

Heart to Heart

DECEMBER 2017

www.aaregina.com

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.

AA'S Steps Lead To--Spiritual Awakening

THE Twelfth Step is, in a sense, the culmination of the whole program. It wraps up all the Steps which go before it and gives us a guide for living the whole program every day of our lives.

The Step breaks down into three parts--spiritual awakening, trying to carry the message, and trying to practice these principles in all our affairs.

I think I have heard and been a party to more disagreements, puzzlements and confusion about the term "spiritual awakening" than any other in the program--including "God." And most of my difficulty was unnecessary. It could have been avoided just by paying more attention to what the Step itself says and less attention to my "old ideas" about spiritual awakening.

First, a small point that made a big difference in my understanding. The Step does not say, "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps;" it says, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps." So a spiritual awakening is not just one of several results of working the Steps. It is the totality of what the Steps are all about, what they are aiming at. Therefore, to define spiritual awakening for myself in AA, all I have to do is describe the results of my work on the first eleven Steps. The work has involved: letting in the truth about my situation as an alcoholic and a loser in life; becoming willing to accept help, not on my terms, but on the terms offered; facing and accepting responsibility for my shortcomings and misbehavior rather than blaming Mums, Dads, my First Sergeant, the boss, the Twentieth Century or fate. The results of this work have been sobriety, stability and responsibility which have, in turn, produced a degree of meaning, satisfaction and joy in my life which were never there before.

I have not yet mentioned God or Higher Power in connection with waking up spiritually. This is not because I want to apologize for or leave out God. The reality of God permeates and is the essence of spiritual awakening, but in order to begin to have experience of the reality, it is not first necessary to come to terms with the word God or even the words Higher Power. As long as one remains open-minded and willing about the words, experience of the reality does not have to and indeed ought not to be postponed.

One of the early fathers of the Christian church said, "Do you wish to know God? Learn first to know yourself." This is the key which opens up the opportunity for recovery in AA to so many of us. Spiritual awakening can begin in the absence of much knowledge or understanding about God. It leads to such knowledge and understanding, but it begins with knowledge and acceptance of the truth about ourselves.

So I am learning, when looking for signs of spiritual awakening in myself, to look, not for bright lights or emotional upheavals (although I'm sure there is a place for these too), but for sobriety, stability, responsibility, meaning, satisfaction, joy. These are the marks of the beginning of spiritual awakening, and they come as the result of work with the Steps. If they fail to come or, after a time, begin to disappear, the answer is no mystery; it is more work with the Steps.

The "tried to carry the message to alcoholics" part of the Twelfth Step is pretty clear to most of us. The term "Twelfth Step work" refers to this part of the Step. The Big Book says, "Nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." This is true for me. Reasoning my way out of old selfish habits has proven impossible, but Twelfth Step work enables me to act my way out of myself by working with the problems of others (which so often turn out to be worse than my own).

I had one difficulty in doing Twelfth Step work that my sponsor helped me with. I was nervous about talking to older people or people with tough histories because I'm young and high-bottom. He said to me, "That's ego. The Step doesn't say, 'carried a terrific message every time'; it says, 'tried to carry the message.' In relation to your recovery, Twelfth Step work has nothing to do with whether you sparkle or not; it has everything to do with whether you make the attempt to communicate your experience, strength and hope in this program. As long as you do your best and are sincere, it's good Twelfth Step work."

The last part of the Twelfth Step, about practicing these principles in all my affairs, has come to mean an awful lot to me. For me it means, don't be a two-stepper, don't take the parts of the program you like and leave the rest out, don't settle for half-measures in your practice of the program. It means these principles won't work for me unless I take them out of the AA meetings and carry them over into my home, business and social life.

The first 100 members of this Fellowship, who hammered out the Twelve Steps, knew what they were doing. They could have made it two steps or ten steps or twenty-five steps, but they didn't. I don't think they put anything in they didn't think they needed. They were working the whole program, not because they were saints, but because they were drunks who wanted to get well. I have no reason to suppose I'm any less sick than they were; I have no reason to suppose I need any less of the program than they did.

I think I want to "keep it simple" as much as the next guy, but I also think my sobriety, my sanity and my very life depend on keeping all of it.

