A NEWCOMER ASKS...

This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature.

recovery

Alcoholics Anonymous® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

• The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

• A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

• Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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This leaflet is intended for people approaching Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) for the first time. In it we have tried to answer the questions most frequently in the minds of newcomers—the questions which were in *our* minds when we first approached the Fellowship.

Am I an alcoholic?

If you repeatedly drink more than you intend or want to, if you get into trouble, or if you have memory lapses when you drink, you may be an alcoholic.

Only you can decide. No one in A.A. will tell you whether you are or not.

What can I do if I am worried about my drinking?

Seek help. Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

What is Alcoholics Anonymous?

We are a Fellowship of men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking and have found ourselves in various kinds of trouble as a result of drinking. We attempt—most of us successfully—to create a satisfying way of life without alcohol. For this we find we need the help and support of other alcoholics in A.A.

If I go to an A.A. meeting, does that commit me to anything?

No. A.A. does not keep membership files, or attendance records. You do not have to reveal anything about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back.

What happens if I meet people I know?

They will be there for the same reason you are there. They will not disclose your identity to outsiders. At A.A. you retain as much anonymity as you wish. That is one of the reasons we call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous.

What happens at an A.A. meeting?

An A.A. meeting may take one of several forms, but at any meeting you will find alcoholics talking about what drinking did to their lives and personalities, what actions they took to help themselves, and how they are living their lives today.

How can this help me with my drinking problem?

We in A.A. know what it is like to be addicted to alcohol, and to be unable to keep promises made to others and ourselves that we will stop drinking. We are not professional therapists. Our only qualification for helping others to recover from alcoholism is that we have stopped drinking ourselves, but problem drinkers coming to us know that recovery is possible because they see people who have done it.

Why do A.A.s keep on going to meetings after they are cured?

We in A.A. believe there is no such thing as a *cure* for alcoholism. We can never return to normal drinking, and our ability to stay away from alcohol depends on maintaining our physical, mental, and spiritual health. This we can achieve by going to meetings regularly and putting into practice what we learn there. In addition, we find it helps us to stay sober if we help other alcoholics.

How do I join A.A.?

You are an A.A. member if and when you say so. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking, and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached A.A.

How much does A.A. membership cost?

There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership. An A.A. group will usually have a collection during the meeting to cover expenses, such as rent, coffee, etc., and to this all members are free to contribute as much or as little as they wish.

Is A.A. a religious organization?

No. Nor is it allied with any religious organization.

There's a lot of talk about God, though, isn't there?

The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower, but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the A.A. group, still others don't believe in it at all. There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and nonbelief.

Can I bring my family to an A.A. meeting?

Family members or close friends are welcome at "Open" A.A. meetings. Discuss this with your local contact.

What advice do you give new members?

In our experience, the people who recover in A.A. are those who:

(a) stay away from the first drink;
(b) attend A.A. meetings regularly;
(c) seek out the people in A.A. who have successfully stayed sober for some time;
(d) try to put into practice the A.A. program of recovery;
(e) obtain and study the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous.*

How can I contact A.A.?

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in your local telephone directory. These telephones are answered by A.A. volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions, or put you in touch with those who can. If there is no A.A. telephone service close to you, write or phone the A.A. General Service Office.

Here is a list of A.A. pamphlets which may be particularly helpful to you:

Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?
Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.
Is A.A. for You?
Do You Think You're Different?
A.A. for the Woman
Young People and A.A.
Too Young?

Remember that alcoholism is a progressive disease. Take it seriously, even if you feel you are only in the early stages of the illness. Alcoholism kills people. If you are an alcoholic, and if you continue to drink, in time you will get worse.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. 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 that out.

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.

A Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible

P-24