



Northern Colorado Intergroup / Central Office

NEWCOMER PACKET

Making a Start in A.A.

A Newcomer Asks...

Where do I go from here?

A.A. at a Glance

Information on A.A.

This is A.A.

Q & A on Sponsorship

A Newcomer Asks



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

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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www.aa.org

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 are 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; and 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 non-belief.

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 online or 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 or visit our website at www.aa.org.

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?"
- "Women in A.A. "
- "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 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.

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 nonprofessional, 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.

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.**



“Where do I go from here?”

Soon you'll be back out there in the real world again. You'll find it's the same old world with the same old problems.

No matter where you live, you'll still have your full share of those problems. Plus the one problem that can make all the others seem a lot bigger than they really are.

You're not the only one who has come face to face with a drinking problem. There are about 2,000,000 of us who are not alone anymore.

Back in 1935, two men saw that alcohol had ruined their lives. They knew it would kill them if they didn't stop drinking. They wanted to stop, but couldn't do it alone.

Their families and friends and doctors couldn't do it for them. There was no personal loss or calamity big enough, no threat, treatment, or cure strong enough to make either of them stop drinking. Willpower didn't work, either. The countless and sincere promises they had made to themselves were broken over and over again—over that first drink.

Each of the two men had been diagnosed as hopeless alcoholics. Worse yet, they saw themselves as hopeless. Until they saw each other.

By strange coincidence, they met and began to share their common experience with alcohol. They found they understood each other's problems better than their families and friends and doctors did. This mutual understanding gave them the strength each desperately needed to pass up the first drink that had always paved the way to disaster.

(OVER)

Very gradually, their new strength restored their hope for life and a future. They survived to share their experience with other so-called hopeless alcoholics.

Today, Alcoholics Anonymous is made up of an estimated 2,000,000 men and women who once felt just as hopeless. We still meet regularly to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. Our everyday lives are a lot better now than they used to be. And each of us once had to ask ourselves that question: "Where do I go from here?"

We live and meet everywhere now and at many different hours of the day. And we hope you'll want to talk to one of us when you get out. We'll be waiting, because somebody waited for each of us. And that made all the difference.

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

**Look for "A.A."
or
"Alcoholics Anonymous"
as listed in the local
telephone directory or online**

If you cannot reach A.A. in your community, just write to

A.A. General Service Office

Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

call: 212-870-3400
or visit our website:
www.aa.org

A.A. at a glance

What is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a voluntary, worldwide fellowship of men and women from all walks of life who meet together to attain and maintain sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership.

Current Membership

It is estimated that there are over 120,000 groups and over 2,000,000 members in approximately 180 countries.

Relations with Outside Agencies

The Fellowship has adopted a policy of “cooperation but not affiliation” with other organizations concerned with the problem of alcoholism. We have no opinion on issues outside A.A. and neither endorse nor oppose any causes.

How A.A. Is Supported

Over the years, Alcoholics Anonymous has affirmed and strengthened a tradition of being fully self-supporting and of neither seeking nor accepting contributions from nonmembers. Within the Fellowship, the amount that may be contributed by any individual member is limited to \$5,000 a year.

How A.A. Members Maintain Sobriety

A.A. is a program of total abstinence. Members simply stay away from one drink, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing experience, strength and hope at group meetings and through the suggested Twelve Steps for recovery from alcoholism.

Why Alcoholics Anonymous Is “Anonymous”

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of A.A. It disciplines the Fellowship to govern itself by principles rather than personalities. We are a society of peers. We strive to make known our program of recovery, not individuals who participate in the program. Anonymity in the public media is assurance to all A.A.s, especially to newcomers, that their A.A. membership will not be disclosed.

Anyone May Attend A.A. Open Meetings

Anyone may attend open meetings of A.A. These usually consist of talks by a leader and two or three speakers who share experience as it relates to their alcoholism and their recovery in A.A. Some meetings are held for the specific purpose of informing the nonalcoholic public about A.A. Doctors, members of the clergy, and public officials are invited. Closed discussion meetings are for alcoholics only.

How A.A. Started

A.A. was started in 1935 by a New York stockbroker and an Ohio surgeon (both now deceased) who had been "hopeless" drunks. They founded A.A. in an effort to help others who suffered from the disease of alcoholism and to stay sober themselves. A.A. grew with the formation of autonomous groups, first in the United States and then around the world.

How to Find A.A.

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in any telephone directory, your local newspaper or "Find A.A. Near You" on the home page of our website, www.aa.org. In most urban areas, a central A.A., office or intergroup, staffed mainly by volunteer A.A.s will be happy to answer your questions and/or put you in touch with those who can.

What A.A. Does Not Do

A.A. does not: Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover... solicit members... engage in or sponsor research... keep attendance records or case histories... join "councils" or social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them)... follow up or try to control its members... make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses... provide detox, rehabilitation or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment... offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats... engage in education about alcohol... provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services... provide domestic or vocational counseling... accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources... provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

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For further information on A.A.,
these pamphlets are available on request:

"A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous";
"Frequently Asked Questions About A.A."; "This is A.A."

A.A. General Service Office,
Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

For Anyone New Coming to A.A. For Anyone Referring People to A.A.

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. This sheet tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does *not* do.

What Is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency.” Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Nonalcoholics may attend open A.A. meetings as observers, but only those with a *drinking* problem may attend closed A.A. meetings.

What Does A.A. Do?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or “sponsorship” to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.
 - a. Open *speaker* meetings — open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members “tell their stories.” They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - b. Open *discussion* meetings — one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up. (*Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.*)
 - c. Closed discussion meetings — conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
 - d. Step meetings (usually closed) — discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
 - e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional facilities and treatment settings.
 - f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings *about A.A.* are *not* regular A.A. group meetings.

What A.A. Does Not Do

A.A. does not:

1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
2. Solicit members.
3. Engage in or sponsor research.
4. Keep attendance records or case histories.
5. Join “councils” of social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them).
6. Follow up or try to control its members.
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses.
8. Provide detox or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment.
9. Offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats.
10. Engage in education about alcohol.
11. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services.
12. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
13. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources.
14. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

Members From Court Programs and Treatment Facilities

In recent years, A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment settings. Some have come to A.A. voluntarily; others, under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet “How A.A. Members Cooperate,” the following appears:

We cannot discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in A.A., many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. But continual exposure to A.A. educated us to the true nature of the illness.... Who made the referral to A.A. is not what A.A. is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern.... We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

Proof of Attendance at Meetings

Sometimes a referral source asks for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.

Groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group’s involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have an A.A. member acknowledge attendance on a slip that has been furnished by the referral source. The referred person is responsible for returning the proof of attendance.

This proof of attendance at meetings is *not* part of A.A.’s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus alleviate breaking A.A. members’ anonymity.

Literature

A.A. Conference-approved literature is available in French and Spanish. For additional copies of this paper, or for a literature catalog please write or call the General Service Office.

AA Grapevine, a monthly international journal — also known as “our meeting in print” — features many interesting stories about recovery from alcoholism written primarily by members of A.A. It is a useful introduction and ongoing link to A.A.’s diverse fellowship and wealth of recovery experience. The Spanish-language magazine La Viña is published bimonthly.