-- T. P., Jr. Hankins, New York May 1967 Grapevine

AA Central Office

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Intergroup Contacts Newsletter

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Treatment Facilities

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**The truth that
makes men
free is for the
most part the
truth which
men prefer
not to hear.**



Living Big: Step 12 Last year, the theme of a local Round-up was "Sobriety Our First Priority"

That topic really put things into perspective. Shortly before, I attended a meeting where a fellow from Louisiana said the word "slip" was an acronym for "sobriety lost its priority." And our priorities are what we actually do with our time. I can't build a contented sobriety based on what I plan on doing, I have to base it on what I am doing in our program.

I had my first drink, got drunk, sick, passed out and blacked out at age 17. My last drink, of which I have no recollection, was shortly after I turned 30. During those years, every time I drank I got drunk. I was never a social drinker. I was a binge drinker. I never drank when I worked. The intervals between binges were unpredictable.

I have little recall of much of my twenties—a whole decade—although I went to school, got married, bought a house, and started a business. The lack of memory is less because of blackouts than because I was always living in the past or worrying about the future. I was rarely in the present.

By my late twenties, I realized something was wrong. I didn't seem to be like other people. Alcohol had become a problem and my life was miserable. I was always irritable and angry. I always wanted more of everything. Every success I had was followed by fear that I could never repeat it. My relations with other people were strained. My basic plan was to get even with them. I used to think that if only they would turn their wills and their lives over to me everything would be a lot better. So I tried a number of things. First self-knowledge: why did I drink? Parents, childhood, wife, work? It wasn't until I was in the program for some time that I realized the only reason I drank was to get drunk. There was no other reason. It was for that initial euphoria and escape from reality, escaping from my responsibilities. The attempt at self-knowledge didn't do anything. So over the course of a couple of years, I went to a doctor, a psychologist, a drug and alcohol counselor and a psychiatrist. These were all human powers that I thought could solve my problem, but as we know: no human power could relieve us of our alcoholism.

To me the biggest Promise, the most important, is in How it Works where it says that God could and would relieve us of our alcoholism if he were sought. That is a very powerful statement. It doesn't say "He'll think about it," or "Maybe he will, or even that "He probably will." It says, "He will relieve us of our alcoholism if he is sought." That is one of the most important facts of my life today.

But back then, my solution consisted of lying to all these professional men, turning it into their problem, while I carried on drinking. However, at one point, I even tried something drastic, I tried "not drinking." Yes, willpower was the to be the real solution. On a bet with my, I didn't drink for a year. Each day I looked at the liquor in the china cabinet and cursed. It was amongst my most miserable years. That was curious. If alcohol was my problem, and I wasn't drinking, why did I still have a problem? I found out later in AA. It wasn't so much that I had quit for a year as I had simply planned my next drink to be one year away. And so it was, to the minute.

Even after not drinking for a year, things were bad. Then they got worse, a lot worse. Binges and blackouts became more frequent and totally out of control. I was in some dangerous situations. I was now 29 and vowed to myself that I would quit when I turned 30. I thought to myself, there I've decided to quit. It was really a deci-

sion to keep drinking until some other time. As always, I was serious about it. For two months after I turned 30, I was scraping by. Then one morning I came to and found myself wandering the streets of Vancouver. Not knowing where I was, what day it was or where my car was. It was raining and I recall not having my jacket. I didn't know how long I had been on a binge. I vaguely knew people were waiting for me at my office. I didn't know what to do anymore. I had made such an effort to quit on my own and failed. I somehow got home. For the first time my wife didn't get upset. She really didn't seem to care anymore and that frightened me. A terrible painful dread overcame me. I hit bottom.

A big part of hitting bottom was giving up the one thing I had been clinging to, the one thing I thought was my biggest asset, that which made it possible for me to do everything else in life: my willpower. I had to at last face the reality that I couldn't stop drinking.

I didn't know what to do and for the most part, was ready to give up, I didn't really care. But I called AA. At that point I wasn't sure where the idea came from. Now I recall that someone came and talked to our ninth grade class about alcoholism and AA.

The next morning I went to work and called the local Central Office. It wasn't what I expected, or wanted, but a couple of hours later Ken T. came to take me to lunch. And save my life. I was very far down in the dumps and he was exactly what I needed. He took me to a meeting that night, a men's Step group. After listening, I admitted that I too was an alcoholic and dramatically declared that I would never drink again.

