



Coffee Pot Talk



NDIAA Newsletter

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Holiday greetings!

Wishing all of you a happy and sober holiday season! I hope in this newsletter that you find some tips for staying sober through the holidays. I tend to use the following phrase more often in December - "Does it need to be said? Does it need to be said by me? Does it need to be said by me now?" Hope this helps you too!

Monica C.

Feature Article by Thomas M.



When I was younger, I never thought I would end up in the program. I have vivid childhood memories of eating anniversary cake and holding hands while praying; my parents were in the program. As I grew up, I was very encouraging of my parents and their sobriety. Relapse is a part of my family's story. I was willing to do whatever it took for my family to stay healthy. Everything changed when I took my first drink. I drank a Smirnoff Ice, or six, and I felt very good. I looked at myself in the mirror that evening, and convinced myself that I was not going to end up as an alcoholic like my parents.

The rest of my drinking career was fueled by denial. I ran from my problems from the age of fourteen to twenty. I got in trouble and ruined my reputation on one hand, and on the other hand, I did well in school, played sports, and

performed in musical productions. Slowly but surely, I lost most of the people close to me. One night, during the last month or so of my active addiction, I came home to my college apartment after buying some dry goods. Nothing negative had been happening between my roommates. I walked into the living room and screamed, "None of you care about me". They were all surprised. Because they never aimed to make me feel that way. This situation and many more are just examples of the delusional narrative I played in my head that took me away from the people that cared about me. I was not able to feel love and trust because I did not have it for myself.

My disease led me to the point where my only friend was the bottle. I would be in a group of people and still felt alone. It got to the point where even if my friends were all partying, I did not want to be around them. A perfect situation during my addiction would be me lying in bed, with my door locked, drinking to oblivion.

It took me a lot of suffering to reach the point of surrender, but when I did; when I finally accepted that I was a sick and suffering alcoholic, my world opened up entirely. I am so grateful for what the program has taught me. I learned early on that I could be spared that last ten to fifteen years of literal hell, as long as I took the first step.

At twenty-two years old, there is not a meeting I go to where someone does not acknowledge how young I am. It truly is a blessing to have found sobriety at this age but in the beginning, I was worried I would not make friends in AA, and that I would lose many of my friends that were my age. I have come to realize that I prioritize quality over quantity. My good friend Jeff M always mentions his mother telling him that some of the best people you can meet are in AA. I find this to be very true. Suddenly, people cared enough to ask me how I was doing, encourage me when I am doing well, and call me out when I am taking my will back. I have done a lot of fun things with my friends in AA including camping, hunting, bowling, cooking, going to outings, etc. I found a family in AA. I have learned to laugh again! The laughter that uproars in a meeting is more than a response to a joke for me, it is a shared gratitude that we do not have to live that way anymore.



Our Principals

Step 12	Tradition 12	Concept 12
<p>“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principals in all of our affairs. “</p>	<p>“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”</p>	<p>“General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.”</p>



Literature Spotlight



For many, the holiday season signals an onslaught of parties and drinks. Egg Nog, Mulled Cider, Bourbon Punch and Peppermint White Russians are just a few of the many alcoholic concoctions to tempt the unwary at this time of year.

Prior to sobriety, I filled the shelf with a variety of liquors ‘just in case’ company stopped by for holiday cheer. Needless to say, I was my own best company.

My first sober Christmas was filled with apprehension. I was ready to say no when offered a drink, but totally unprepared for a liqueur filled chocolate bonbon that I popped into my mouth. Yikes! That was a shock. As the saying goes: a word to the wise is sufficient. ☺

Over the years, the AA Grapevine has amassed a number of suggestions to weather the holiday storm of alcoholic beverages for the newly sober and long timers alike. They are printed below.

Enjoy a safe, sober, happy, healthy holiday season.

Love and support in service,
Sheila D.



Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.

Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.

Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.

Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.

Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take some- one newer than you are.

Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.

If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.

Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.

Worship in your own way.

Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.

Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember— "one day at a time."

Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.

"Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

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OUR OTHER 24 PRINCIPLES



In this article, we will discuss the A.A. Tradition and Concept of the month. The main hope is to help us all, myself included, grow in "Understanding and Effectiveness." As the writer of this article, I feel it necessary to clarify that I am by no means an expert in our Traditions and Concepts. All that I have to share is my own experience and the literature that has helped me. I eagerly suggest reading up and discussing anything with your sponsor that you feel does not reconcile with our literature. I will do my utmost to make sure I note any A.A. Conference Approved Literature that I reference.

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

The spiritual aspects of anonymity is the focus of Tradition 12, it is about keeping the great I and me right size. To be clear, this isn't about us using the principles to deal with the personalities of others. The only personality I have to put these principles before is my own! That is the sacrifice this tradition is asking us to make.

