

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

In this issue, we explore the powerful phrase 'Keep Coming Back.' You will read inspiring stories of folks who faced the challenges of relapse but found the courage to Keep Coming Back. Their stories remind us that setbacks in recovery do not have to be seen as failures but as opportunities for growth, resilience, and renewal. We hope you'll be inspired and strengthened to keep going, no matter where you are in your journey of recovery.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- From Relapse to Renewal
- District 22 Service Day
- I Was In and Out Of The Rooms
- Grapevine Book of the Month
- Archives Corner
- .. And Much More!

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FROM RELAPSE TO RENEWAL: EMBRACING THE BIG BOOK'S PROMISE THROUGH GRACE AND ACTION

I've been told that people relapse for one of two reasons: either they don't know the problem, or they don't know the solution. For me, it was a bit of both.

I am more inclined to say it was because I was reluctant to confront the facts that kept me spiritually sick. This last relapse was different from the others. It was a series of short relapses - by the grace of God. I mention God's grace because I was blessed with moments of clarity and recall that I hadn't experienced before. I was horrified at the prospect of continuing, knowing full well that I was flirting with utter ruin - even death.

I had to stop balking at any cost.

I became teachable and willing. Upon returning to the Fellowship, I embraced Speaker Tapes and came across a Big Book Deep Dive workshop led by a fellow named Howard E. This opportunity allowed me not only to learn about myself and my disease but to also understand the Fellowship and its roots.

The Big Book came alive, igniting a fire within me. I was ready to embark on a course of vigorous action. I sought out a sponsor and stopped stopping short. I realized that I had to either face the facts about myself and my actions, which kept me from letting in the sunlight of God's Spirit, or die. The choice became very simple.

By the grace of God, I am progressing through my steps with His loving and guiding hand. I am



incredibly grateful and elated to report that I am now experiencing the promises God laid out for us through the pen of Bill W. many years ago.

The promises of outgrowing fear, learning tolerance, patience, and goodwill towards all, being delighted, finding perfect peace and ease in solitude, and feeling the nearness of my Creator are as real to me today as they were when Bill first published the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book.

I have begun to experience that sought-after spiritual awakening.

God is good. I practice two-way prayer and have turned the Big Book into my prayer book. I seek out opportunities to serve - Cont'd on pg. 2

I WAS IN AND OUT OF THE ROOMS EVERY OTHER WEEK



I entered my first AA meeting with a friend that I had met in yet another shelter. When I entered these rooms I thought I was going to be cured by shaking hands and chatting with old-timers. And I was wrong. During that period I was introduced to AA members that would eventually become brothers and sisters to me.

I reached 2 months of sobriety and I went back out. I couldn't tell you why at the time, but I now know that I have an obsession of the mind that, left untreated, will bring me back out every time. It won't matter if it takes a week, a month or a year; without help it will eventually happen.

After going back out after my first 2 months of sobriety in 10 years, I eventually went back out a second time, and a third time, and a fourth, and on and on. I was in and out of the rooms every other week or month for a period of 8 months, but I kept coming back.

I thought I could get sober my way. I didn't want to believe in a Power greater than myself, and I thought I didn't need the steps. Today one thing I know is that God is extremely patient. During those 8 months everything went from bad to worse. At that point, I - Cont'd on pg. 4

AN EMPOWERING MOMENT



Sometimes, for a person like me, the best thing I could possibly do for myself is to not make things worse. Can anyone reading this relate to that? This was always my mantra whenever I came off a relapse.

Thanks to some grace that was outside my knowledge, in those moments, I somehow knew that I needed to give my brain some time to heal. I knew that my decision-making ability was skewed. So most of the early days and weeks that followed a lapse or relapse, the only thing I was able to do was to simply not make things worse. But it wasn't easy for me to be "ok" with not feeling 'ok'.

During one of my last relapses, I learned something that I'll never forget. See, I'm the kinda guy that is very capable of understanding things intellectually; but, I've always found it challenging to understand things experientially. So I've taken to studying and practising mindfulness techniques from different programs. Over the years, there's a principle that's stuck with me: people are disturbed not by things themselves, but by the views they take of them. It took a relapse to fully experience the truth of this.

