



Sobriety Through the Holidays

WISHING YOU A SOBER HOLIDAY

We know that the holidays can be a tough time for anyone in recovery. After all, tis' the season for family gatherings and social events. However, you can make it through the holidays sober with a little planning and effort.

In this issue, you'll find some of our best holiday survival tips, list of candle light meetings in the GTA, and a few stories to carry you through this season.

Remember that sobriety is a gift. Just because you're sober doesn't mean that the holidays have to be boring!

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BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

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How To Reach Us

Submit Group News, medallions, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times, before the 10th of the month prior to month of issue by email to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org
or contact Alexx at 416-487-8110

When I was new to AA, I needed some practical tips on how to get through the holidays without drinking. How would I say no to that festive drink from a dear friend or neighbour? What could I do to avoid my old haunts and habits? How would I dodge that first drink?

Luckily, by the time the holidays rolled around, my one AA friend had agreed to be my sponsor. He told me to call him anytime, especially when I felt the urge to go to the liquor store. He also advised that I collect a few phone numbers of other AAers - just in case he couldn't pick up. My sponsor said, "don't wait for it to get bad, plan ahead. Let me and your AA friends know when you're going to a party or event so that we are prepared for your call."

I remember being at a holiday party with some old friends and being handed a drink. For a fleeting moment, I looked at that spirit-filled glass and thought, *On the one hand, I might celebrate a few festive hours, but on the other hand the obsession will tear down my life again...!* I slowly lowered the glass to the counter, backed away as if "recoiling from a hot flame", and called my sponsor. He picked up and the second after he said "Hello", I felt the obsession leaving me. He advised me to start doing the dishes and cleaning up the place. That was the tidiest party I'd been to in years!

-A Few More Tips that Worked for Me -

As another holiday season approaches, here are some more tips I've heard and used:

- *We are no longer alone!* Attend festivities with an AA friend or sponsor.
- Plan out your Holiday AA meetings and calls with AA friends. Some meetings and AA friends may be unavailable. So plan ahead!



- If you're down in the dumps, pick up the phone. If you can't do that, get on your knees and pray to a Higher Power (HP) of your understanding for the courage to pick up the phone. Make that call, you're worth it!

AAHelpline: 416-487-5591

- When you're at an event or party and feeling squirrely, get into service! Tidy up, do the dishes, entertain the kids, take out the garbage. Get into action.
- Make sure you can leave the party or event at any time and are not dependent on transportation, but if you are: refer to the above point - Get into service, get into action.
- Tell the server to serve you only soda (or your nonalcoholic drink of choice). In my early days I would tell them it's because I'm an alcoholic! Or I even said "I'm on medication".

Here's hoping you have a happy, sober holiday.

"I guess sometimes I want to have a drink with dinner, but then I remember that I have plans for Christmas." - Robert Downey Jr. (friend of Bill W.)