Whether it be practicing kindness, love and courtesy when I feel like acting otherwise or sometimes just keeping my mouth shut all together, I am asked to sacrifice that need to let you and/or the world know what I think of them in any kind of unkindly, sarcastic or venomous way. It also applies to my need to seek praise, gratification or attention from you or the world at large. As a friend of mine says, "I cannot afford to be famous for being sober", nor can I fool myself into thinking that I am the one who has the power to save. The Power comes from God, A.A. is the vessel, I am just a tool for both to do their work, so I am directed to sacrifice my need for validation and let the praise go to where it is rightly deserved.

A.A. Comes of Age: p. 131; "In my belief, the entire future of our fellowship hangs upon this vital principle. If we continue to be filled with the spirit and principle of anonymity, no shoal or reef can wreck us. If we forget this principle, the lid of Pandora's box will be off and the spirit of Money, Power, and Prestige will be loosed among us. Obsessed by these evil genii, we might well founder and break up. I devoutly believe this will never happen. No A.A. principle merits more study and application than this one. I am positive that A.A.'s anonymity is the key to long time survival."

The spiritual sacrifice of this tradition is just as important to my staying sober as it is to the unity of Alcoholics Anonymous. It suggests we sacrifice our desire for prestige and recognition both as individual A.A. members and as A.A. Groups. Both the individual and the group can bring about irreparable damage to our Society by misrepresentation of what A.A. is and what principles A.A. stands for. Over the years my sponsor has said to me many times “stand for something or your will fall for everything”, I do believe that standing for this principle is well worth the sacrifice and the risk of us falling apart.

A.A. Comes of Age: p. 43; Dr. Bob. “For the first time I saw A.A.’s anonymity for what it really is. It isn’t something to save us from alcoholic shame and stigma; its deeper purpose is actually to keep those fool egos of ours from running hog wild after money and public fame at A.A.’s expense. It really means personal and group sacrifice for the benefit of all A.A. Right then I resolved to learn our Twelve Traditions by heart, just as I had learned the Twelve Steps. If every A.A. did the same thing and really soaked up these principles we drunks could hang together forever.”

When I need an example of what this tradition means, I think of Bill W.. Bill was known to be quite the promotor in his early days, however that changed greatly as he matured in his sobriety. When presented with the opportunity to have an article written about him and the back of his head, not even his face, on the cover of Time Magazine, he turned it down. He even mentioned, as is noted on page 314 of the book “Pass It On”, how there was a chance that many of alcoholics probably died or stayed sick because he was not willing to compromise our principles. He stated how it was not an easy decision to make, as I am sure most of us would feel the same. However the importance of our principles took precedence because without the unity protecting aspects of Tradition 12 we may not be here for the great many more A.A.’s to come in the future.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: p 187; “This experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society and under which we may grow and work in unity.

Concept 12: “General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall

ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.”

The last of the Twelve Concepts contains Article 12 of the Conference Charter and it's six warranties. For brevity I will not list and elaborate on each and every one of our warranties as they are listed in the concept itself and they are, for the most part, pretty self explanatory. I will note the importance of Article 12 though. Article 12 holds the agreement that protects our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the six warranties from ever being changed without the written consent of 3/4 of all of the A.A. groups known to all of the A.A. general service offices around the world. I, myself find that immensely reassuring and I am grateful that measures were put in place to protect those things which hold us together and that we all hold so dear from the very people who could possibly ruin them,...us.

The A.A. Service Manual: 2018-2020; p 60; “It is clear that all of these Warranties have a high and permanent importance to A.A.’s general welfare. This is why we believe we should permit change in them only upon positive evidence of their defectiveness and then only by common consent of the A.A. groups themselves. We have ranked them therefore with A.A.’s Twelve Traditions, feeling that they are quite as important to A.A.’s world services as the Traditions are to A.A. as a whole.”

Our six warranties discussed in this concept clearly describe the spiritually minded level of ethics in which our General Service Conference is expected conduct itself. It is our means of squashing the possible ego driven seeking for money, property and authority in our delegates, trustees and directors. It clarifies that the authority comes through God as He may express Himself through ALL of our A.A. groups. With that being said, you might ask yourself, if the groups hold the final call anyway, what is the need for all of these Concepts, the General Service Conference and all of the Corporate mumbo jumbo? Well, I do believe that question was best answered by someone long before me.

A.A. Comes of Age: p 280; Bernard Smith; “We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. But we do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness, seeking the light. We need it to insure the recovery of some newborn child, inexplicably destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with the Twelve Steps, a

permanent haven for all alcoholics who in the ages ahead can find in A.A. that rebirth which brought its first members back to life.”