I was last to speak and the meeting ended. Harvey C. came over and talked to me. What he told me in a brief conversation changed everything. He asked me if I had ever sworn off drinking forever before? Sure, many times. Had it ever worked? I admitted it hadn't. He said that in AA we don't go around carrying the heavy load of never drinking again. No one would stop me if I wanted to go and do some more. What we do is not drink one day at a time. A major revelation. Something I felt I too could do.

He also told me, that although I might not have been aware of it, when it came to alcohol I didn't really have a choice before, but now I did. If I wanted to stop drinking I could do what they were doing. I didn't know what it was but I believed him. It was sometime later that I came to realize that the choices I had were about much more than just drinking. I learned in the Program that I could choose what to think, what to feel, how to react, what attitudes I would have and how to conduct myself. These were very difficult endeavors, especially the part about choosing what to think, but they changed my life completely.

So I joined a men's Step group and started learning. It soon became apparent that, although it was a major component, my problem wasn't just alcohol. It was something called alcoholism. If it was just alcohol, then during that year I had been dry, things should have gotten better or at least been okay. If it was only alcohol and I didn't drink one day at a time why did I need anything else? Through the literature, the meetings, and other members I learned that alcoholism was a disease, an allergy to alcohol with several aspects to it.

*My relations with other people: All those ruptured relationships had to be changed by making amends. To amend something means to change it. I didn't care much for making amends, although I did them. After that I used to carry around in my pocket a list of people I haven't harmed today. I wrote down the name of everyone with whom I came into contact and watched myself so I wouldn't have to make amends to them.

*My instincts gone astray: This approach explained much of what I was about as a person. I had to learn to

say yes when I wanted to say no. Yes to doing all the hard things required in this program to give me the kind of sobriety I wanted. And I had to learn to say no when I wanted to say yes. No to the familiar and comfortable feelings of anger, no to resentment, no to wanting more of everything than I was entitled to.

*My spiritual condition: In my case there was a total lack of any spiritual life whatsoever. I didn't know there was a spiritual dimension to my existence. I had to discover and develop this. I did this through the Steps. I read that their primary purpose was not to simply stop me drinking but to allow me to increasingly bring my will and my life into accord with God's will for me. And the primary purpose of the Big Book was to allow me to find a power greater than myself that would solve my problem. I discovered there were certain principles in the Program to live by. These I had to learn and to start practicing. There are many but some of the most important ones to me:

**Acceptance*: Accepting my alcoholism, accepting that there was a solution, accepting other people for who they are. Accepting that when it came to alcohol, my ideas didn't work at all.

**Honesty*: The wonderful thing about honesty is that it is a whole way of life and a solution to most problems. Being honest results in not creating a lot of problems for yourself. Being honest means you don't have to keep making a lot of decisions, there is only one right answer, one decision. And there is nothing inconsistent with being polite, diplomatic, caring, loving and being rigorously honest. An essential place for honesty is in respect to my motives.

**Humility*: I have to always remember that God is in charge. On awakening, I have to remember that I have to pray first, then think, not vice versa. When I think first, it all becomes about what I want.

**Reliance not defiance*: to do this I have to acknowledge that things are good and getting better. As a speaker at the Round-up said, "We follow the path, we don't create it." I had tried trail-blazing and was continually lost.

Placing my spiritual condition ahead of my material condition: Practical results came from this in business. There arose situations where I could have come out ahead, legitimately, over other people but decided not to do so. Why is this so important? We're told that those who slip are those who fail to grow their spiritual life and that what we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. What seemed at first to have been given up financially was in due course returned many fold within a couple of years. We try to make spiritual progress. How do I know if I'm making progress? Things are going well, there is harmony in my life, I'm content. If these are absent, I'm not making progress.

Now there are other principles as well: we don't retaliate, we avoid anger, we take a kindly and tolerant view of others. We practice these principles. And the key word here is practice. No matter where we are at we can all do that. We don't have to concern ourselves with perfection. It doesn't say we perfect these principles in all our affairs. At least I haven't.

For me the reason to practice these principles is that I want more than just being dry. I want to be sober. That means a rational, sane, balanced, loving way of life in all its aspects. I want to get the most out of my sobriety. I've learned from the old timers that recovery never ends. Growth never ends. Through AA I feel I am living big in sobriety and big in life.

-- Ken A
Grapevine Online Exclusive March 2014
Pender Island, British Columbia, Canada

"I only drank on special occasions, like the grand opening of a pack of cigarettes."