I was maybe 4 days into a mini binge, doing everything I could to not go to the liquor store and pick up another bottle. The hangover and withdrawal was excruciating. "I can't go to the liquor store." "This HAS TO stop." "What's the matter with me?" "I can't handle this."

I couldn't stop ruminating over my situation. I was torn between "I MUST NOT GO" and "I HAVE TO MAKE THIS STOP." Of course, being an alcoholic, I knew that just a little hard liquor would ease my pain.

I finally had that all too familiar "F it" moment and jumped into the car. All of a sudden, while driving to the liquor store, I became aware of how much better I was feeling. Not feeling good by any means obviously because I was experiencing a mild withdrawal. But compared to how I had been feeling while lying in bed and ruminating over how horrible my situation was, it felt like night and day. Without even putting a drop of alcohol into my body, my system was much calmer. That is when I

realized that it was my own way of thinking that was creating this urgency within. My own thoughts.

I was blown away by how much of a difference I had felt internally, simply by taking the action of driving to the liquor store. As crappy as I still felt, it was a HUGE relief to realize how I was playing a major role in amplifying the negative emotions I had felt prior to jumping into my car and heading out for some liquor relief. It was an empowering moment.

I immediately turned around and when I got home I immediately went on the internet and sat quietly with guided meditations. It was at that moment, for me, that I began to understand the Serenity Prayer. It was the beginning of the wisdom to know the difference between what I am able to accept, and focus on the courage and patience needed to change what I could. With all the self-compassion I could muster.

Thanks to some mindfulness practices that I had picked up over the years, I managed - to a degree - to train myself to recognize the many daily demanding statements that I put on myself, which amplified uneasiness within me. I began to replace phrases like "I can't" and "I shouldn't" with gentle statements like "it's not in my best interest to...."

I began to catch myself making hypercritical statements like "what's the matter with me" and trained myself to speak more compassionately of myself. "I can't handle this" became "I've made it through this before so that's evidence that I'm capable of overcoming this again. It's JUST a hangover, this will pass. It's temporary."

Meditation has been a huge part of my journey too. In my experience, it's been key. For me, the best part is that it can never be mastered, it only evolves through practice. That fact almost excites me. Who knows what will happen next?

It's been a long 12 years in recovery, trying different programs that this city has to offer, and practising many techniques from different points of view. A mindfulness practice brought me back to the rooms of AA. It's amazing what you can learn through the difficulties of life. Even in relapses, there's always something that can be learned.

My last drink was 2 ½ years ago, but the past 9 months in AA have been mind blowing. I'm hearing things I was never able to hear before. Seems I'm getting in my own way less these days. Always working on "keeping an open mind".

I'm excited for the future.

- Lee P.

From Relapse to Renewal: Embracing the Big Book's Promise Through Grace and Action - cont'd from pg. 1

others, putting my own plans and designs secondary. God's work takes primary focus in my daily life. When I experience fear or self-pity, I ask God to remove them at once and redirect my attention to serving others. When others offend me, I see myself in them; I patiently tolerate them and show compassion. I, too, am sick. Love and tolerance are my code because it is no longer I who live. I am reborn.
- Daniel R.

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 to always be there.

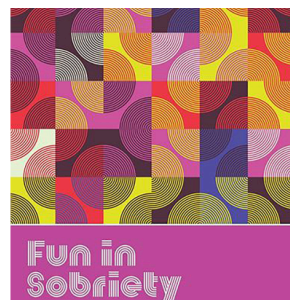
URGENT CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Twelfth Step Committee is creating a new phone greeter shift. We are looking for volunteers who:

- Are willing and able to answer the 24/7 AA Toronto Helpline phones from 9:00 PM to 1:00 AM
- Can commit to 1 or 2 shifts per month

This volunteer position requires one year of sobriety and we will provide all the training. If you are interested in this incredibly rewarding work, please send an email to: 12step@aatoronto.org

GRAPEVINE BOOK OF THE MONTH



This book shows how, by working the program and developing a sober network, life can begin to take on new and exciting adventures.



Scan this QR code to access [more](#)
"Better Times" issues!

Scarborough District 22 Service Day: Enrich Your Recovery Through Service

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2024

Carrying the message: that's the essence of our program, and it's the theme of our Service Day this year. So if you're looking to get started in service or add another dimension to your sobriety, we invite you to come hang out with us for the afternoon!