In closing, it has been an honor to write about our Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts over this past year, I hope that I have done them adequate respect. If I was able to spark a desire in even one person to seek to better understand our other 24 principles I will consider it a job well done. I know that having to search my own experience and reread over our literature again and again has been of great joy and help to me. I will end in the only way that seems fit.

Alcoholics Anonymous; P 164; “We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the road of Happy Destiny. May God Bless you and keep you - until then”

Brendon M
Sobriety Date: 02/25/2011
Member at Large, NDIAA

Literature for reference: *Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book); A.A. Comes of Age; Pass it on; 12 Steps and 12 Traditions; The A.A. Service Manual 2018-2020 Edition; The Twelve Traditions Illustrated (P-43); The Twelve Concepts for World Service illustrated (P-8); The A.A. Group...Where it All Begins (P-16); A.A. Tradition, How it Developed (P-17); Concepts Checklist (SMF-91);*



Stone Cold Sober...



Last night a young friend in the rooms, with 5 years of sobriety, sat on my couch and shared a disturbing story. They were confronted by someone in the rooms, not their sponsor, about the quality of their sobriety. They attend 3 meetings a week, read literature, hold a service position, do step work, have a home-group, and are in regular contact with their sponsor. The nosey-body's issue was that they are attending meetings on Zoom, and gave his unwanted opinion that these don't count as AA meetings. This left my friend both hurt and questioning (note - this person attends the program in another state). I have not been to a live meeting in over 18 months, but I go to meetings everyday - does this character think my meetings do not count? At first I thought this was another Zoom debate, but it really is about taking each's inventories.

It is one thing if my sponsor says something to me about the quality of my program - or if we ask someone for their input, but what right do we have to run around taking people's inventories willy-nilly? How dare anyone question the quality of someone else's spiritual program, especially if they are staying sober. My first impulse was - what's going on in this other person's program that they feel so superior or entitled? Perhaps we best, as our literature suggests, make sure our own homes are in order before we throw stones at other people's houses. We can help each other, while still staying in our own lanes. I have learned two acronyms for minding my own business. 1) Before I say anything, I ask myself: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? and 2) Does it need to be said? Does it need to be said now? Does it need to be said by me?

I asked my friend if anyone else jumped on this bandwagon and he said 2 newcomers. My experience, strength and hope was to "stick with the winners," follow their sponsor's direction to ignore the person, and keep working their daily spiritual program. It seems this person has a history of this behavior. Our 4th Step, as I read it, says continue to take inventory of *ourselves*. How easy, fun, and unhealthy would it be if it said to "continue to take other people's inventories." Imagine that ruin of a program! "The inventory was ours, not the other man's," says the **Big Book** on page 67.

Now here's the brutal honesty that I believe keeps me sober. I take other people's inventories all the time. I often think people are doing things wrong - the difference is I don't verbalize my thoughts, unless it becomes a resentment or rumination, at which time I talk to my sponsor and pray for the person. They say oftentimes the things we do not like in other's are the things

we too are guilty of, but not willing to acknowledge. I need to remember: I do not have a gavel, I am not a judge. I do not have a badge, I am not an AA sheriff.

Was this other person only trying to help? Maybe. Maybe they really care and really believe you can only get sober at in-person meetings (although I would suggest they study why the AA Grapevine was founded and its origins - it was started for people living in remote areas, or physically incapacitated, who could not attend 'real' meetings). I think this was a political/vaccine/Zoom-related ego issue and if I was Queen of AA, I would recommend they check their motives and reread our Traditions. But alas, I am just a member among members, so I am praying for this person now, because I do have a resentment.

I have had people question my level of service multiple times in the rooms, because they did more than me or think I should be serving in a different way. I have been questioned about my faith in a higher power and told many times that I should sound better than I do given the length of time I have been sober. The Queen Baby in me wants to say, "Come talk to me when you've been sober 36 years....", but instead I pray for them and talk to my sponsor about my resentments. Most of us feel bad enough about ourselves some days, when we are really trying our very best. Am I guilty of doing this to others? I'm sure I am. I'm sure I've given advice when it was inappropriate or opinions that were not asked for and probably inaccurate - and for that I am truly sorry. Progress not perfection, and practice makes progress!