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow's a mystery, and today is a present!"

The Twelve Principles of Alcoholics Anonymous

There are principles which correspond to each of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Part of Step 12 is that we "practice these principles in all our affairs". So, it's important to know what they are! This is an effort to expand on the meaning of the Principles of the 12 Steps. These are the principles that are incorporated into our daily lives as 'we walk the walk'. Employing each of these behaviors will help to rebuild a life of increased self-esteem, self-confidence and recovery. Here are the action principles behind the Twelve Steps:

1. Honesty – It is vital to concede that we are alcoholics if we are to achieve sobriety. The odds are against us if we don't completely admit defeat and surrender. This takes being truthful with ourselves. The alcoholic cannot differentiate the true from the false. By learning to be honest with ourselves and admit an honest desire to be sober, we begin the spiritual program of action.
2. Hope - In order to engage in a course of alcoholism recovery, we must have hope of success. If there is no hope, why try? We have not been able to stay sober on our own, and the desperation we feel when we enter AA is overwhelming. A way to instill hope is to realize recovery is not a question of ability, but rather a desire to stay sober. Seeing others recover and live free of alcohol brings hope.
3. Faith - This decision step to go on with the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous asks that we step out on faith. It is only a matter of being willing to believe. Through the process of the 12 steps, that belief turns into faith. We carry this faith into the rest of the steps by being willing to believe. We must begin to have faith it will work.
4. Courage - This step is really about courage to honestly look at ourselves. Take a look at how our behavior has become warped to justify our continued behavior. We are here to take an honest assessment of ourselves. Looking at causes and conditions of our alcoholic behavior can be scary.
5. Integrity - If we have truly done a thorough job of introspection and evaluation of our assets and shortcomings, do we have the integrity to own up to it? It can be very difficult to be open and honest about our past behaviors. We begin to learn to do the right thing even though no one is watching.
6. Willingness - Now that we have accomplished an inventory of the good and not so good aspects of our character and behavior, are we willing to change them? All of them? The important part in this 12 step principle is the willingness to let go of old

behaviors and rely on our Higher Power.

7. Humility - Here we move further into action. We have seen in step 5 where we have been selfish and self-centered. We practice being humble by realizing that we are not the center of the universe. We are all simply small parts of a huge whole. To be human is to make mistakes. Hopefully our journey has led us to the point where we can readily admit mistakes and accept ourselves for being imperfect. We are asking for help in forgiving ourselves.
8. Brotherly Love – While we are preparing a list of those to whom we owe amends, it becomes time for the "golden rule". It is important to begin treating others as we wish to be treated. We must also learn not to judge others, but accept them for who they are, not our vision of who they should be.
9. Discipline - We are continuing to remove the barriers that can block forward sober growth. We are getting ready to sweep our side of the street clean. We are learning to become accountable while making amends to those people we have harmed. We are practicing new behaviors by facing our wrongs, so it is important to have this self discipline. We are trying to try to correct our wrongs through action, not just words. We stay close to our sponsor during each amends to stay focused and disciplined.
10. Perseverance – We have entered the world of the Spirit and strive to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This takes practice and means we have to keep on keeping on. We are beginning to trudge the road of Happy Destiny, and this takes diligence.
11. Spiritual Awareness – Step 11 suggests that we continue to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, so we tap into that power through prayer and meditation. We become cognizant of the blessings we are receiving in our new life. We are learning to notice His handiwork in all aspects of our lives.
12. Service - Having experienced a psychic change that keeps us sober one day at a time, we are empowered to demonstrate the new principles by which we live. We remain in action in our daily life through example. We seek out and are available to help others in need. We continue to carry the message of hope and recovery. We strive to help wherever we can even in the smallest, simple tasks of life.

These are the action Principles of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. As long as we use these principles each day, we receive the gift of sobriety.

Step Twelve is considered to be so important that it takes up much more space in the literature than any other step. It's almost three steps in one. I have divided it into three parts to look at in this chapter.

1. Having had a spiritual awakening...
2. We tried to carry the message to others...
3. And to practice these principles in all our affairs.

1... In the Twelve Step community the word *spiritual* usually doesn't mean the same thing as the word *religious*. For many, spiritual refers to being in touch with and living on the basis of "reality". A spiritual woman, for instance, would be in touch with her own reality, her own feelings, her own controlling and diseased behaviors and character defects as well as her own preciousness and gifts. She would be in touch with the reality of other people and with ultimate reality in the experience of a Higher Power, God. In that sense a "spiritual awakening," whatever else it might include, is an awakening to seeing and dealing with reality in one's own life and in relationships with other people and with God...