What is Service Day?

This is a chance for anyone in District 22 to learn more about the awesome service opportunities available to you at the District level.

We've got some great short presentations lined up from our service committees discussing opportunities in:

- Accessibility
- Archives
- Grapevine
- Corrections
- Treatment
- Self Support
- Intergroup Liaison
- CPC
- Public Information

And all you newcomers (and sponsors) won't want to miss our dynamic Newcomers In Service Panel!

We've also got a fantastic guest speaker, Rob F., your Area 83 Corrections Chair to close us out.

Coffee, tea and snacks will be served!

Who Should Attend?

This event is a don't miss for:

- Newcomers who want to find out more about district level service
- Anyone who wants to learn how service can compliment their recovery
- Folks who want to learn new skills
- Members who want to expand their network within the fellowship

When and Where?

We'll see you on Saturday September 21 from 1-4 pm at the Oakridge Community Centre, located at 63 Pharmacy Avenue. The Centre is located just two blocks east of Victoria Park subway station, with plenty of on site parking.

Find Out More

If you've still got questions, please contact Joe A (Alternate DCM/OPAAT) adcmdistrict22@gmail.com

-James H., GSR New Anchor Scarborough

GTAI/DISTRICT - SEPTEMBER SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Accessibilities - Sun. Sept. 15 - 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

Archives - Fri. September 13 - 7 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

Communications - Tues. September 17 - 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

CPC/PI - Mon. Sept. 16 - 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

Correctional Facilities - Sept. 03 - 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

Self-Support - Meets every other month.

Next Meeting: September 26 - 6:30 pm

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

Treatment - September 15 - 4pm

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

Twelfth Step - Wed. Sept. 11 - 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

IT Subcommittee - Tues. Sept. 10 - 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

Information AA Day - Mon. Sept. 23 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

SEPTEMBER MEDALLIONS

Gagan S., Erin Mills Group, 25 years, Medallion: September 02, 2024

Peter R., Golden Mile Group, 45 years, Dry Date: Sept. 05, 1979 | Medallion: Sept. 16, 2024, 7 pm

Tyler B., Lakeshore Group, 1 year, Dry Date: September 4, 2013 | Medallion: September 8, 2024 8- 9 p.m.

Murray W., Erin Mills Group, 5 years, Medallion: September 09, 2024

Dora Mae M., Golden Mile Group, 45 years, Dry Date: Sept. 08, 1979 | Medallion: Sept. 9, 2024, 7pm

Derek P., Grace Noon Group (Grace United Church), 10 years, Dry Date: September 14, 2014

Lynn B., Erin Mills Group, 1 year, Medallion: September 16, 2024

Dave L., Golden Mile Group, 45 years, Dry Date: Sept. 22, 1979 | Medallion: Sept. 23, 2024, 7 pm

Sharon L., Golden Mile Group, 35 years, Dry Date: Sept. 22, 1989 | Medallion: Sept. 23, 2024, 7 pm

Kenny M., Fellowship Group, 30 years, Medallion: September 30, 8 pm

Lisa J., Fellowship Group, 10 years, Medallion: September 30, 8 pm

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...)

ARCHIVES CORNER

Did you Know ?

On September 17, 1934, Bill W. went to Towns Hospital for the third time (again paid for by Dr. Leonard Strong, husband of Bill's sister Dorothy). Dr. Silkworth declared him as hopeless & told Lois that Bill would likely have to be committed. Bill left the hospital a very broken man and sheer terror kept him sober. He found some work on Wall St., which helped restore his shattered confidence.

On Sept. 13, 1937, Florence R. (story in 1st Big Book Edition "A Feminine Victory") became the first female AAer in New York. She helped Fitz M. start the Washington Group. However, she resumed drinking in 1949. One night Fitz was called to identify her body at the Washington Morgue. She committed suicide.

In September 1938, Agnes (sister of Fitz M., whose story is told in Big Book under "Our Southern Friend," and was also AA No. 8) lent Bill W. & Hank P. \$1,000.00 to help get them through the Big Book project. Also Dr. Silkworth encouraged Charles Towns to loan \$2,500 to Bill & Hank. He later increased it to \$4,000.