For Grapevine information or to order a subscription to either AA Grapevine or La Viña: (212) 870-3404; fax (212) 870-3301; website: www.aagrapevine.org.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of A.A. is to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety. Regardless of the road we follow, we all head for the same destination, recovery of the alcoholic person. Together, we can do what none of us could accomplish alone. We can serve as a source of personal experience and be an ongoing support system for recovering alcoholics.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station,
New York, NY 10163. Tel. (212) 870-3400. www.aa.org

This is **A.A.**

An introduction
to the A.A.
Recovery Program



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

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Mail address: Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

www.aa.org

This Is A.A.

*...an introduction to the
A.A. recovery program*

Only you can decide

If you seem to be having trouble with your drinking, or if your drinking has reached the point where it worries you a bit, you may be interested in knowing something about Alcoholics Anonymous and the A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism. After reading this brief outline, you may decide that A.A. has nothing to offer you. Should this be the case, we suggest only that you keep an open mind on the subject. Consider your drinking carefully in the light of what you may learn from these pages. Determine, for yourself, whether or not alcohol has truly become a problem for you. And remember that you will always be most welcome to join the thousands of men and women in A.A. who have put their drinking problems behind them and now lead “normal” lives of constructive, day-by-day sobriety.

Who we are

We in A.A. are men and women who have discovered, and admitted, that we cannot control alcohol. We have learned that we must live without it if we are to avoid disaster for ourselves and those close to us.

With local groups in thousands of communities, we are part of an informal international fellowship, which now has members in more than 180 countries. We have but one primary purpose: to stay sober ourselves and to help others who may turn to us for help in achieving sobriety.

We are not reformers, and we are not allied with any group, cause, or religious denomination. We have no wish to dry up the world. We do not recruit new members, but we do welcome them. We do not impose our experience with problem drinking on others, but we do share it when we are asked to do so.

Within our membership may be found men and women of all ages and many different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Some of us drank for many years before coming to the realization we could not handle alcohol. Others were fortunate enough to appreciate, early in life or in their drinking careers, that alcohol had become unmanageable.

The consequences of our alcoholic drinking have also varied. A few of us had become derelicts before turning to A.A. for help. Some had lost family, possessions, and self-respect. We had been on skid row in many cities. Some of us had been hospitalized or jailed times without number. We had committed grave offenses — against society, our families, our employers, and ourselves.

Others among us have never been jailed or hospitalized. Nor had we lost jobs or families through drinking. But we finally came to a point

where we realized that alcohol was interfering with normal living. When we discovered that we could not live without alcohol, we, too, sought help through A.A.

All the great faiths are represented in our Fellowship, and many religious leaders have encouraged our growth. There are also atheists and agnostics among us. Belief in, or adherence to, a formal creed is not a condition of membership.

We are united by our common problem, alcohol. Meeting and talking and helping other alcoholics, *together* we are somehow able to stay sober and to lose the compulsion to drink, once a dominant force in our lives.

We do not think we are the only people who have the answer to problem drinking. We know that the A.A. program works for us, and we have seen it work for every newcomer, almost without exception, who honestly and sincerely wanted to quit drinking.

Through A.A., we have learned a number of things about alcoholism and about ourselves. We try to keep these facts fresh in our thinking at all times, because they seem to be the key to our sobriety. For us, sobriety must always come first.

What we have learned about alcoholism

The first thing we have learned about alcoholism is that it is one of the oldest problems in history. Only recently have we begun to benefit from new approaches to the problem. Doctors today, for example, know a great deal more about alcoholism than their predecessors did only two generations ago. They are beginning to define the problem and study it in detail.

While there is no formal "A.A. definition" of alcoholism, most of us agree that, for us, it could be described as *a physical compulsion, coupled with a mental obsession*. We mean that we had a distinct physical desire to consume alcohol beyond our capacity to control it, and in defiance of all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for alcohol, but we frequently

yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not know when (or how) to stop drinking. Often, we did not seem to have sense enough to know when not to begin.

As alcoholics, we have learned the hard way that willpower alone, however strong in other respects, was not enough to keep us sober. We have tried laying off for specified periods. We have taken solemn pledges. We have switched brands and beverages. We have tried drinking only during certain hours. But none of our plans worked. We always wound up, sooner or later, by getting drunk when we not only wanted to stay sober, but had every rational incentive for staying sober.

We have gone through stages of dark despair when we were sure that there was something wrong with us mentally. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently, we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could ever help us.

We can smile at those recollections now, but at the time they were grim, unpleasant experiences.

Alcoholism — an illness

Today we are willing to accept the idea that, as far as we are concerned, alcoholism is an illness, a progressive illness which can never be “cured,” but which, like some other illnesses, *can* be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about having an illness, provided we face the problem honestly and try to do something about it. We are perfectly willing to admit that we are allergic to alcohol and that it is simply common sense to stay away from the source of our allergy.

We understand now that once a person has crossed the invisible borderline from heavy drinking to compulsive alcoholic drinking, that person will always remain an alcoholic. So far as we know, there can never be any turning back to “normal” social drinking. “Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic” is a simple fact we have to live with.

We have also learned that there are few alternatives for alcoholics. If they continue to drink, their problem will become progressively worse; they seem assuredly on the path to skid row, to hospitals, to jails or other institutions, or to early graves. The only alternative is to stop drinking completely, to abstain from even the smallest quantity of alcohol in any form. If they are willing to follow this course, and to take advantage of the help available to them, a whole new life can open up for alcoholics.

There were times in our drinking careers when we were convinced that all we had to do to control our drinking was to quit after the second drink, the fifth, or some other number. Only gradually did we come to appreciate that it was not the fifth or the tenth or the twentieth drink that got us drunk; it was the first! The first drink was the one that did the damage. The first drink was the one that started us on our merry-go-rounds. The first drink was the one that set up a chain reaction of alcoholic thinking that led to our uncontrolled drinking.

A.A. has a way of expressing this: "For an alcoholic, one drink is too many and a thousand are not enough."

Another thing that many of us learned during our drinking days was that enforced sobriety was generally not a very pleasant experience. Some of us were able to stay sober, occasionally, for periods of days, weeks, and even years. But we did not enjoy our sobriety. We felt like martyrs. We became irritable, difficult to live and work with. We persisted in looking forward to the time when we might be able to drink again.

Now that we are in A.A., we have a new outlook on sobriety. We enjoy a sense of release, a feeling of freedom from even the desire to drink. Since we cannot expect to drink normally at any time in the future, we concentrate on living a full life without alcohol today. There is not a thing we can do about yesterday. And tomorrow never comes. Today is the only day we have to worry about. And we know from experience that even the "worst" drunks can go twenty-four hours

without a drink. They may need to postpone that next drink to the next hour, even the next minute — but they learn that it *can* be put off for a period of time.

When we first heard about A.A., it seemed miraculous that anyone who had really been an uncontrolled drinker could ever achieve and maintain the kind of sobriety that older A.A. members talked about. Some of us were inclined to think that ours was a special kind of drinking, that our experiences had been “different,” that A.A. might work for others, but that it could do nothing for us. Others among us, who had not yet been hurt seriously by their drinking, reasoned that A.A. might be fine for the skid row drunks, but that they could probably handle the problem by themselves.

