Anonymous works! How interesting, I really didn't know what to think of this format. I daresay I was impressed with the knowledge the new A.A.ers had of the program as they shared, how honest and forthcoming. I remember my own sober journey beginnings and am not confident that I could have spoken from the front of the room with full attention on me. I admired these newly sober people for their courage and pure will to be there rather than anywhere else. This was an



example of will at its finest. What an incredible thing to bare witness to.

I inquired with some folks on the format of this group and they referenced Billy L. who has since passed. Apparently Billy L. had experienced this meeting format and concept in Chicago and brought it

home to Brampton. Each group is autonomous; a committee now carries on the format and hope for the newcomer to just stay. A vision the group shares of the late Billy L. and continue the tradition. More can be found on [Suggestions for Leading Beginners Meetings](#).

Mary M. [Erin Mills Group](#)

GTA (Toronto) Archives Committee
Presents the *Virtual*
36TH ANNUAL ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

November 8, 2020
10:30 am-1:30 pm EST

Meeting ID: 896 5515 3508
Passcode: 637582

11:00 am Tour
Stepping Stones
Followed by a short Q & A session

12:00 pm Guest Speaker
Shirley B. of the Saturday Morning Westboro Group, Ottawa
Jan 3, 1969 in Montreal, QC- 51 years!

Home with History:
A Virtual Exploration of the Lives, Home and Archives of the Wilsons

As there will be no physical breakfast this year, members are encouraged to send contributions by e-transfer to ArchivesBkfst@gmail.com; our temporary account for contributions in support of the Archives committee's ongoing projects (history book, archives display and repository supplies).