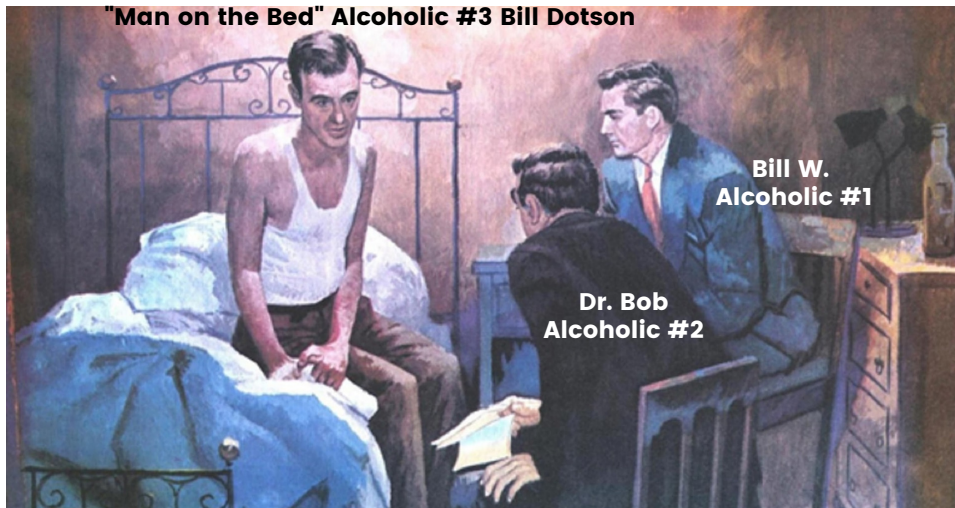
Luke G - High Park Group

Holiday Gratitude Meetings

- Monday, Dec. 11, 8pm - **The Friendly Group** - St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 263 Roncesvalles Ave. West, Toronto, ON.
- Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7pm - **Sisters In Sobriety** - St Hilary's Church, 2055 Hurontario St. Mississauga. Gratitude Candlelight Meeting, potluck of finger foods and sweets. Contribution to the potluck welcome!
- Thursday, Dec. 14, 8pm - **Pathfinders Group** - St. Ansgar Lutheran Church 1498 Avenue Road, North York. Candlelight Gratitude Meeting Dinner.
- Thursday, Dec. 14, 8pm - **Rox Glen's Traditional Annual Christmas Meeting** - Rosedale United Church, 159 Roxborough Drive. Annual Christmas Dinner.
- Sunday, Dec. 17, 7-9pm - **High Park Group** - St. John's Anglican Church, 288 Humberside Ave. West Toronto. 7-8pm Open meeting 8-9pm Dinner. Venue Notes: Enter through the lower door of the daycare.
- Sunday, Dec. 17, 8pm - **Aurora Group** - St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 32 Mosley St., Aurora. Open Speaker Mtg.
- Monday, Dec. 18, 8pm - **King City Group** - All Saints Church, 12935 Keele St., King City. Candlelight Meeting.
- Tuesday, Dec. 19, 8pm - **Fifth Tradition Group** - Wexford United Church, 2102 Lawrence Ave. E., Scarborough. Candlelight Meeting.

THE 12TH STEP CALL – HOW IT WORKS

"Man on the Bed" Alcoholic #3 Bill Dotson



A Twelfth Step Call is when two AA members make physical contact - in person - with an alcoholic. Often times a desperate drunk.

A 12 Step Call is when a Twelfth Step Phone Greeter asks a 416-487-5591 caller, "Would you like to have an AA member(s) come to see you, and talk to you about the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and how the AA program could help you to stop drinking?" If the answer is "Yes", the Phone Greeter completes a Twelfth Step Call Blue Form.

Desperate Alcoholic's traits :

- bloodshot eyes
- hands shaking so violently that they cannot hold a bottle of booze
- throwing up
- drinking their last bottle of Jack Daniels, traditional booze, Listerine, cough syrup, or in my case (19 years ago) multiple bottles of B&G Cuvee Speciale Rouge
- not able to attempt to go an In Person AA Closed or Open meeting because of physical inability and sickness

We cannot stop making 12 Step Calls because members of AA think it is too dangerous.

The 12 Step In Person Calls are not for every AA member - it is for the AA member who believes in the picture "Man on the Bed" Alcoholic #3 Bill Dotson.

The 12 Step Caller needs a Blue Form issued from a Twelfth Step Phone Greeter in order to call up the alcoholic and say, "We, two alcoholics, would like to come over to meet with you tonight. What would be a good time for you?"

The 12 Step Call :

- We introduce ourselves as Alcoholics

- We give the alcoholic an opportunity to share, their situation
- We share with the alcoholic, our story, how we joined Alcoholics Anonymous, and how we work the AA program - one day at a time - to achieve another day of not picking up the first drink

We then ask our new friend, if they have a willingness to stop drinking. If the answer is "Yes", we hand them a copy of the Big Book with an AA handshake, our contact information, and ask them to read the first 164 pages. And if they have any questions to please give us a call, or the Phone Greeter at [416-4487-5591](tel:416-4487-5591) on the front page of the Meeting Booklet. We leave all 12 Step Calls with a copy of GTA Intergroup Meeting Directory Booklet and GSO approved Information outlining meetings in their immediate area that they may want to attend.

If you have an interest in being a Phone Greeter, or a member on the Buddies List, who talk to alcoholics over the phone, direct alcoholics to meetings or secure a ride, or actually becoming a 12 Step Caller List Member to go out on 12 Step, In-Person Calls with a Blue Form then please send a email to 12step@aatoronto.org

It is possible the Twelfth Step Committee could arrange for you to go on a Twelfth Step call with an experienced member, or you can contact an AA member within your Home Group who regularly goes out on in-person 12 Step Calls.

Let us remember, every time two AA members successfully complete an In Person 12 Step Call, the alcoholic has an opportunity to understand the meaning of the word Hope, to stop drinking. And the two alcoholics working the 12 Step Call are able to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Marvyn W, Mississauga Group

LEAN INTO SERVICE

The GTA Intergroup operates a 24 hour Helpline. Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, the Twelfth Step Committee wants the hand of AA always to be there.

One of the most rewarding service positions I've held is that of a Twelfth Step Greeter. I took my first phone shift in 2015 soon after celebrating one year of sobriety. At the time, two greeters, one new and one seasoned, would head into the office at 234 Eglinton Ave E for a shift. I would sit in fellowship with my partner and take turns in answering the phone. The four hours flew by as I learned from my seasoned partner how to help the alcoholic caller.