Our experience in A.A. has taught us two important things. First, all alcoholics face the same basic problems, whether they are panhandling for the price of a short beer or holding down an executive position in a big corporation. Second, we now appreciate that the A.A. recovery program works for almost *any* alcoholic who honestly wants it to work, no matter what the individual’s background or particular drinking pattern may have been.

We made a decision

All of us now in A.A. had to make one crucial decision before we felt secure in the new program of life without alcohol. We had to face the facts about ourselves and our drinking realistically and honestly. *We had to admit* that we were powerless over alcohol. For some of us, this was the toughest proposition we had ever faced.

We did not know too much about alcoholism. We had our own ideas about the word “alcoholic.” We tied it up with the down-and-out derelict. We thought it surely meant weakness of will, weakness of character. Some of us fought off the step of admitting that we were alcoholics. Others only partially admitted it.

Most of us, however, were relieved when it

was explained to us that alcoholism was an illness. We saw the common sense of doing something about an illness that threatened to destroy us. We quit trying to deceive others — and ourselves — into thinking that we could handle alcohol when all the facts pointed the other way.

We were assured from the beginning that no one could tell us we were alcoholics. The admission had to come from us — not from a doctor or a minister or wife or husband. It had to be based on facts which we ourselves knew. Our friends might understand the nature of our problem, but we were the only ones who could tell for sure whether or not our drinking was out of control.

Frequently we asked: “How can I tell if I am really an alcoholic?” We were told that there were no hard and fast rules for determining alcoholism. We learned that there were, however, certain telltale symptoms. If we got drunk when we had every reason to stay sober, if our drinking had become progressively worse, if we no longer got as much fun from drinking as we once had — these, we learned, were apt to be symptoms of the illness we call alcoholism. Reviewing our drinking experiences and their consequences, most of us were able to discover additional reasons for recognizing the truth about ourselves.

Quite naturally, the prospect of a life without alcohol seemed a dreary one. We feared that our new friends in A.A. would be dull or, worse yet, wild-eyed evangelists. We discovered that they were, instead, human beings like ourselves, but with the special virtue of understanding our problem — sympathetically, without sitting in judgment.

We began to wonder what we had to do to stay sober, what membership in A.A. would cost, and who ran the organization, locally and worldwide. We soon discovered that there are no musts in A.A., that no one is required to follow any formal ritual or pattern of living. We learned also that A.A. has no dues or fees of any kind; expenses of meeting rooms, refreshments, and literature are met by passing the hat. But even contributions of this kind are not a requirement for membership.

It soon became apparent to us that A.A. has only a minimum of organization and has nobody giving orders. Arrangements for meetings are handled by group officers who move on regularly to make room for new people. This “rotation” system is very popular in A.A.

Staying sober

How, then, do we manage to stay sober in such an informal, loosely knit fellowship?

The answer is that, once having achieved sobriety, we try to preserve it by observing and following the successful experience of those who have preceded us in A.A.

Their experience provides certain “tools” and guides which we are free to accept or reject, as we may choose. Because our sobriety is the most important thing in our lives today, we think it wise to follow the patterns suggested by those who have already demonstrated that the A.A. recovery program really works.

The 24-hour plan

For example, we take no pledges, we don't say that we will “never” drink again. Instead, we try to follow what we in A.A. call the “24-hour plan.” We concentrate on keeping sober just the current twenty-four hours. We simply try to get through one day at a time without a drink. If we feel the urge for a drink, we neither yield nor resist. We merely put off taking that particular drink until *tomorrow*.

We try to keep our thinking honest and realistic where alcohol is concerned. If we are tempted to drink — and the temptation usually fades after the first few months in A.A. — we ask ourselves whether the particular drink we have in mind would be worth all the consequences we have experienced from drinking in the past. We bear in mind that we are perfectly free to get drunk, if we want to, that the choice between drinking and not drinking is entirely up to us. Most important of all, we try to face up to the fact that, no matter

how long we may have been dry, we will always be alcoholics — and alcoholics, as far as we know, can never again drink socially or normally.

We follow the experience of the successful “oldtimers” in another respect. We usually keep coming regularly to meetings of the local A.A. group with which we have become affiliated. There is no rule which makes such attendance compulsory. Nor can we always explain why we seem to get a lift out of hearing the personal stories and interpretations of other members. Most of us, however, feel that attendance at meetings and other informal contacts with fellow A.A.s are important factors in the maintenance of our sobriety.

Twelve Steps

Early in our association with A.A. we heard about the “Twelve Steps” of recovery from alcoholism. We learned that these Steps represented an attempt by the first members to record their own progress from uncontrolled drinking to sobriety. We discovered that a key factor in this progress seemed to be humility, coupled with reliance upon a Power greater than ourselves. While some members prefer to call this Power “God,” we were told that this was purely a matter of personal interpretation; we could conceive of the Power in any terms we thought fit. Since alcohol had obviously been a power greater than ourselves during our drinking days, we had to admit that perhaps we could not run the whole show ourselves and that it made sense to turn elsewhere for help. As we have grown in A.A., our concept of a greater Power has usually become more mature. But it has always been our personal concept; no one has forced it upon us.

Finally, we noted from the Twelfth Step and from the experience of older members, that work with other alcoholics who turned to A.A. for help was an effective way of strengthening our own sobriety. Whenever possible, we tried to do our share, always keeping in mind that the other person was the only one who could determine

whether or not he or she was an alcoholic.

We were also guided by the experience of the many A.A.s who have given new meaning to three time-worn sayings or slogans. “First Things First” is one of the slogans, reminding us that, much as we would like to try, we cannot do everything at once, that we have to remember the prior importance of sobriety in any attempt to rebuild our lives.

“Easy Does It” is another old slogan with new meaning for alcoholics who are frequently guilty of working too feverishly at whatever they are doing. Experience shows that alcoholics should, and can, learn to pace themselves. “Live and Let Live” is the third slogan, a recurring suggestion that alcoholics, no matter how many years of sobriety they have, cannot afford to let themselves become intolerant of others.

A.A. books and pamphlets are also helpful. Soon after we came into A.A., most of us had an opportunity to read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.’s book of experience in which early members first recorded their stories and the principles which they believed had helped them to recover. Many members, sober for years, continue to refer to this and other A.A. books for insight and inspiration. (They are all listed at the end of this pamphlet.) A.A. also publishes an international monthly magazine called the AA Grapevine for newcomers and oldtimers alike.

Because A.A. is essentially a way of life, few of us have ever been able to describe with complete accuracy just how the various elements in the recovery program contribute to our present sobriety. We do not all interpret or live the A.A. program in exactly the same way. We can all testify, however, that A.A. works for us when many other ventures into sobriety have failed. Many members who have been sober for years say that they simply accepted the program “on faith” and do not yet fully understand how A.A. works for them. Meanwhile, they keep trying to pass their faith along to others who still understand all too well the disastrous way in which alcohol works against the alcoholic.

Will A.A. work for everyone?

The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism, we believe, will work for almost anyone who has a desire to stop drinking. It may work even for those who feel they are being prodded in the direction of A.A. Many of us made our first contact with A.A. because of social or job pressures. Later, we made our own decision.

