

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 31, NO. 2

FEB 2007

## To Drink, or Not to Drink...

BEING A NEWCOMER to Alcoholics Anonymous, I've often been confused when I hear people say, "I choose not to drink today." When I ask them about this I'm told that one day when I have a little more time in the program I'll understand. "Just keep coming back," they say.

What's so confusing to me is the fact that our Big Book tells me that most alcoholics have "lost the power of choice" when it comes to drinking. My experience proves this to me. Every time I decided that I'd had enough and that this time I was going to quit forever, I would hit one of those "blank spots" and no matter how much I'd wanted to stop, I drank again. I was incapable of stopping the spiral of events. I was doomed.

Sometimes I wish that I could just choose not to drink. If I had this power then I would have quit long ago and not done the things that I did while drinking. Because of my failure to stop drinking my family and I lived through many years of pain and sorrow.

Sometimes I bring this fact to the attention of my elder statesmen and they say, "Yes, but I have found the power to choose. By working the Steps I now have the power to choose whether I drink or not." I myself have often wondered if I have this power. Now that I've been sober for some time, it is tempting for me to think that I too have found enough power to resist the urge to drink. But I must look at my experience to find the truth.

I've always worshipped the God of intellect. I always thought that my "intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end." When I looked at this desire to say that I had now found power, I found in myself a form of denial stronger than the denial I had coming into Alcoholics Anonymous: the denial of the grace of God. My ego had reemerged and taken credit for the work of God.

A friend said, "What you're talking about is semantics. If I can choose to drink today then I can surely choose not to drink."

This reminded me, again, of my experience. After being sober only a few short months I told my wife that I, too, could choose to drink. She said, "Well, if you can just choose to drink then walk right into that store and buy some beer."

I found that I could not bring myself to even purchase the beer much less drink it. God had restored my sanity and I could not choose to drink. I had no more ability to choose to drink than I did not to drink before I came into Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the dictionary choice is defined as the ability to choose between two options. Because God has restored my sanity I know that to drink, for me, is to die and that is not an option. Therefore I still do not have a choice.

I am powerless over alcohol. This means that I can't control the amount I drink once I've started, and I can't stay stopped once I've stopped. This situation leads me to seek a power greater than myself that I hope and pray will continue to do for me what I could never, nor will ever, be able to do for myself.

AA has led me to a power that has saved my life. By completely abandoning myself to this power, through working the Twelve Steps, I've been given the gift of sobriety and the ability to see the truth about my life. For the first time in my life I feel I have a purpose and direction.

Christopher K.  
Lexington, Kentucky

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# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### **PRAASA 2007**

March 2 – 4, 2007  
Portland, OR  
Website: [www.praasa.org](http://www.praasa.org)

### **20th Annual Men's International Conference**

March 29 – April 1, 2007  
Las Vegas, NV  
Website: [www.iaamcvegas.org](http://www.iaamcvegas.org)

### **30th Annual Spring Roundup**

April 5 – 8, 2007  
San Diego, CA  
Website: [www.sandiegospringroundup.com](http://www.sandiegospringroundup.com)

### **23rd Annual Tri-State Round-up**

May 18 – May 20, 2007  
Laughlin, NV  
Info: Debbie A. (928) 681-2217  
Website: [www.tristate-roundup.com](http://www.tristate-roundup.com)

### **A.A. Desert Pow Wow**

June 14 – 17, 2007  
Indian Wells, CA  
Info: SherAli J. (760) 321-6568  
Website: [www.desertpowwow.com](http://www.desertpowwow.com)

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

## Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs  
**telephone volunteers**  
for the Late Evening (9 PM - 12 Midnight) shift  
and the Overnight (12 midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous  
sobriety, you can sign up to do a shift  
(from your home!) once per month and  
help your fellow alcoholics.

*"Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers,  
depend upon our constant thought of others  
and how we may help meet their needs."*

*(Alcoholics Anonymous, top of page 20)*

## Service Committee Schedule

- Feb. 19, 2006 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 5, 2007 **G.S. District #11  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
315 W. Vine St., Glendale  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 5, 2007 **G.S. District #16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6:15PM meeting  
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 5, 2007 **G.S. District #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 6, 2007 **G.S. District #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 7, 2007 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 7, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6PM, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 10, 2007 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Mar. 12, 2007 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30PM Orientation  
7PM Business Meeting  
St. Innocents Church  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

## Valley Events

**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>**

# 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 (Get Acquainted Workshop, 7:00 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 6:30 PM, Meeting at 7:00 PM. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2007 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](mailto:sfvaa@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting January 8, 2007**

Michael F. 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: Dan - 1 yr, Mike - 4 yrs, Laura - 7 yrs.

