

BETTER TIMES



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

As April showers bring May flowers
Humble faith brings your Higher Power
Trust the goodness in the midst of life's storms

HOPE CANNOT BE CANCELLED



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GTA InterGroup office closed on March 24, 2020.

Our 24/7 Help Line (416) 487-5591 will be forwarded remotely during this time. We thank you for your patience and understanding as we all navigate these uncharted waters!

Meeting in real life might be on pause right now, and that's the right thing to do for your health and the health of others.

In light of this, please refer to our GTA InterGroup website [A.A.toronto.org](https://www.A.A.toronto.org) for meeting updates and general information for the Alcoholics Anonymous membership.

Human connection and community is at the center of our fellowship. Following the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is crucial and enables us to lean on each other in uncertain times.

PLEASE STAY CONNECTED

WORD search

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AREA INTERGROUP**
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www.A.A.toronto.org

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@A.A.toronto.org *

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STEP FOUR: *searching, fearless...*

R R O A B E F K P G K A G X Z M A S A I
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HUMILITY
CONDITIONS
SELFLOATHING
SOULSICKNESS
INSECURITY
DESIRE
RESENTMENTS
RELATIONSHIPS
INSTINCTS
DEFECTS
INVENTORY
MORAL
FEARLESS
IDEALS

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Submit group news, medallions, other event notices to: communications@A.A.toronto.org

Letters or articles To the editor (200-500 words) for *BETTER TIMES* at bettertimes@A.A.toronto.org

ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE OPERATING COMMITTEE CHAIR

oc.chair@A.A.toronto.org

GTA INTERGROUP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

AD-HOC COMMITTEE

The last decade has brought about enormous technological advancements and change. It's hard to think that Facebook only started 12 years ago in the basement of a college dorm. Nevertheless, the internet, computer advancements and smartphones are redefining the way we operate and interact with each other daily.

Alcoholics Anonymous is adapting to this new technological society in many ways including hosting online meetings, facilitating online contribution capabilities and even the occasional email or two ;)

The GTA A.A. Intergroup is now looking at incorporating a series of online tools to carry our primary purpose quickly with ease and efficiency to the next suffering alcoholic.

On February 25th 2020, the GTA Intergroup Operating Committee called for an **Online Ad Hoc Committee**, to be overseen by the Webmaster of the Intergroup Communications Committee with the assistance of the Operating Committee Vice Chair. The committee will be dedicated towards redesigning the website A.A.toronto.org to be more user-friendly and engaging to the newcomer.

Several of these initiatives include:

NEWCOMER PAGE

This new page will be specifically designed for newcomers, with resources including introductory information on A.A., A.A. 20 question online survey, and steps on how to recover using A.A.'s 36 principles.

ONLINE CHAT SERVICE

It will operate parallel to our phone greeters allowing live non-verbal chat with a fellow alcoholic online, anytime of the day dealing with a wide range of inquiries from small quick questions, to referral to meetings and other resources.

ONLINE LITERATURE STORE

A.A. literature can be purchased online, and shipped directly to your address.

Technology has brought about an exciting and quickly changing era for Alcoholics Anonymous! The Online Ad Hoc Committee is looking for volunteers to be a part of this fantastic advancement. A test-run of a prototype chat was conducted on the website and received 280 engagements in 24 hours.

If you have any skills in graphic design, web design, software development or IT, please reach out to the Intergroup Webmaster at webmaster@A.A.toronto.org or Operating Vice Chair at oc.vicechair@A.A.toronto.org. We need your help in helping carry the message and further leveraging the power of the world wide web.

Yours in Love and Service,



ANONYMITY IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF ALL OUR TRADITIONS

In the spirit of [Tradition Eleven](#) A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution and as such does not endorse and is not affiliated with any of the specific technology providers utilized to facilitate meetings.

Spirituality in Troubled Times

It is extremely difficult in these times of trouble, with all the fear of the coronavirus and our difficulty just trying to survive day to day in our sobriety, without meetings or fellowship. In this situation we need to be closer than ever to our faith in a Higher Power.

In the beginning of A.A., the early members were reliant on the practice of *Guidance*, which was a part of every meeting from the time of the Oxford Groups. This has carried on today with the [Eleventh Step](#).

My practice of prayer and meditation starts with a spiritual reading ([Daily Reflections](#), [As Bill Sees It](#), etc.) and then some silent meditation. Pages 85 to 88 of the [Big Book](#) are used in some meditation groups to reinforce the daily practice of meditation and it has a reminder on how to practice this step by maintaining a conscious contact with my Higher Power “upon awakening”. For me, this is a daily practice early in the morning before anyone else has stirred out of bed. Many times, I have also practiced the same meditation at the end of the day before retiring.