We have seen some alcoholics stumble for a while before “getting” the program. We have seen others who made only token efforts to follow the tested principles through which over a million of us now maintain our sobriety; token efforts are generally not enough.

But, no matter how down-and-out an alcoholic may be, or how high he or she may be on the social and economic scales, we know from experience and observation that A.A. offers a sober way out of the squirrel cage of confused problem drinking. Most of us have found it an easy way.

When we first turned to A.A., many of us had a number of serious problems — problems involving money, family, job, and our own personalities. We soon discovered that our immediate central problem was alcohol. Once we had that problem under control, we were able to make successful approaches to the other problems. Solutions to these problems have not always come easily, but we have been able to cope with them far more effectively when sober than we were able to do during our drinking days.

‘A new dimension’

There was a time when many of us believed that alcohol was the only thing that made life bearable. We could not even dream of a life without drinking. Today, through the A.A. program, we do not feel that we have been *deprived* of anything. Rather, we have been freed and find that a new dimension has been added to our lives. We have new friends, new horizons, and new attitudes. After years of despair and frustration, many of us feel that we have really begun to live for the first time. We enjoy sharing that new life

with anyone who is still suffering from alcoholism, as we once suffered, and who seeks a way out of the darkness and into the light.

Alcoholism is one of the major American health problems. It has been estimated that millions of men and women continue to suffer, perhaps unnecessarily, from this progressive illness. As members of A.A. we welcome the opportunity to share our experience in arresting this illness with anyone who seeks help. We appreciate that nothing we can say will have any real meaning until the alcoholic *personally* is ready to admit as we once did, “Alcohol has me licked, and I want help.”

Where to find A.A.

A.A. help is available without charge or obligation. There are groups of us in many cities, villages, and rural areas throughout the world. Look for “A.A.” or “Alcoholics Anonymous” as listed online or in the community telephone directory. Information about local meetings may often be obtained from doctors and nurses, from the clergy, newspaper people, police officials, and alcoholism facilities that are familiar with our program.

Those who cannot get in touch with a group in their community are invited to write to our world service office: General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 (or visit our website at aa.org). They will put you in touch with the group nearest you. If you live in a remote area and there is no nearby group, they will tell you how a number of “lone” members are staying sober by using A.A. principles and the A.A. program.

Anyone who turns to A.A. can be assured that his or her anonymity will be protected.

If you feel that you may have an alcoholic problem and earnestly want to stop drinking, more than two million of us can testify that A.A. is working for us — and that there is no reason in the world why it should not work for you.

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.

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 nonprofessional, 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.

A.A. PUBLICATIONS Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400; Website: aa.org.

BOOKS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
DAILY REFLECTIONS
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
AS BILL SEES IT
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
'PASS IT ON'

BOOKLETS

LIVING SOBER
CAME TO BELIEVE
A.A. IN PRISON: INMATE TO INMATE

PAMPHLETS

Experience, Strength and Hope:

WOMEN IN A.A.
A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN
YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE
LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.
THE "GOD" WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.
A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES —
AND THEIR SPONSORS
ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY
MEMO TO AN INMATE
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
(An illustrated pamphlet for inmates)

About A.A.:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
IS A.A. FOR ME?
IS A.A. FOR YOU?
A NEWCOMER ASKS
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?
THIS IS A.A.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
THE A.A. GROUP
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX
THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED
HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE WITH PROFESSIONALS
A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP
A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

For Professionals:

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?
MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY ASK ABOUT A.A.
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
A MEMBER'S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

VIDEOS (available on aa.org)

A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
A NEW FREEDOM
CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS

For Professionals:

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

PERIODICALS

AA GRAPEVINE (monthly)
LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish)

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.**

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

For additional information, visit www.aa.org (Information for Professionals) or contact the Cooperation with the Professional Community desk at the General Service Office: cpc@aa.org or 212-870-3400.



Questions & on Answers Sponsorship



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

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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Mail address:
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Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

www.aa.org

Questions & Answers on Sponsorship

Contents

Contents

What Is Sponsorship? 7

For the Person Seeking a Sponsor

How does sponsorship differ from
Twelfth Step calls? 8

How does sponsorship help the
newcomer? 9

How should a sponsor be chosen? 9

Should sponsor and newcomer be
as much alike as possible? 9

Must the newcomer agree with
everything the sponsor says? 10

What if the sponsor is
unavailable when needed? 10

May a newcomer have
more than one sponsor? 10

May a newcomer change sponsors? 11

If a newcomer has received a thorough
course of treatment and indoctrination
in an alcoholism program outside A.A.,
will a sponsor still be needed in A.A.?
Is a special approach needed? 11

Is it ever too late to get a sponsor? 11

For the Person Wanting to Be a Sponsor

How does sponsorship help the sponsor? 12

Can any member be a sponsor? 12

When is a member ready for
sponsorship responsibility? 13

What does a sponsor do and not do? 13

Is there any one best way of
sponsoring a newcomer? 15

How can a sponsor explain the A.A. program?	15
Should a sponsor recommend hospitalization?	16
How can a sponsor work with an alcoholic's family?	17
Should a sponsor lend money to a newcomer?	18
Should a sponsor intercede with an employer?	18
Can a sponsor be too firm?	18
Can a sponsor be overprotective?	19
Can a sponsor be too casual?	19
How can a sponsor handle an overdependent newcomer?	20
How can a sponsor work with a newcomer who rejects help?	21
When newcomers resist "the spiritual side" of the program, what can sponsors do?	21
How should a sponsor deal with slips?	22
Can a member sponsor more than one newcomer simultaneously?	23
 For Groups Planning Sponsorship Activity	
How does sponsorship help a group?	23
What procedures can a group set up to sponsor new members?	23
How may "outside" A.A. groups help groups and members in institutions?	25
 Service Sponsorship	25
 Summary	27
 Twelve Steps	28
 Twelve Traditions	29
 Twelve Concepts	30

What is sponsorship?

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: “You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!”

He found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need A.A. was born. The word “sponsor” was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.

What does A.A. mean by sponsorship? To join some organizations, you must have a sponsor — a person who vouches for you, presents you as being suitable for membership. This is definitely not the case with A.A. Anyone who has a desire to stop drinking is welcome to join us!

In A.A., sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr. Bob did. Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.

When we first begin to attend A.A. meetings, we may feel confused and sick and apprehensive. Although people at meetings respond to our questions willingly, that alone isn’t enough. Many other questions occur to us between meetings; we find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to “live sober.”

So we select an A.A. member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and confidentially, and we ask that person to be our sponsor.

Whether you are a newcomer who is hesitant about “bothering” anyone, or a member who has been around for some time trying to go it alone, sponsorship is yours for the asking. We urge you: *Do not delay*. Alcoholics recovered in A.A. want to share what they have learned with other alcoholics. We know from experience that our own sobriety is greatly strengthened when we give it away!

Sponsorship can also mean the responsibility *the group as a whole* has for helping the newcomer. Today, more and more alcoholics arriving at their first A.A. meeting have had no prior contact with A.A. They have not telephoned a local A.A. intergroup or central office; no member has made a “Twelfth Step call” on them. So, especially for such newcomers, groups are recognizing the need to provide some form of sponsorship help. In many successful groups, sponsorship is one of the most important planned activities of the members.

Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal, but it is a basic part of the A.A. approach to recovery from alcoholism through the Twelve Steps. Sponsorship can be a long-term relationship.

We hope that this pamphlet will provide answers to some of the often-asked questions about the rewarding two-way street called sponsorship — for people who may be seeking sponsors; for A.A. members who want to share their sobriety through sponsorship; and for groups that wish to develop sponsorship activity (see *What procedures can a group set up to sponsor new members?* page 23).

For the person seeking a sponsor

How does sponsorship differ from Twelfth Step calls?

A Twelfth Step call — visiting an alcoholic who has asked for help and talking about the A.A. program with him or her — may become the *beginning* of sponsorship, but by itself it is not necessarily sponsorship.

Sponsorship, with its *continuing* interest

in another alcoholic, often develops when the prospect is willing to be helped, admits having a drinking problem, and decides to seek sobriety as a solution.

Sponsorship is Twelfth Step work, but it is also *continuing responsibility* for helping a newcomer adjust to a way of life without alcohol.

How does sponsorship help the newcomer?

It assures the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation fully and cares — one person to turn to without embarrassment when doubts, questions or problems linked to alcoholism arise. Sponsorship gives the newcomer an understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most. Sponsorship also provides the bridge enabling the new person to meet other alcoholics — in a home group and in other groups visited.

How should a sponsor be chosen?

The process of matching newcomer and sponsor is as informal as everything else in A.A. Often, the new person simply approaches a more experienced member who seems compatible, and asks that member to be a sponsor. Most A.A.s are happy and grateful to receive such a request.

An old A.A. saying suggests, “Stick with the winners.” It’s only reasonable to seek a sharing of experience with a member who seems to be using the A.A. program successfully in everyday life. There are no specific rules, but a good sponsor probably should be a year or more away from the last drink — and should seem to be *enjoying* sobriety.

Should sponsor and newcomer be as much alike as possible?

Often, a newcomer feels most at ease with a sponsor of similar background and interests. However, many A.A.s say they were greatly helped by sponsors totally unlike themselves. Maybe that’s because their attention was then focused on

the *most important* things that any sponsor and newcomer have in common: alcoholism and recovery in A.A.

A.A. experience does suggest that it is best for men to sponsor men, women to sponsor women. This custom usually helps our members stay focused on the A.A. program. Some gay men and lesbians feel an opposite-sex sponsor is more appropriate for similar reasons.

Must the newcomer agree with everything the sponsor says?

No. If the sponsor's ideas sound strange or unclear, the newcomer had better speak up and ask questions. Theirs is supposed to be an easy, open relationship, in which both parties talk freely and honestly with each other.

The A.A. program is simple, but it didn't seem that way to many of us at first. Often, we learned by asking questions, at closed meetings or — most especially — in conversations with our sponsors.

What if the sponsor is unavailable when needed?

It is the whole A.A. program — not the individual's sponsor — that maintains the newcomer's sobriety. Sponsorship is just the best way we know of introducing a newcomer to the program and helping them continue in A.A.

So we have many recourses when we are unable to contact our sponsors. We can telephone other members; go to an A.A. meeting; phone or visit the nearest A.A. office or clubroom for sober alcoholics; or read A.A. books or pamphlets or our magazine, the A.A. Grapevine, to find answers for almost any problem troubling us at the moment.

May a newcomer have more than one sponsor?

Many feel it is best for a newcomer to have only one sponsor. Choosing one sponsor helps to avoid the precarious practice of a newcomer going from sponsor to sponsor seeking the advice he or she wants to hear.

May a newcomer change sponsors?

We are always free to select another sponsor with whom we feel more comfortable, particularly if we believe this member will be more helpful to our growth in A.A.

If a newcomer has received a thorough course of treatment and indoctrination in an alcoholism program outside A.A., will a sponsor still be needed in A.A.?

Is a special approach needed?

The alcoholism programs of government, industry, and other agencies are referring more and more alcoholics to A.A. These newcomers usually reach us in a physically dry condition, at a somewhat later stage in recovery than the shaking newcomer of the past. Detoxification is often weeks and even months in the past and the physical compulsion to drink is gone. But the mental obsession with alcohol may still be there, and, as A.A. groups that have welcomed such newcomers generally believe, sponsorship is necessary as soon as possible to help overcome that obsession.

This newcomer may have learned many medical facts about the disease of alcoholism. But learning about alcoholism in an institutional setting is one thing, and functioning as a sober alcoholic in a drinking world is quite another, we find. The sponsor is ready to share experience in how to cope with this situation. The sponsor's personal experience can enable the newcomer to find guidance in applying A.A. principles to everyday life — just as any other newcomer does who arrives at A.A.'s doors for help.

Is it ever too late to get a sponsor?

No. An A.A. who has been in — or “around” the Fellowship for many years often finds that getting a good sponsor, talking frankly, and listening can make the whole program open up as it never did before. Most A.A.s feel that sponsorship is a vital part of their ongoing growth and progress in recovery, including persons who have long-term sobriety.

Sponsorship can be the answer for the person who has been able to achieve only interludes of sobriety or who has attended meetings casually and has not really taken the First Step. For such a person, a sponsor with a firm grounding of sobriety in A.A. can make all the difference.

Even if we have many dry years behind us, we can often benefit by asking an A.A. friend to be our sponsor. We may have been feeling discontentment or real emotional pain because we forgot that the A.A. program offers a whole new way of life, not just freedom from alcohol. With a sponsor's help, we can use the program to the full, change our attitudes, and, in the process, come to enjoy our sobriety.

For the person wanting to be a sponsor

How does sponsorship help the sponsor?

Sponsorship strengthens the older member's sobriety. The act of sharing sobriety makes it easier for a member to live without alcohol. By helping others, alcoholics find that they help themselves.

Sponsorship also offers the satisfaction that comes from assuming responsibility for someone other than oneself. In a very real sense, it fills the need, felt by most human beings, to help others over rough spots.

Can any member be a sponsor?

There is no superior class or caste of sponsors in A.A. Any member can help the newcomer learn to cope with life without resorting to alcohol in any form.

In most instances, A.A. custom does suggest one limitation, already noted on page 10: If the group is large enough to allow a choice, sponsor and newcomer be of the same sex. The reasons are the same from both viewpoints; we A.A. members, no matter how long we have been sober, remain thoroughly human, subject to emotions that might divert us from "our primary purpose."

When is a member ready for sponsorship responsibility?

Our primary purpose is to carry the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers. A.A. members who have actually worked the Steps of A.A. as a way to attain sobriety are often in the best position to share their experience, strength and hope. The most successful sponsors seem to be men and women who have been in A.A. long enough to have a good understanding of the A.A. program outlined in the Twelve Steps. Many of us think it wise to seek advice from our own sponsors about when we may be ready to take on the responsibility of sponsoring another alcoholic.

The member who has been sober for months or years is usually — but not always — able to work more effectively with newcomers than the members whose experience is limited to only a few weeks or days. Thus, length of sobriety is a factor, but not the only factor, in successful sponsorship. Just as importantly, the sponsor should have capacity for understanding, patience, and the willingness to devote time and effort to new members.

What does a sponsor do and not do?