Soon after March of 2020, Intergroup closed its office due to COVID 19 and phone greeters began working remotely. We were still able to perform this much needed service, but now answering calls were routed directly to our own phones in our own homes. No matter where the call answering may take place, a Twelve Step Greeter answers the Helpline.

This rewarding position requires one year of sobriety and is a one year commitment. As a Greeter you can do a four hour shift weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, depending on your availability. You can choose to answer the help line remotely or from the office at 234 Eglinton Ave E. In-office shifts are available Monday to Friday either 9am - 1pm or 1pm - 5pm. Remote greeter options also include 5pm-9:30pm as well as overnight and weekend shifts.

As a greeter, I encourage the caller to go to a meeting as soon as possible, and let them know what they may expect there. As a greeter, I don't have a lot of time to explain the program of AA or answer the many, sometimes detailed questions a caller may have. But I do have access to a list of Twelve Step volunteers who are available to call them back and meet with them in person to answer their questions in greater detail.

If you have an interest in this incredibly rewarding volunteer-work, please email us below and/or visit our monthly Twelve Step Committee meeting.

- Become a remote or in office phone greeter: greetercoordinator@aatoronto.org
- Add your name to the 12 Step Caller list by contacting 12Step@aatoronto.org
- Join our next 12 Step Com. Mtg: Mon. Dec. 11, 2023: 7 - 8pm Meeting ID: 813 0646 6967 Passcode: 572531

URGENT CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The 12th Step Committee is looking for volunteers who:

- Are willing and able to answer the 24/7 AA Toronto Helpline phones from 9:30 PM to 9:30 AM
- can commit to at least 1 shift per month
- Can speak more than 1 language

Please contact 12Step@aatoronto.org.

"Happiness is not a pursuit unto itself. That road leads to misery. Rather happiness is a byproduct, a byproduct of service." - Anonymous
Kelli T. - The Hill Group



DO YOU REMEMBER BEING NEW TO AA?

I am an alcoholic and my name is Kathy.

Do you remember being new to A.A.? Do you remember your first Ontario Regional Conference?

My experience was scary because I was feeling sick, confused, bankrupt in every way and wondering "Do I really belong here?"



Thankfully, the slogan "we are no longer alone" came to mind. But I was looking for hope at a conference with over 2000 people and feeling lost.

That's where you come in.

Why not volunteer in the Newcomers Room and share your experience (especially the early days) of getting sober in Alcoholics Anonymous? We are looking for groups and/or individuals who are willing to commit one hour or more of their time during the ORC.

If you can be of service, please contact me (Kathy T.) via email - Newcomers24room@gmail.com for more information.

REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

In addition, the ORC Committee would be grateful for contributions that will be handed out to newcomers attending the 2024 conference. Much appreciated items include:

- Early sobriety chips such as 24-hour desire, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11-month chips
- Literature such as Big Books, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Daily Reflections, 24 hours a day, GTA meeting lists, etc. Pamphlets such as 'yellow 20 questions', The A.A. Group...where it all begins, Questions & Answers on Sponsorship, Understanding Anonymity ...etc.

To coordinate, please contact me (Kathy T.) via email - Newcomers24room@gmail.com.

Thank you.

"Hey there AA groups of the GTA! The Virtual Alkathon wants you!"

Please sign up to chair a meeting on one of the following days -

Dec 24: noon-1am / Dec 25: 4 pm-am / Dec 31: noon-1am / Jan 01: 7am-4pm

Only 27 meetings left so pick your time NOW!

Email your time to -
winterseasonvirtualalkathon@aatoronto.org

WINTER SEASON VIRTUAL ALKATHON



GTAI/DISTRICT - DECEMBER SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

To attend one of the meetings, simply request by email below-

Accessibilities - Sun. Dec. 17 – 11 a.m.

accessibility@aatoronto.org

Archives - Fri. Dec. 08 – 8 p.m.

archives@aatoronto.org

Communications - Tues. Dec. 12 – 8 p.m.

cc.chair@aatoronto.org

CPC/PI - Mon. Dec. 18 – 7 p.m.

cpc@aatoronto.org

Correctional Facilities - Tues. Dec. 05 – 7 p.m.

corrections@aatoronto.org

Self-Support - Thurs. Dec. 28 – 6:30 p.m.

self-support.liaison@aatoronto.org

Treatment - Thurs. Jan. 18, 2024 – 7 p.m.

treatment@aatoronto.org

Twelfth Step - Mon. Dec. 11 – 7 p.m.

12step.chair@aatoronto.org

Winter Season Virtual Alkathon Wed. Dec. 06. 8pm-

winterseasonvirtualalkathon@aatoronto.org

Winter Season Open House - Sun. Dec. 10 – 9:30 a.m.

- wsqh@aatoronto.org

IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Please send your medallion details to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org

in the format of:

name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety -

medallion date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20...)

