

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 29, NO 6 June 2005

TRUSTING THE SILENCE

Sometimes my faith in a Higher Power slips. I look at the people, places, and things around me and ask, "Is this really what you had in mind for me? Is this what I sobered up for? Is this all there is?" And I sometimes get the silent treatment. That's only fair. My mouth has usually been running overtime, anyway.

Who is God? I don't need to know. I only need to have faith in a power greater than myself. What matters is what works, not my opinion of what works.

It took me years to figure that out, years in which I did mental and emotional battle with other people's conception of God, years in which I managed only to make myself miserable, cringing or scoffing whenever someone mentioned Step Three or Eleven. It took me a while sober to realize that it's a waste of time to take God's inventory.

So I don't pretend to know God well. And I really don't claim to pray respectably. I say the words "Thy will, not mine, be done" as if they were magic, as if they could help me stop yammering so much to have my will done. My prayers are usually brief and to the point. "Help!" is one I use often.

Sometimes in sobriety I've prayed when I needed to meditate. I've yammered at God so much that God can't get a word in edgewise. (What I practice with people, I cannot help but practice with God.) To me, meditation is simply being quiet and listening for a change. It is buttoning up my lip and my mind that yaps even when my mouth is shut.

Meditation is the path by which I cease being caught up in my own mental "garbage in/garbage out" recycling. It is the path by which I walk out of the turmoil, trouble, pain, depression, and frustration that I create in and around me.

Meditation is when I learn to be a child again. Not a noisy brat, but a child of the sort I always admired but rarely was: quiet, serene, loving, trusting, teachable.

To meditate means I have to become willing to sit alone in silence - and endure silence patiently. It means trusting the silence around me for a while, as if it were an answer I had long sought. This is simple but not easy for me to do. I don't meditate to hear God's voice inside me, but merely to allow some space and time for the awareness of something higher than myself to grow more strongly within me.

I began doing meditation when I gave up my childish habit of expecting God to part the Red Sea and save me from myself once again, when I gave up my spoiled-brat routine of expecting God to show me a burning bush to prove that God really does care about me.

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

15th ANNUAL JUNE LAKE KAMPVENTION

June 17 - 19, 2005

June Lake, CA

Info: 13951 Wyandotte St., Van Nuys, CA 91405-2540.

Website: www.junelakekampvention.org

2005 INTERNATIONAL A.A. CONVENTION

June 30 - July 3, 2005

Toronto, Ont

Registration forms are now available

<http://www.aa.org>

13th ANNUAL FOOTHILL ROUNDUP

July 29 - 31, 2005

La Canada - Flintridge, CA

Website: www.foothillroundup.org

54th SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA A.A. CONVENTION

September 30 - October 2, 2005

Riverside, CA

Info: SCAAC Hotline (949) 929-7007

Website: www.aasocal.com

44th ANNUAL HAWAII CONVENTION

October 18 - 25, 2005

Honolulu, HI

Info: (209) 536-1404

2nd ANNUAL SANTA CLARITA VALLEY CONVENTION

October 21 - 23, 2005

Santa Clarita, CA

Website: www.scvaaconvention.com

Registration forms for the events above
can be obtained at the Intergroup Meeting
or at Central Office

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- June 20, 2005 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8pm Business Meeting
7pm Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- July 4, 2005 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- July 4, 2005 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15pm meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- July 4, 2005 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- July 5, 2005 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- July 6, 2005 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- July 6, 2005 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

- July 9, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- July 11, 2005 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30pm Orientation
7:00pm Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Valley Events

15th ANNUAL BIKE-N-FOR-BOOKS

Woodley Park, Van Nuys

Sat. June 25, 2005

**TO FIND OUT WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON
YOU CAN:**

COME TO CENTRAL OFFICE

CALL US AT 818-988-3001

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT

<http://www.sfvaa.org>

Special Events

CENTRAL OFFICE

On July 1, 2005,
the price of most books
published by A.A. World Service
will **increase** by \$1.00 per copy.

The price of the Big Book (all flavors)
will remain unchanged.

Service Opportunities & News

Service Opportunities in the San Fernando Valley

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE -

Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does and does not do. Could always use volunteers, especially young people and Spanish speaking A.A.'s for health fairs and to speak at various schools and businesses. Contact Central Office (818) 988-3001.

HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE -

Carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into hospitals, prisons & treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Meets the third Monday of each month 8:00 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. For more information, contact Central Office at 988-3001.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY INTERGROUP -

Elected Intergroup representatives maintain and develop policies for Central Office, and inform other IG Reps about Alkathons, fund raisers, etc. Meets second Monday, monthly, St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Orientation 6:30pm, Meeting at 7:00pm. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2005 Convention. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except February and March); 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA.

Central Office News

San Fernando Valley Central Office is On the Web

The SFV Central Office website is now available for Internet browsers. On the website, you can find a map to our office in Van Nuys, a listing of upcoming events in the Valley, service organization information and links to other cool A.A. websites. Our meeting schedule is also accessible on the website. Meetings are listed by day, Sunday through Saturday. Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.org>

Do you have an article for the Recovery Times?