2... in the Twelve Steps, where people learn about God through their own experiences with him, there is no need to "persuade" with theology or verbal arguments. We let pain do the persuading, because we know that it is only through pain that the hunger for healing comes that will make us ready to admit our powerlessness. We know that until the pain of our lives was greater than the fear of swallowing our pride and going for help, we were not hungry enough for healing to go for it through the Twelve Steps...

3... When we first read that we were to "practice these principles in all our affairs," some of us didn't understand. How could we use the Twelve Steps to deal with conflict in a personal relationship or a decision about buying a house? Gradually we realized that "practicing principles" means taking specific usable pieces of truth out of larger truths and applying the smaller principles to a different situation...

A Hunger for Healing, by J. Keith Miller, p. 196, 199, 210

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Harmony Group

Mike N. 7 years Dec. 5

Scott A. 5years Dec 13

One-Way Group

Craig L 8 yrs 18 Dec 2009

Sean M 24 yrs 11 Dec 1993



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

District and Area 91 Upcoming Events

First Wednesday of the month at 7:30:

Intergroup Meeting, YWCA

Second Wednesday of the month at 7:30:

District Meeting, Mount Olive Lutheran Church.

See aasask.org and aaregina.com for more information

Meeting Changes

Friday Morning – 7:00 am new group – Sobriety First Group meets at Nick's Café – 1005 – 8th Avenue – Closed Meeting.

Tuesday Evening – 8:00 pm Last Chance Group (Open Meeting) meets at Christ Lutheran Church, 4815 Dewdney Avenue. (back door, downstairs). May 1 – October 31st. Nov. 1 – April 30 no meeting.

Sunday at 5:25, Rolling Home on Sunday is a new meeting day at the olde Eureka Club, 1065 Pasqua

New: All Saints Anglican – 142 Massey Road, Sunday 7 – 8 p.m.

Intergroup & Office Contributions

The General Service Conference suggests that each group adopts a specific contribution plan according to their financial situation. Once the basic expenses have been taken care of and a "prudent reserve" has been set aside, the group may decide to send money to the service entities as follows:

- 50% Regina Intergroup
- 30% General Service Office
- 10% Area 91
- 10% District Committee

Contributing Groups: July, Aug, Sept

Ramada Sunday at Nine, Harmony Group, Last Chance Group, Hero Group, Home Away from Home Group, Northside Group, Northern Lights, Walsh Acres, Four Aces, Friday Breakfast Group, Vibank Group, Last Chance Group, Tuesday Noon Hour, Fresh Start and Heartview Groups **THANK YOU ALL!**

Free H2H Subscription via email Send request to: h2heditor@aaregina.com

Opportunities for Service

- 12 Step List Committee
- Regina Round Up Committee
- Social Events Committee
- Treatment Centre Committee
- Corrections Committee

Contact your Intergroup representative or AA Central Office at a.a@saskatel.net

Reader Submissions

Wanted!

H2H Editors want to share your experience, strength and hope with others in *your* words and through *your* stories. What have the Steps, principles, traditions and fellowship meant to **you** on our journey? We're listening.

Send to h2heditor@aaregina.com

Condolences

On behalf of our members, our sincere condolences go out to members who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.

Nu-Life Group

60th Anniversary Potluck Celebration

When: January 13, 2018

Where: Eastview Community Centre
615 6th Avenue, Regina SK

Time: 5:00 pm Social

Supper: 5:45 pm

Cost: Tradition 7 gratefully declined

Everyone Welcome!

Bring your favorite potluck dish and join us!

Speakers, Entertainment, Santa C.

Come Celebrate Nu-Life's 60th Anniversary

For information on ticket requirements contact:



Wayne H. 306-543-5379
Rhonda P. 306-761-0369



2017 Regina AA Alcohols



December 24, 6:00pm thru
December 26, 6:00 pm

December 31, 6:00 pm thru
January 1, 6:00 pm

Regina North East Community Centre
North side lot, 160 Broad Street, Regina, SK

Groups and volunteers needed to take time slots
Food donations needed as well

For Volunteer Info email AA Regina Central Office

a.a@sasktel.net