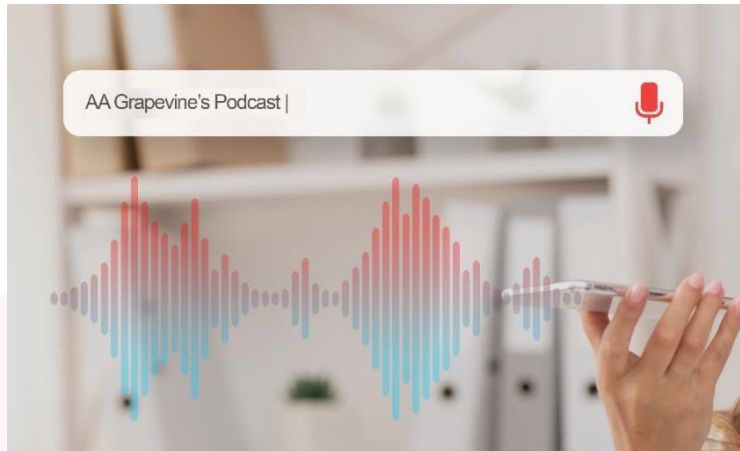
Today, I will make sure my own house is in order. I will think first before I open my mouth and hurt someone or degrade their program without thinking. If I am tempted to talk about someone else's program, I will discuss it with my sponsor or a trusted AA fellow. Would I like to say I will never goof up? Yes. Will I goof up? Yes. But let's all keep trying one day, one hour, one minute at a time.

My father was an aggressive driver, and often shouted out the window, "STAY IN YOUR OWN LANE." I think I'll try. To the young person who was demoralized by this fellow member, "keep coming back, your higher power did not take you this far to drop you now, you are a miracle, it works if you work it."

As always, this is just one alcoholic's experience, strength, and hope. Take what you like and leave the rest. I wish you faith and patience, faith that it works and the patience to let it.

In fellowship and service, Maria

Technically Speaking...



Our new podcast, the **AA Grapevine Half-Hour Variety Hour** can be heard anywhere you listen to podcasts. We release a new episode every Monday. Tune in to hear funny, poignant, and always inspiring “**meeting after the meeting**” conversation about getting sober and staying sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Available for free wherever you listen to podcast or you can also find it on our website, at www.aagrapevine.org/podcast.

TWELVE TIPS ON KEEPING YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON SOBER AND JOYOUS

1. Line up extra AA activities (help on the phones, speak, empty the ashtrays).
2. Be host to friends, especially newcomers, at home or at a coffee shop.
3. Keep your AA telephone list with you at all times.
4. Find out about holiday meetings or celebrations in your local groups.
5. Skip any drinking occasions you're nervous about.
6. If there's one you can't skip, take an AA friend—or keep candy handy.
7. Don't think you have to stay late (plan an “important date” in advance).
8. Go to church. Any church. And don't forget about extra meetings.
9. Don't sit around brooding; catch up on reading, museums, walks, letters.
10. Don't project about holiday temptations: remember “One day at a time.”
11. Even if you cannot give material gifts, enjoy the beauty of holiday love.
12. Carry the message. Give the joy away, and it will be yours to keep.

— Adapted from Box 4-5-9

Anniversary Club

Bill C 5/2/78	Ken P 9/20/83
Bob A 7/9/90	Kerry O 4/20/08
Bob M 1/17/83	Laura R 6/21/95
Brendan D 5/3/09	Leslie D 2/20/90
Brenda A 2/23/85	Liza F 1/20/05
Carel B 4/26/04	Marilyn M 6/26/99
Carolyn W 7/15/82	Marie R 9/6/83
Christopher K 1/03	Mary Ellen S 1/24/10
David C 2/1/94	Melissa S 6/23/08
David G 7/6/99	Mike M 4/20/91
David F 11/23/07	Nancy V 2/21/05 (deceased)
David K 12/3/72	Patricia K 12/17/87
Debbie H 3/16/91	Patsy M 1/6/88
Doris S 4/80	Phyllis M 3/9/88
Doug W 2/28/91	Sally C 10/15/95
Ed H 1/28/96	Shirley U 3/19/76
Franny C 5/7/96	Stanley B 3/5/79
Fred M 5/5/90	Suzanne M 4/4
Gail R 6/4/92	Tenney W 5/15/82
Jaime B 8/8/04	Tom H 7/2/04
Jaffrey H 11/24/96	Tom McD 1/16/96
Janice S 12/25/10	Tracy D 2/28/13
Jason B 4/20/09	Valerie S 2/3/89
Jim S 4/10/88	Walt A 1/94
Kara G 11/8/12	Wes J 4/21/75
Kathy O 6/11/97	Wes M 2/1/94
Ken H 11/4/97	

*** Would you like to celebrate your anniversary, show your fellows how the program works and contribute to your Northern Delaware Intergroup at the same time? The anniversary club is easy to join, Here's how it works... you can email the information below to intergroup at mainoffice@ndiaa.org. A small donation of \$1 per year sober is all it costs to have your name and anniversary date printed in the newsletter every month for a whole year. **