- A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of personal experience and knowledge, to help the newcomer get sober and stay sober through the A.A. program.
- Shows by present example and drinking history what A.A. has meant in the sponsor's life.
- Encourages and helps the newcomer to attend a variety of A.A. meetings — to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the A.A. program.
- Suggests keeping an open mind about A.A. if the newcomer isn't sure at first whether he or she is an alcoholic.
- Introduces the newcomer to other members.
- Sees that the newcomer is aware of A.A. literature, in particular the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Grapevine, *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober* and suitable pamphlets.
- Is available to the newcomer when the latter has special problems.

- Goes over the meaning of the Twelve Steps, and emphasizes their importance.
- Urges the newcomer to join in group activities as soon as possible.
- Impresses upon the newcomer the importance of all our Traditions.
- Emphasizes the relevance and spiritual value of anonymity, both on a person-to-person basis, as well as at the public level, including social media. (For more information see the pamphlet, “Understanding Anonymity.”)
- Tries to give the newcomer some picture of the scope of A.A., beyond the group, and directs attention to A.A. literature about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of A.A. — wherever the newcomer may go.
- Explains the program to relatives of the alcoholic, if this appears to be useful, and tells them about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen.
- Quickly admits, “I don’t know” when that is the case, and helps the newcomer find a good source of information.
- The sponsor encourages the newcomer to work with other alcoholics as soon as possible, and sometimes begins by taking the newcomer along on Twelfth Step calls.
- Never takes the newcomer’s inventory except when asked.
- Never tries to impose personal views on the newcomer. A good sponsor who is an atheist does not try to persuade a religious newcomer to abandon faith, nor does a religious sponsor argue theological matters with an agnostic newcomer.
- Does not pretend to know all the answers, and does not keep up a pretense of being right all the time.
- An A.A. sponsor does not offer professional services such as those provided by counselors, the legal, medical or social work communities, but may sometimes help the newcomer to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of A.A. is needed.

The sponsor underscores the fact that it is the A.A. recovery program — not the sponsor’s per-

sonality or position — that is important. Thus, the newcomer learns to rely on the A.A. program, not on the sponsor. A sponsor well-grounded in the A.A. program will not be offended if the newcomer goes to other A.A. members for additional guidance or even decides to change sponsors.

Is there any one best way of sponsoring a newcomer?

The answer is no. All members are free to approach sponsorship as their own individual experiences and personalities may suggest. Some sponsors adopt a more or less brusque, “Take it or leave it” approach in dealing with newcomers. Others exhibit extreme patience and great personal interest in the people they sponsor. Still others are somewhat casual, content to let the new person take the initiative in asking questions or seeking help in special situations.

Each approach is sometimes successful and sometimes fails. The sponsor has to decide which to try in a particular case. The experienced sponsor recognizes the importance of flexibility in working with newcomers, does not rely on a single approach, and may try a number of different approaches with the same person.

How can a sponsor explain the A.A. program?

Sponsors will want to explain A.A. in the manner that each finds most natural and most likely to be clear to the newcomer at hand.

Some sponsors find that reminding the newcomer of the First Step — that they are powerless over alcohol and that their lives had become unmanageable — is key to a successful recovery. Many sponsors make it a point to emphasize that together they can do what they could not do alone — stay away from the first drink.

These sponsors remind the newcomer that A.A. offers a *practical* program, and that it has already helped more than two million men and women. They suggest the need for open-mindedness in facing alcoholism as a personal problem, and they underscore the fact that it is up to the newcomer alone to decide whether he or she is an

alcoholic and whether A.A. can help.

Nearly all members who work with newcomers look upon the A.A. program in terms of their own experience. They tell the new person that no one speaks for A.A. and that every member is perfectly free to arrive at an individual understanding of the program.

Some sponsors talk about the program in a more spiritual way than others do. But nearly all call attention to the source of strength to be found in “a Power greater than ourselves.” Again, the sponsor points out, it is up to the newcomer to determine what that A.A. phrase means. It expresses an idea that people of many faiths — or of no particular faith — can and do accept with complete harmony.

Many sponsors discuss the significance of anonymity at a personal level and public level early on. Anonymity at a personal level provides protection for all members from the identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers. At the public level of press, radio, films, and other media technologies, such as the internet, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain. The sponsor is quick to point out the benefit of anonymity at this public level. Sponsors may provide examples from their own experience of maintaining public anonymity.

Should a sponsor recommend hospitalization?

The important thing to remember is that hospitalization is not part of the A.A. program and that a doctor, not a sponsor, is the person who should say whether it is required. Experienced sponsors are careful not to set themselves up as substitutes for doctors in dealing with any phase of alcoholism.

An A.A. oldtimer offers this reminder: Hospitalization or other professional care given to a newcomer “does not in any way lessen the responsibility of the A.A. member to carry the message in the best way possible, and to furnish

good sponsorship. It is not good A.A. simply to dump an alcoholic into the lap of others because we do not have enough time, or because the alcoholic is troublesome and demanding. Most of us recall with gratitude the enduring patience and great kindness older members showed us when we were new ourselves.”

How can a sponsor work with an alcoholic's family?

The sponsor can explain the A.A. program to a spouse, partner or relative, and point out that most members have found it easier to live a life without alcohol when their relatives took an interest in A.A., became familiar with A.A. literature, and attended open meetings of a local group.

In general, the sponsor can help the alcoholic's family give the newcomer every chance to make good in A.A. and can urge the family not to expect too much, too soon, from the recovering alcoholic.

In some cases, family relationships have slipped seriously as a result of the alcoholic's behavior while drinking. The sponsor should not act like a professional counselor in such situations. However, many threatened relationships have been saved once the primary problem of alcoholism has been brought under control, and the sponsor can point this out.

The sponsor will also want the family to know about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen, made up of relatives and friends of alcoholics — alcoholics who may or may not be in A.A.

The Al-Anon program parallels A.A.'s but Al-Anon is an entirely separate fellowship. It helps relatives of problem drinkers to understand the illness and its effect on family life. In Alateen — a part of Al-Anon — teenagers who have alcoholic parents share their own experiences. Local groups of Al-Anon and Alateen meet regularly in many communities, where an Al-Anon listing often appears in the phone book.

Al-Anon literature and meeting information may be requested by writing to 1600 Corporate Landing Pkwy., Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617, or at al-anon.alateen.org.

Should a sponsor lend money to a newcomer?

This is, of course, a matter of individual judgment and decision. Involved in it is the basic fact that A.A. has a single purpose: to help alcoholics with their drinking problem. A.A. is not a philanthropic or job-finding society.

Money, or the lack of it, has never been a key factor in an individual's ability to get sober in A.A.

The sponsor who lends money to a newcomer does so at risk and may even be slowing down the new person's progress toward sobriety. The newcomer who turns to A.A. for money, clothes, or assurance of employment is coming to the wrong place for the wrong thing. A.A. has something far more important to offer: sobriety.

Professional agencies can furnish other kinds of help if any are needed. But many alcoholics *when sober* can solve their own domestic, vocational, or legal problems.

Should a sponsor intercede with an employer?

By the time an alcoholic turns to A.A., he or she may already have lost a job or be in danger of losing one. If there is a job, it may involve working for an employer who is uninformed about problem drinkers and knows little or nothing of A.A.