From the early days of my sobriety, I have always maintained a close contact with my Higher Power whether I am

unable to attend meetings or off in some weird and wonderful place in the service of my country. One time I was in a foreign country without the aid of meetings and had to maintain my spirituality by reading the [Big Book](#) and the [Grapevines](#) sent to me by my sponsor. I had a problem arise with my family in Canada that I could not resolve and had to turn this over to my HP and let it go. Everything worked out but it proved to me that the [Third Step](#) will work in my daily life if I give it a chance. My spirituality saved my sobriety.

The [Third Step](#) will work in my daily life if I give it a chance. My spirituality saved my sobriety.

Today is a similar situation with the fear of contracting the novel coronavirus. All I can do is to stay safe by following the directions to isolate myself at home and avoid people. Both my wife and I are following directions and remaining at home to keep ourselves safe. So far, we have not yelled at each other and have stayed relatively calm. She practices her way of con-

tacting her Higher Power and I have mine. While our practices are very different from each other we both maintain our sobriety and sanity in this crazy time. May you also stay safe and serene in our troubled times.

David T., [St. Clements Group](#)

That old Chinese proverb is true. We do live in interesting times. In A.A., “**we are no longer alone**” but in the face of COVID-19, **you had better be alone**. We now have the means to stay sober together, but without being together. Just a new paradox for the modern era. Thankfully, I belong to group that swiftly adopted a digital format for our daily discussion meeting. Just hearing the voices of my friends, really more than friends, is still a great start to my day!

I am currently working from home, and grateful for that opportunity. The [Serenity Prayer](#) is getting used ever more, with current connectivity breakdowns, system slowness and a melting stock market. The days are long. When Netflix gets too boring, I can always go to [Grapevine](#) to read from my fellow alcoholics. Then there are moments connecting with my higher power, who I call Gus (Guy Upstairs Steering). Like many with aging parents in institutional residency, I have constant worry but it is bearable.

If I pray on it, it doesn't prey on me.

Keeping balance is a little different these days. Making sure I take care of myself, proper diet (lost 10lbs already), exercise (walks are a game of dodgem in order to keep 6 feet away) and contact with the fellowship. I am calling my sponsor more than ever before. It is so nice to get a call from a member, just checking in, hearing about their triumphs and struggles. So I guess old school communication works in our new faceless world.

Being in A.A. has given me a higher level of acceptance, and that is so needed now. ODA.A.T has a new meaning. Everyday just doing what is in front of me and praying for guidance on every action and emotion and keeping expectations realistic helps me be available for the next thing so a day in the life, doesn't have to be helter skelter. With a little help from my friends, we will all get back on the long and winding road. It's getting better all the time, better than you can imagine. **Jim A.**, [Attitude Adjustment](#)

Pre-Conference Sharing Sessions



OUR DELEGATE TO CARRY TRUE GROUP CONSCIENCE

Like never before, A.A. members in the GTA had a chance this year to voice their opinions and to actually vote on the issues that will be decided at this year's General Service Conference (GSC). There were [nine pre-conference video-conference sharing sessions](#) held in the first half of March organized by our Area 83 delegate.

A.A. has always done its best to adhere to an inverted organizational structure, where the voice of the common membership is its leading authority. This has always been a challenge because each area can only send one delegate to the GSC in New York each spring to vote on the issues of the day. While delegates have always done their best to carry the group conscience of their area, the use of video-conferencing technology is a game-changer. The technology today allows our delegate to gather a wider range of opinion than has ever been possible in the past.

These sessions were open to all members. Those planning to participate could go to the Area 86 website for a list of topics to be discussed. Logging into Zoom is unbelievably simple and you can see the faces of everyone else in the meeting. There's a button to click to "raise your hand" for a turn to speak. The most democratic part is that at the end of each discussion, the app allowed everyone to vote on each issue.

I took part in the first pre-conference session, covering topics that will be handled by the Literature Committee in April at the GSC. There were 20 of us taking part. The perennial issue for Literature has been whether the first 164 pages of the Big Book should be revised with modern, inclusive language.

I suggested no: that the most important and often-studied works of literature in the world are read in their original form, so why does A.A. need to tamper with its central text? The general discussion broadened my point of view, though. Someone suggested that the world's central religious texts are constantly being re-written in new translations. I hadn't thought of that before. At the end, the vote was YES: 18% and NO: 82%.