Email it to us at: sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting May 9, 2005

Richard W. Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm

Treasurer's Report: See Insert

Service Committee information - see page 2 and 3 of the Recovery Times for more information

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Birthdays: Lloyd - 2 yrs, Scott - 2 yrs, Chris - 5 yrs,
Jennifer - 5 yrs, Kim - 21 yrs, Bob F. - 24 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for April is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting. These minutes are pending approval on June 13, 2005

Next Meeting - June 13, 2005

Prepared and submitted by: Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

June 2005

Katie D.	5 years
Robert H.	5 years
Johnny B.	11 years
Michael P.	23 years
Steve M.	23 years
Diane D.	25 years
Stewart D	25 years
Harley E.	26 years
John C.	32 years

Your Birthday Gift to Central Office

Many A.A. members share their birthdays with those who need the same help and opportunity that A.A. gave to them.

By sending a donation to Central Office you share your birthday with Recovery Times readers. Send a dollar (\$1.00) a year - or \$1.00 for each year of your sobriety - or send as much as you wish to give to celebrate your birthday. The amount doesn't matter - it's the "counting" that counts.

May your special day be filled with joy from morning until night, and may the "24's" that lie ahead be especially glad and bright.

POSITIVE POINTS TO PONDER . . .

Maybe God wanted us to meet the wrong people before meeting the right one so that when we finally meet the right person, we will know how to be grateful for that gift. Maybe when the door of happiness closes, another opens, but oftentimes we look so long at the closed door that we don't see the one which has been opened for us.

Maybe the best kind of friend is the kind you can sit on a porch and swing with, never say a word, and then walk away feeling like it was the best conversation you've ever had.

Maybe it is true that we don't know what we have got until we lose it, but it is also true that we don't know what we have been missing until it arrives.

Giving someone all your love is never an assurance that they will love you back. Don't expect love in return; just wait for it to grow in their heart; but if it does not, be content it grew in yours.

It takes only a minute to get a crush on someone, an hour to like someone, and a day to love someone, but it takes a lifetime to forget someone.

Don't go for looks; they can deceive. Don't go for wealth; even that fades away. Go for someone who makes you smile because it takes only a smile to make a dark day seem bright. Find the one that makes your heart smile.

There are moments in life when you miss someone so much that you just want to pick them from your dreams and hug them for real.

Dream what you want to dream; go where you want to go; be what you want to be, because you have only one life and one chance to do all the things you want to do.

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, enough hope to make you happy.

Always put yourself in others' shoes. If you feel that it hurts you, it probably hurts the other person, too.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

Happiness lies for those who cry, those who hurt, those who have searched, and those who have tried, for only they can appreciate the importance of people who have touched their lives.

Love begins with a smile, grows with a kiss and ends with a tear. The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past, you can't go on well in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches.

When you were born, you were crying and everyone around you was smiling. Live your life so that when you die, you are the one who is smiling and everyone around you is crying.

Anonymous

HOW DO YOU TALK ABOUT BEING HUMBLE?

I've been in meetings where the topic has been humility and have thought, "How do you talk about being humble?" One time I chuckled at this question and was called on to share. Honestly I didn't know what it meant, but I've looked it up and read "not proud or haughty; not arrogant or assertive," which is the exact opposite of my natural disposition. My higher power must have been working through me that night because I shared in a way that also is against my nature. I didn't talk exclusively about me!

Instead I talked about doing things for others which is not something that I do naturally unless I know I'm going to get a return on my investment. Because of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous I've learned that giving to someone else can be its own reward. The best return I've ever gotten from investing my time and money into something big was a smile and a thank you.

That night it was amazing to sit with my two best friends listening to that person talk about how grateful she was to have six months sober. Everyone could see the light in those eyes and how the future looked so promising for that person. I'll never forget that night no matter what happens to any of us. I'm grateful that I listened to my sponsor and passed it on like I was told to.

I passed on the message because people told me that it would keep me sober. So really I was being selfish while working with that person and I still don't know if it was a humble act. Most of what I said came from the Big Book, Twelve and Twelve, meetings, and of course my sponsor and friend. The amazing thing about how this works is that I learn as much from working with others as I do when working with my sponsor and I'll never stop learning.

Please read the following from A.A. Comes of Age, page 287, which talks about humility in a way that I could understand and I hope passing it on here might help you.

"At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to, or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances. We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it.

"Were these sacrifices? Yes, they were. To gain enough humility and self-respect to stay alive at all, we had to give up what had really been our dearest possessions — our ambition and our illegitimate pride."

Anonymous, via The Coordinator, *San Diego*



Co-founder Quotes

Community Problem

The answer to the problem of alcoholism seems to be in education—education in schoolrooms, in medical colleges, among clergymen and employers, in families, and in the public at large. From cradle to grave, the drunk and the potential alcoholic will have to be completely surrounded by a true and deep

understanding and by a continuous barrage of information.