In September 1948, The Serenity Prayer was first printed in the Grapevine and it became a vital part of AA.

On September 17, 1954, Bill D. from Akron, "Man on the Bed" died. A prominent attorney, Bill D. was hospitalized 8 times for his drinking. His story was first printed in the 2nd Edition of the Big Book "Alcoholic Anonymous Number Three." Before his death, Bill D. spoke at the ORC in Toronto in 1953. Bill D. had 19 years of sobriety.

In September 1973, Archives was established at General Service Office (GSO) in New York & Nell Wing, and one of Bill's earliest secretaries became the first archivist.

On September 9, 1982, Meetings of the six DCM's (today 8 Districts in the GTA) from around the Metropolitan Toronto Area & the GTA Intergroup Operating Committee of Toronto Intergroup started. Today these meetings are called "Joint Sharing Meetings". Tommy H. (from the Unionville Group, Area 83 Panel 33 Delegate 1983-84, Class B Trustee for East Canada Region 1986-89) started these meetings so Toronto Intergroup & General Service could work together to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic in the GTA. Tommy also help start Information AA Day in Toronto in 1979 with the same purpose that Toronto Intergroup & General Service could work together in carrying the message to the alcoholic.

On September 12, 2001, AA trusted servants of NY Area 49 & the NY Intergroup Office organized AA meetings around the clock near Ground Zero for AA members engaged in rescue & emergency work at the 9/11 World Trade Centre disaster. The Red Cross assigned AA rooms near the site. Members later constructed an iron plaque & presented it to GSO & the NY Intergroup as a memento.

Greater Toronto Area Groups That Started in September

- Sept. 27, 1947 - Danforth Group
- Sept. 23, 1952 - St. Clements Group
- Sept. 29, 1957 - West York Group
- Sept. 17, 1964 - Long Branch Group
- Sept. 23, 1973 - Heron Park Sunday Morning Open Meeting
- Sept. 13, 1974 - Rexdale United Group
- Sept. 15, 1975 - Fifth Wheel Group
- Sept. 11, 1978 - Deer Park Group
- Sept. 6, 1979 - Stepping Stones Group
- Sept. 17, 1983 - Frontrunner's Group
- Sept. 16, 1990 - Sunday Scarboro Group
- Sept. 17, 2007 - Prince Edward Group
- Sept. 24, 2009 - Beyond Belief Group
- Sept. 7, 2010 - We Agnostics Group
- Sept. 25, 2013 - Sisters In Sobriety Group

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.

I Was In and Out Of The Rooms Every Other Week - cont'd from pg. 1

drinking, smoking and injecting anything and everything in sight. I was miserable and I did not have a solution.

I went to treatment for the fourth time in my life and made it to 5 and a half months sober, white knuckling it with tears in my eyes. I was so depressed. I ended up going back out again and God willing, for the last time. At this point I was so out of control that when I took a drink or a substance, no matter what it was, I would end up emptying my bank account within days, a week if I was lucky, then panhandling to afford another drink or drug. My girlfriend and friends that loved me more than I was able to love myself would have to come look for me in rough areas and alleys and my family was worried sick.

During this relapse I was hit in the face very hard by someone trying to stop me from using more. I went to the hospital and was told I needed surgery as my face was badly broken. While in hospital, AA members came to see me and checked on me regularly on the phone.

I had a moment of clarity: "I don't have to keep fighting, these people truly want the best for me and they have been where I have been." I went back to Detox for the last time to date, and when I came back to the rooms I stopped doing things my way and started doing the steps.

Today I have peace in my life and amazing relationships. But more importantly I have a relationship with something bigger than myself. It reminds me that I am not all powerful and I have to let life unfold without me trying to control everything.

I now know that I'm not special. What worked for hundreds of thousands of others will work for me as well.

Life still happens but today I have a solution, and that means I do not have to pick up a drink when things don't go the way I want them to. Everybody deserves peace in their life but I now know that it's up to me to go and get it.

I wish you all serenity and peace.

- Nicolas S.

SHARE YOUR STORY



Please scan the QR
Code or tap this box and you
will be directed
to our anonymous content
submission page.