Whether or not a sponsor should intercede to preserve another alcoholic's job depends upon the individual circumstances of each case. A surprising number of employers, anxious to restore competent employees to maximum efficiency, welcome the news that a worker has turned to A.A., and are interested in knowing more about the recovery program.

An informative pamphlet, "Is There a Problem Drinker in the Workplace?," has been prepared to acquaint employers with the help that A.A. can offer.

Can a sponsor be too firm?

Some sponsors believe in being fairly blunt with a newcomer. They describe the A.A. program as they understand it. They explain what A.A.

has meant to them. They point out that there is no known *cure* for alcoholism, but that it *can be arrested*.

Having done these things, they leave the next move up to the newcomer. If the still-drinking alcoholic does not reach a decision immediately to join A.A., this sponsor believes in letting the situation alone.

This approach is not totally unsympathetic. Many alcoholics respect it and recognize it as an attempt to be completely factual about A.A., to avoid emotion.

The A.A. program is based on certain tested principles, which a newcomer may disregard only at risk. Firm sponsorship emphasizes this and usually works well in convincing the newcomer. Most A.A.s, however, recognize that firmness overdone can upset a newcomer. It should be tempered with sympathy and understanding.

Can a sponsor be overprotective?

In their enthusiasm to help a newcomer achieve sobriety, some sponsors may tend to be overprotective. They worry unduly about the persons they sponsor and tend to smother them with attention. In doing so, they may run the risk of having a newcomer depend on an individual member, rather than on the A.A. program. The most effective sponsors recognize that alcoholics who join A.A. must eventually stand on their own feet and make their own decisions — and that there is a difference between helping people to their feet and insisting on holding them up thereafter.

Another danger of overprotectiveness is that it may annoy the newcomer to the point of resenting the attempts to help — and expressing that resentment by turning away from A.A.

Can a sponsor be too casual?

Some sponsors prefer to adopt a casual attitude toward newcomers with whom they work. For example, they are perfectly willing to spend time with the new member who asks for it, but rarely

take the time or trouble to call between meetings or help the newcomer get to meetings.

Some newcomers actually flourish best left pretty much on their own. But there may be some danger in this approach: A timid or reserved newcomer may conclude that the group and the individual sponsor are not interested in helping.

Many present members report that they did not make a firm decision to adopt the A.A. program until months or years after their first contact with A.A., simply because they were allowed to drift away from the group. A growing number of groups try to avoid this by establishing a program for following up with newcomers during a period of weeks or months after an initial approach is made to the group (see pages 23-24).

How can a sponsor handle an overdependent newcomer?

In the first days of sobriety, a newcomer is sometimes so bewildered and frightened — or so mentally fuzzy and physically weak — that he or she needs to be taken to each meeting and perhaps helped in making personal decisions. But such utter dependence on the sponsor, when carried past the earliest stages of recovery, often becomes damaging to both parties. It has already been pointed out that we stay sober through reliance on the A.A. program, not on any one member, so the newcomer's chances in this situation may not be very good. And the sponsor may either feel harried by constant, unreasonable demands, or feel flattered and let the ego build up dangerously.

How can this dilemma be solved without leaving the newcomer disheartened? Many A.A.s, when first asked to sponsor, will have met with the newcomer and reviewed this pamphlet in an effort to avoid pitfalls. Most likely, the sponsor and newcomer will have discussed their commitments and agreed-upon expectations early in the relationship. The sponsor will also have encouraged the newcomer to talk to other A.A. members with longer-term sobriety. Now might be the time for a heartfelt talk in which the sponsor again

explains the importance of relying on the entire A.A. program, as well as their concern regarding the overdependence of the newcomer. If this conversation fails to provide a solution, the sponsor may offer to remain as a temporary sponsor until the newcomer can find a sponsor they feel more comfortable with.

How can a sponsor work with a newcomer who rejects help?

In such cases, there is little a sponsor can do except assure the newcomer of willingness to help, when and if needed. Occasionally, it may be wise to introduce the newcomer to an A.A. member who shares more of the newcomer's background and interests. Sponsorship is a flexible venture, and good sponsors are themselves flexible in working with new people. It is just as much a mistake to thrust unwanted help upon a newcomer as it is to refuse help when a newcomer asks for it.

When newcomers resist "the spiritual side" of the program, what can sponsors do?

First of all, we can relax and remember that sponsorship does not mean forcing any specific interpretation of A.A. upon newcomers. Most men and women who have been in A.A. for more than a few months recognize that its program is based on spiritual principles. At the same time, they appreciate that alcoholics have been able to achieve and maintain sobriety without any belief in a personal Higher Power.

Perhaps the sponsor might point out the distinction between the words "spiritual" and "religious." As our Preamble says, A.A. is not allied with any sect or denomination, and no sort of religious belief is required for membership — only "a desire to stop drinking." On the other hand, the help offered by our program is certainly neither material nor physical; we do not offer money or medicine — only ideas and the A.A. love of one alcoholic for another. In this sense, the entire program, rather than just a "side" of it, may be called

“spiritual,” and almost any newcomer can appreciate a concept so broadly defined.

How should a sponsor deal with slips?

It can be most discouraging to work with a newcomer who gets sober for a period, then has a relapse, or slip, and starts drinking again. This can be a delicate, difficult time for both the sponsor and the newcomer. The sponsor may be tempted to consider the newcomer ungrateful or even to give up. Here, we sponsors need to look carefully into our own attitudes, to steer a middle course between harsh criticism that would only build up the newcomer’s remorse, and maudlin sympathizing that would add to self-pity.

The newcomer, of course, may be even more discouraged and bewildered, and may find it extremely difficult to return to the sponsor and the group for a fresh start. (For this reason, many sponsors believe it important to take the initiative and call the newcomer.) In order to make the return truly a new beginning, it may be wise at this point to avoid postmortems on the reasons for the slip. Instead, the sponsor can help guide the newcomer back to the simplicity of the First Step and the prime importance of staying away from the first drink just for the day at hand.

Later, the newcomer may want to check the kind of thinking that possibly led to the slip, in order to guard against its recurrence. Here, the sponsor’s role depends completely on the two people involved. If the sponsor was aware of the danger signals beforehand, one newcomer may say, “If only you had told me!” but another may rebel at the idea of having been “watched.”

Regarded realistically, the slip can become a learning experience for both the person sponsored and the sponsor. For the sponsor, it may serve as a push toward humility, a reminder that one person cannot keep another person sober and that the Twelfth Step says, “...we tried to carry this message....”

Most good sponsors emphasize that people who have slipped continue to be welcome in A.A. Successful sponsorship activity depends to a large degree on the understanding and love that the

individual and group offer to a newcomer who may have one or more slips despite sincere efforts to achieve sobriety.

Can a member sponsor more than one newcomer simultaneously?

A.A. members differ in their enthusiasm for sponsorship work, in their ability to handle it effectively, and in the time they can give. Members who are willing and able to sponsor several newcomers simultaneously should certainly not be discouraged. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that sponsorship is, in a sense, a privilege to be shared by as many members as possible and an activity that helps all members to strengthen their sobriety.