Another question was whether the text of *The A.A. Group*, our pamphlet explaining how a group functions, should be included as an appendix to the Big Book. I'd skimmed through the pamphlet before the meeting. There's a lot of solid information in there. I was the only one who liked the idea. Someone else suggested that if any pamphlet was to be included it should be the one on sponsorship. I liked that idea, too. The vote came back YES: 6% and NO: 94%.

We dealt with five separate questions in about an hour and a half during the session I attended. Eight more sessions followed over the next week and a half, covering the business of the other GSC committees. The discussion and votes from these sessions will all go toward giving our delegate, Rob M. from Oshawa, a clearer understanding of our group conscience—the ultimate authority in A.A.—to guide his decisions.

My voice and opinions have now been literally heard and recorded as part of the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs: the General Service Conference. I really hope we keep doing this every year.

Chris Z., [Port Credit](#)

Working With Others in Isolation

A.A. is a design for living that works in rough going. That statement has never been truer than today. Loved ones are dying; people are losing their jobs leading to financial insecurity. COVID-19 is affecting the entire world.

How can we be a light to others during this dark time? how can we be that powerful cement that binds us?

We are privileged to share how we are living through this new virtual format which is quickly becoming the new norm of our collective experience. Here we grow again as we are reminded that we are no longer alone and will get through this together.

Let's talk about routines. Lately it seems that every day is the same. There are no weekends or weekdays: isolated at home, restricted from visiting family and friends, restricted from going to our meetings.

Isolation, Isolation, Isolation!

What can we do? We continue to stick to our daily routines, that's what we do.

First things first: upon awakening, we pray together and thank God for the day. Plug in the kettle, and sit right down and start doing our readings from the A.A. library, patiently waiting for the coffee to brew.



Reprinted with permission by Olaf S. [Had Enuf Yet](#)

[Chapter 7 WORKING WITH OTHERS pg. 89](#) Practical experience shows that **nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics**. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill. Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends— this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

While waiting, meditate and think about the readings and reflect or better yet, discuss with someone what they mean and what resonated. We thank the God of our understanding for the ability to see, to read and for the ability to be of service. We ask our higher power to use us in such a way that others will see Him through our actions.

We carry on with our day, going to work, and hitting a few virtual meetings. We keep in touch with family members and friends by phone, e-mail, text or online camera just to see how everyone is doing, and ask if they need anything?

We continue to pray for others throughout the day, in the mornings, over the phone, and again at night. We give thanks for the day before retiring at night. We give thanks for another sober day. Besides, without a higher power of your own comprehension, what else is there? Who else is keeping us sane and sober? Certainly not me...

Doesn't the Big Book tell us that if an alcoholic fails to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he surely cannot survive the low spots, the trials and tribulations that surely lay ahead. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish. We had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life, or else.

We continue to work our program on a spiritual basis. May God bless you and keep you - until then.