DECEMBER MEDALLIONS

Rob T., Fifth Tradition Group, 1 year - Dec 2 2023.,
Medallion Celebration Date: Dec 12 2023

Jason L., Anniversary Group - Scarborough, 1 year - Dec 6th., 7:00 p.m. Celebration

John K., Fifth Tradition Group, 1 year - Dec 12 2023.,
Medallion Celebration Date: Jan 23, 2024

Andrew G. – Silverbirch Group, 1 year - Friday Dec 8

Karoline L., Friendly Group, 1 year - Dec 12th, 2022,
Celebration date: Dec 18th, 2023

Jonathon G., Friendly Group, 1 year - Dec 25th, 2022,
Celebration date: Jan 8th, 2024,

Demar P., Fifth Tradition Group, 1 year - Dec 25 2023.,
Medallion Celebration Date: Jan 29 2024



Use this QR code to access more "Better Times" issues online!

Home Brewmeister

With an abrasive personality and unconcealed hostility towards Bill W. and the Traditions, Clarence S. carved a place in Alcoholics Anonymous all of his own. Sobering up Feb 11th of 1938, Clarence was brought by his wife to Dr. Bob in Akron for treatment of his alcoholism. His was an ultimatum. Seek treatment or the marriage was over.

Fifteen months after his sobriety began, he organised the Cleveland Group and had the first meeting that was identified as "Alcoholics Anonymous". However, Nell Wing stated firmly that Bill W. used this term for AA meetings long before Clarence had.

Catholic priests in Cleveland were not allowing their parishioners to attend the Oxford Group meetings in Akron. Clarence's defiance heralded the beginning of the end of the Oxford Group's connection with Alcoholics anonymous.

Around this time another disgruntled AA showed up in Cleveland. Hank P. - Bill W.'s right hand man in New York - relapsed and was feeding the rumour mills. He was out to discredit Bill and Dr. Bob. Hank reportedly married Clarence's sister-in-law and was working with Clarence in a business selling porcelain mugs and figurines. When Hank divorced and remarried, the business dissolved.

Clarence enlisted in the army in WWII and when he was discharged, his wife divorced him. He refused to abide by the Traditions of AA, insisting that he was the founder of AA. He never hesitated to accept any honour or award that came his way. He never accepted anonymity as a spiritual principle and used his full name in relation to his work in AA all his life.

He moved to Florida where he married his third wife who was an AA member and belonged to the Assembly of God Church. Their retreats in 12 Step recovery became Christian fundamentalist in nature. Clarence S. died in March of 1984 at the age of 82.

Bernadette M

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or archives@aatoronto.org OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.

HELP WANTED

The Communications Committee - which oversees aatoronto.org, Better Times, and other AA Toronto platforms - is looking for a Secretary. Time Requirement: 90 minutes per month

In this volunteer role, you will:

- Work with Communications Committee Chair to create monthly meeting agendas.
- Send out a monthly invitation for Communications Committee meeting with agenda and minutes attached
- Attend monthly meetings to record and transcribe minutes
- Manage the email list.

If interested, email: cc.chair@aatoronto.org



Did you Know?

1. On Dec. 7, 1934 Bill W. decided to investigate the Calvary Mission at 246 E. 23rd St., NY. He showed up drunk with a drinking companion he found along the way (Alec the Finn). Bill kept interrupting the service wanting to speak. On the verge of being ejected, Ebby T. came by & fed Bill a plate of beans. Bill later joined the penitents & drunkenly "testified" at the meeting.

2. On Dec. 11, 1934 Bill W., 39 years old, decided to go back to Towns Hospital in NY & had his last drink (4 bottles of beer purchased on the way). He received financial help from his mother, Emily, for the hospital bill.

3. On Dec 14, 1934 Ebby T. visited Bill W. at Towns Hospital in NY & told him about the Oxford Group principles. After Ebby left, Bill fell into a deep depression (his "deflation at depth") & had a profound spiritual experience after crying out "If there is a God, will he show himself." Fearing that he had gone crazy, Bill called for Dr. Silkworth who told him to hang on to what he had experienced because it seemed so much better than what he came into the hospital with. In a lighter vein, Bill & others would later refer to this as his "white flash" or "hot flash" experience.

4. On Dec. 15, 1934 Ebby T. (possibly Rowland H.) brought Bill a copy of William James' book "The Varieties of Religious Experience." Bill found the book inspiring by revealing three key points for recovery:

- A. A need for a complete defeat in a vital area of life (or what we today call "hitting bottom")
- B. An admission of defeat (or what we today call "acceptance") and
- C. An appeal to a higher power for help (or what we today call "surrender").

These spiritual principles later formed the basis for Steps 1, 2, & 3. The book strongly influenced early AA & is cited in the Big Book.