Further, members who do too much sponsorship work may get exaggerated ideas about their abilities, may even risk their own sobriety. As in so many phases of A.A., common sense is the best guide.

For groups planning sponsorship activity

How does sponsorship help a group?

The primary purpose of an A.A. group is to carry the message of the recovery program to alcoholics who want and ask for help. Group meetings are one way of doing this. Sponsorship is another.

In some groups, the idea of sponsorship is broadened to include working with alcoholics in nearby institutions and, through correspondence, with isolated Lone Members, Internationalists (seagoing A.A.s) and Homers.

Active sponsorship programs within a group remind all members of the group's primary purpose. They serve to unite a group, keep it mindful of First Things First.

What procedures can a group set up to sponsor new members?

Carefully planned sponsorship activity within a group is often likely to produce better results than sponsorship left to chance.

A typical pattern of planned sponsorship within a local group might include the following:

- A regular *committee on sponsorship* or a *Twelfth Step committee*, with members rotating frequently. If there is an intergroup or central office that keeps a list of local groups and the members available for Twelfth Step calls, such a committee may check to see whether the group has enough of its members on the office list to fulfill its responsibility.
- Regular *beginners meetings* (also called *newcomers meetings*) — particularly in larger communities where there are many newcomers. A Guide for Leading Beginners Meetings may be ordered from G.S.O.
- Regular *assignment of members to greet newcomers* at meetings and introduce them around. In large groups, people on a hospitality committee may wear badges for the benefit of the newcomer. In smaller groups, the secretary may, during the announcements, simply ask newcomers to come up and make themselves known after the meeting, so they may be introduced to other members.
- Another *suggested announcement*. “If any person here does not have a sponsor and wants one, please see the secretary, who will arrange a temporary sponsor.” Where this practice is followed at each meeting, members say, it reminds the group of the value of sponsoring and being sponsored.
- *Closed-meeting* discussions of sponsorship problems and opportunities. Some groups schedule meetings especially for this purpose.
- *Table display* of Conference-approved A.A. literature on recovery (including this pamphlet).
- *Study of Chapter 7* in the Big Book (“Working With Others”).
- Regular procedure (carried out by the secretary or the sponsorship committee) for *welcoming newcomers who have just left institutions*, treatment centers, or halfway houses. For instance, the secretary may receive word from the secretary of a prison group that a newly released person is about to attend a meeting, and the “outside” group is then alerted to the arrival of this newcomer. If it is feasible, a member of the group may even offer to meet the person immediately upon release.

How may “outside” A.A. groups help groups and members in institutions?

This subject is fully covered in the pamphlets “A.A. in Correctional Facilities” and “A.A. in Treatment Settings.” Also see Guidelines on Corrections Committees and Guidelines on Treatment Facilities Committees, Treatment Facilities Workbook and Corrections Workbook, all available from G.S.O.

Service Sponsorship

“...A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.” — *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

Sponsorship in A.A. is basically the same, whether helping another individual’s recovery or service to a group. It can be defined as one alcoholic who has made some progress in recovery and/or performance in service, sharing this experience with another alcoholic who is just starting the journey. Both types of service spring from the spiritual aspects of the program.

Individuals may feel that they have more to offer in one area than in another. It is the service sponsor’s responsibility to present the various aspects of service: setting up a meeting; working on committees; participating in conferences, etc. In this matter it is important for the service sponsor to help individuals understand the distinction between serving the needs of the Fellowship and meeting the personal needs of another group member.

A service sponsor is usually someone who is knowledgeable in A.A. history and has a strong background in the service structure. The A.A. member is introduced to a new language: G.S.R., D.C.M., area assembly, minority opinion. They will become familiar with the Traditions, Concepts and Warranties, as well as *The A.A. Service*

Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age and other A.A. literature.

The service sponsor begins by encouraging the member to become active in their home group — coffee, literature, cleanup, attending business or intergroup meetings, etc. The service sponsor should keep in mind that all members will not have the desire or qualifications to move beyond certain levels and, thus, the service sponsor might help find tasks appropriate to individuals' skills and interests. Whatever level of service one performs, all are toward the same end — sharing the overall responsibilities of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Eventually, the service sponsor encourages the individual member interested in this form of service to attend district meetings and to read about the history and structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. At this point, the individual beginning this work should begin to understand the responsibilities of service work, as well as feel the satisfaction of yet another form of Twelfth Step work. Such individuals should be encouraged to take an active part in district activities and consider being elected to alternate positions in the district so as to learn about the responsibilities of various jobs in the service structure.

During this process it is important for the individual to continue to learn about the Three Legacies — Recovery, Unity and Service, and to understand that the principle of rotation not only allows them to move on in service, but also gives newer members the privilege of serving. Rotation also allows them to understand that no one should hold on to a position of trust long enough to feel a proprietary interest and thereby discourage newcomers from service.

Co-founder Dr. Bob said, "I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip."

The basis of all sponsorship is to lead by example. Service sponsors can impart to their sponsees the pleasure of involvement in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is best done by stressing the spiritual nature of service work and by pointing out the usefulness of simple footwork and faith.

Now, through knowledge and experience, the newer member is aware that service is our most important product after sobriety. With this knowledge, the individual is able to share their vision with others and ensure the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Summary

Most present members of Alcoholics Anonymous owe their sobriety to the fact that someone else took a special interest in them and was willing to share a great gift with them.

Sponsorship is merely another way of describing the continuing special interest of a seasoned member that can mean so much to a newcomer turning to A.A. for help.

Individuals and groups cannot afford to lose sight of the importance of sponsorship, the importance of taking a special interest in a confused alcoholic who wants to stop drinking. Experience shows clearly that the members getting the most out of the A.A. program, and the groups doing the best job of carrying the A.A. message to still-suffering alcoholics, are those for whom sponsorship is too important to be left to chance.

By these members and groups, sponsorship responsibilities are welcomed and accepted as *opportunities* to enrich personal A.A. experience and to deepen the satisfactions that come from working with others.

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.

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 nonprofessional, 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 CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

I. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

II. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

III. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. — the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives — with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

IV. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

V. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

VII. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

VIII. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

X. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

XII. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

A.A. PUBLICATIONS Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400; Website: aa.org.

BOOKS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
DAILY REFLECTIONS
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
AS BILL SEES IT
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
'PASS IT ON'

BOOKLETS

LIVING SOBER
CAME TO BELIEVE
A.A. IN PRISON: INMATE TO INMATE

PAMPHLETS

Experience, Strength and Hope:

WOMEN IN A.A.
A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN
YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE
LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.
THE "GOD" WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.
A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES —
AND THEIR SPONSORS
ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY
MEMO TO AN INMATE
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
(An illustrated pamphlet for inmates)

About A.A.:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
IS A.A. FOR ME?
IS A.A. FOR YOU?
A NEWCOMER ASKS
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?
THIS IS A.A.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
THE A.A. GROUP
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX
THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED
HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE WITH PROFESSIONALS
A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP
A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

For Professionals:

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?
MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY ASK ABOUT A.A.
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
A MEMBER'S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

VIDEOS (available on aa.org)

A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
A NEW FREEDOM
CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS

For Professionals:

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

PERIODICALS

AA GRAPEVINE (monthly)
LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish)

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.**