This means factual education, properly presented. Heretofore, much of this education has attacked the immorality of drinking rather than the illness of alcoholism.

Now who is going to do all this education? Obviously, it is both a community job and a job for specialists. Individually, we A.A.'s can help, but A.A. as such cannot, and should not, get directly into this field. Therefore, we must rely on other agencies, on outside friends and their willingness to supply great amounts of money and effort.

Grapevine, March 1958

ONE ALCOHOLIC'S STORY

My name is Ken. I'm a recovering alcoholic. Recently I had an experience which I believe speaks to the awesomeness of what sobriety in A.A. is all about.

My sobriety date is 10-31-88, but I've been in custody since 2-16-90. I've lost my character, morals, ability to reason, ability to care, etc. to the disease of alcoholism.

The journey to restoration has been long, at times difficult, but most of all it has been guided by God as I understand Him.

Anyhow, I was making an in-custody trip to the local court to testify in a matter not my own. Chained wrists to waist, and at the ankles, I entered the holding area, and then was additionally chained to a bench outside the attorney visiting booths.

Secured to the adjoining bench, at the far end of it, was a woman in "street clothes." I assumed that she had been taken into custody from a courtroom upstairs.

At first I said nothing. However, after a few audible sobs escaped from her, I looked over and simply said, "I know that this sucks, but you don't have to keep living this way."

She responded with "I can't believe I am doing this to my kids again."

I asked her, "Dope and Booze?"

She said, "Yeah."

I then intuited why I was chained to that particular bench and not inside a holding cell as I had been all the previous times. I was there to carry the A.A. message to a still suffering alcoholic.

So, I said, "There is help available if you want it."

She said she'd been sober for a couple of years, but had relapsed. Her husband was practicing the disease. So I shared how I had not stayed sober or done what it took to grow in A.A. my first time either. I also shared that every time I returned to A.A., my bottom was lower.

What I know today is that when my bottom is deep enough, I simply can choose to stop digging. I do that by going to A.A. meetings and asking for help, then following directions.

I then said, "I hope you won't mind me saying this. But, there is a woman in recovery that I admire greatly. She tells newcomer women to go to meetings, find women with some sobriety time and stay close to them."

The woman said, "Yes, I really have to make some changes."

I then said, "Maybe it is just the choice of words, but I needed to surrender long, long before I chose to surrender. As a result I have been in custody almost 8 years beyond my prison term. You see, I am detained under the SVP law."

I told her, "It's the Sexually Violent Predator Act. The wreckage of my past includes sex crimes against females. I'm coming up on my 16th sober anniversary and I don't know when or if I'll ever get released. I do know that because I'm sober and really apply myself to the A.A. program, I'm fit for society today. I never felt that way in active alcoholism. So, please give yourself a break. Make the choice now and act on it. I'm proof that the bottom and its consequences can be far worse than the alcoholic brain can comprehend."

About then, law enforcement officers came to transport her to jail.

As she left I simply said, "Good luck and God bless."

After she'd gone, I took a moment to thank God. I hadn't asked her name... I wasn't trying to get anything, I was trying to give. I simply was sharing the AA message with a fellow human being. Yet, it was special for me, even though I never went to court that day and was returned to prison.

You see, I can never undo what I did to women. This was, at least, a chance for me to make indirect amends to one of them. This is a small glimpse of what A.A. is doing in my life today. The trudge is a gift today.

TRUSTING THE SILENCE (cont'd)

Practicing meditation means I open up for spiritual contact before disaster strikes, before even the need for prayer becomes desperately obvious. It's the brand of spiritual contact with God that I practice early enough in the day that I have nothing to tell God and nothing to ask God about in Prayer.

Meditation is the only time when I can be absolutely sure that I am not running on self-will.

In the beginning, while admitting I didn't know the first thing about how to meditate, I turned my ignorance into a major case of self-confusion by reading various books on meditation and trying to follow all the guidelines they presented.

Then simplicity mercifully struck. I found I didn't need to learn how to meditate before meditating. It turned out to be one of those learn-as-you-go things, just as learning how to stay sober is part of staying sober a day at a time. Meditation is something like showing up on a new job I don't know how to do, only to find out that by merely showing up on a regular basis and doing what is placed before me, I'm automatically doing what at first I didn't know how to do and was sure I could never do.

When I practice listening in AA meetings, I am learning something I can use in private meditation practice. It took me awhile to learn how to really listen to others in AA, to have my mind solely on what the speaker was saying, instead of hearing only the part that plugged me into my own preferred thinking. What I do in meetings is called listening. When I listen along with God, it is called meditating. When I can listen completely to what you have to say without having to change or criticize it to meet my expectations, then I have a better chance of being able to do the same thing with God the next time I pray or meditate.

Whatever I learn during meditation applies to me in my life, not necessarily to anyone else. The messages are usually what I need to hear at a particular time, whether I agree or not. For example:

Help yourself by helping someone else first.

When in doubt, be silent.

Grow where you are planted.

The Best of the Grapevine, pp 216-219 by Anonymous

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*San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91405*

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