Tracey S., [Sisters in Sobriety](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1.** that in April 1935, Bill W. had a talk with Dr. Silkworth who advised him to stop preaching about his “hot flash” experience and hit the alcoholic hard with the medical view on alcoholism? Dr. Silkworth advised Bill to break down the strong egos of alcoholics by telling them about the obsession that condemned them to drink and allergy that condemned them to go mad or die. It would then be so much easier to get them to accept the spiritual solution.
- 2.** that in April 1937, Ebby T. who brought the message to Bill W. got drunk after 2 years and 7 months of sobriety?
- 3.** that in April 1938, the writing of the Big Book began at Hank P.’s office at Honors Dealers, 17 William St., Newark, NJ? In 1938 Bill wrote & rewrote drafts at home on legal pads then dictated them to Ruth Hock (who was the Honors Dealers Secretary).
- 4.** that on April 4, 1939, the first edition of “Alcoholics Anonymous” was first published? 4,730 copies were published at \$3.50 a copy. The printer, Edward Blackwell of Cornwall Press, was told to use the thickest paper in his shop. The large, bulky volume became known as the Big Book. The idea was to convince the alcoholic he was getting his money’s worth. Ray C. (whose Big Book story is “An Artist’s Concept”) designed the “circus color” dust jacket. The book had 8 Roman & 400 Arabic numbered pages. “The Doctor’s Opinion” started as page 1 and the basic text ended at page 174.
- 5.** that in April 1939, the bank forecloses on Bill & Lois Brooklyn home? They stay with Hank P. in Monclair, NJ, the first of more than 50 moves they will make before buying Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills, NY in 1941.
- 6.** that in April 1940, the first A.A. pamphlet, entitled simply “A.A.,” is published?
- 7.** that in April 1941, Ruth Hock (Bill W.’s first secretary) reports that 1,600 letters have been received since the Saturday Evening Post article by Jack Alexander on A.A.?
- 8.** that on April 20-22, 1951, the first General Service Conference took place at the Commodore Hotel in New York City, beginning a five-year experimental period, linking A.A.’s Trustees with the Entire Fellowship?
- 9.** that in April 1953, Adam C. from Friday-Yonge Group in Toronto (first Delegate of all Ontario 1951-52) was made the first Canadian Trustee?
- 10.** that in April 1954, the Alcoholic Foundation changed its name to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous?
- 11.** that in April 1955, the triangle-in-the-circle symbol was approved by the A.A. General Service Conference? In 1993, A.A.WS Inc., announced that official use of all of the several circle/triangle trademarks & service marks was being discontinued because they were being associated with a variety of products & services that were not part of A.A. & not consistent with A.A.’s purpose. The following is a complete list of registered trademarks & service marks that symbolize A.A., its work & its purpose: A.A.; Alcoholics Anonymous; The Big Book; The Grapevine; A.A. Grapevine; GV; La Vina; A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive.
- 12.** that on April 9, 1956, the Pine Hills Group started with founders: Harry H. & Doug H. from the Agincourt-Unionville Group? This year the group will be 64 years in existence.
- 13.** that in April 1958, the Advisory Action of the General Service Conference removed the word “honest” from the Preamble? It was never in the Tradition #3.
- 14.** that in April 1960, Bill W. declines cover story for Time magazine although picture revealed back of his head?
- 15.** that in April 1973, the distribution of the book Alcoholics Anonymous reaches the 1,000,000th mark?
- 16.** that in April 1973, Dr. Jack Harris, Chairman of A.A. General Service Board, presents the 1,000,000th copy of the Big Book to President Nixon at a ceremony in the White House?
- 17.** that in April 1989, “My Name is Bill W.,” a Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation, is broadcast on ABC at 9:00 pm?
- 18.** that in April 1993, the General Service Conference (GSC) rejected the idea of medallions & chips and decided to have them considered local autonomy? Everybody has them but the GSC rejects them.



NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	GROUP	CELEBRATION
Richard P.	1	Feb. 28 2019	Bloomdale Group	Mar. 1 2020
Kimmie D.	5	Feb. 1 2015	Keep it Simple Scarborough Group	Mar. 1 2020
Jay A.	15	Feb. 7 2005	Fifth Tradition Group	Mar. 3 2020
Randy C.	1	Feb. 22 2019	Brampton Bad Boys Big Book /MEN	Mar. 5 2020
Richard P.	1	Mar. 7 2019	Start Today Group	Mar. 7 2020
Pete K.	1	Feb. 23 2019	Croassroads Group	Mar. 8 2020
Scott M.	1	Mar. 8 2019	Prince Edward Group	Mar. 9 2020
Matthew C.	5	Feb. 4 2015	New Anchor Group	Mar. 12 2020
Lynn T.	10	Jan. 30 2010	Lansing Group	Mar. 14 2020
Zak H.	1	Mar. 2 2019	Prince Edward Group	Mar. 16 2020
Jamey D.	1	Mar. 14 2019	Anniversary Group	Mar. 18 2020
Alan J.	1	Mar. 23 2019	Prince Edward Group	Mar. 23 2020
Alexandra M P	1	Mar. 24 2019	Mount Royal-York Group	Mar. 24 2020
Stan S.	50	Mar. 27 1970	Burlington Skyway Group	Mar. 27 2020
Charles W.	40	Mar. 24 1980	East York Group	Mar. 31 2020
David N.	1	Mar. 11 2019	Mount Royal-York Group	Mar. 31 2020
Marnie S.	20	Mar. 13 2000	Fifth Tradition Group	Mar. 31 2020
Selina L.	1	Mar. 12 2019	East York Group	Mar. 31 2020
Larry B.	1	Apr. 1 2019	Scarborough Group	Apr. 5 2020
Kevin K.	1	Apr. 6 2019	Last Road of Recovery Group	Apr. 12 2020
James M.	44	Apr, 14 1976	Sobriety Plus Group	Apr. 14 2020
Richard P.	10	Feb. 10 2010	Keep it Simple: Scarborough	Apr. 26 2020
Tim O.	1	Apr. 7 2019	East York Group	Apr. 28 2020
Doug S.	1	Apr. 27 2019	Anniversary Group	Apr. 29 2020
Paul M.	1	Apr. 4 2019	Erin Mills Group	

Everything we have today has been passed on to us

Step

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

“

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

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SO PASS IT ON