*Motion to adjourn 7:27 PM*

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes  
for November is available at Central Office or at  
the Intergroup Meeting.*

*These minutes are pending approval on  
February 8, 2007*

*Next Meeting - February 8, 2007*

*Prepared and submitted by:*

*Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

### ***January 2007***

**Xxxx X. XX Years**

**Xxxx X. XX Years**

**Xxxx X. a lot of 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.*

# In All Our Affairs

*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.*

WORDS HAVE A WAY of taking on an entirely new significance when we enter into the new world opened up to us by AA sobriety. We all know how the first apparent clichés of our simple formulas change and become a vital part of our daily life. We discover after a time, for example, that we never really had an inkling of how practically useful “think” is until we accept how very long it has been since we really understood it. “Humility” came, with a bit more sobriety, to take its place as a lovely, living word, a quality of acceptance of our limitations, most devoutly to be searched for; the most desirable member of our family of words—humility.

“Gratitude,” that much abused sister, also altered her face and was transformed into a joyful appreciation of our miraculous recovery. We grew to know that without daily gratitude our personal miracle would lose its lustre, and in time it could cover our shiny new world with a dull-for-granted-taking that would lead us inevitably away from the fellowship and equally inevitably to our most welcoming enemy. We might drink if we became careless with our “gratitude.”

“Pride” by a peculiar shift in syntax became the most active and omnipotent devil of a word, perhaps the most dangerous of all, and yet, while unresolved pride can lead us quickly to the bottle, we are tremendously proud that we are a part of AA.

“Honesty—” I heard an AA friend say at a meeting that he had heard a dictionary definition of honesty given by a rural postman at a country meeting in the middle-west. This old boy was sick of hearing this sensible word kicked around so he had gone to the County Court House and looked it up in “that big old dictionary there.” It was good enough for him, it’s good in any man’s life. “Honesty—is the absence of the intent to deceive.” Only what does “intent” mean?

Now I find that with all my new found confidence in the validity and importance of semantics, I have been retarded and stifled by periodic waves of doubt and despair because of my blindness concerning the meaning of the key word to our entire program.

It occurs with perfect rightness in the Twelfth Step. . . “awakening.”

Some hidden closet in my mind had failed to open. To me spiritual awakening meant an absolute conviction of and close relationship to a God everyone seemed to understand but me. I felt, in this untidy recess of my brain, that, without this revelation of spiritual grace, I couldn’t begin to “carry the message” adequately and, of even greater importance, I was continually unsuccessful in handling “all my affairs.”

I finally looked up the definition of awakening. It means to quicken, to stir, to wake up. It doesn’t say anything about a great white light or an aura of divinity, in my dictionary.

Well, now I know without any more fuss or feathers, that I, like every other member of AA have had a very tangible spiritual awakening. My belief in a Higher Power is as strong as it was when I went to my first AA meeting and accepted the first and second steps as simply and trustfully as a child accepts its mother’s milk. And certainly AA with its never ending procession of miracles, has deepened and made tangible the evidence of the workings of that Higher Power. So what on earth was I looking for? I just don’t know. I guess I wanted a little Tinker Bell all my own to show me the right and only way out of every situation.

In my peculiarly alcoholic way of creating difficulties, I discovered this semantic truth in the most involved way. Recently I was confronted with a work project that should have presented no particular difficulties, and yet it did. I blocked and blocked and couldn’t rationally get around why I was procrastinating, fearful, unable to come to grips with it. I was thinking resentfully that in this year and a half in AA the only departments of my life that had become remotely manageable were my AA activities. I had no feelings of guilty inadequacy after I had been secretary of my group. I met my Grapevine deadlines. I spoke frequently at open and closed meetings. I had done everything requested or required of me without any anxiety as to the perfection of my performances. Why was I having so much difficulty in the other areas of my life?

Quite suddenly and without any warning bells, the simple solution came to me. I had surrendered to only one thing: my alcoholism. I accepted divine and temporal help in everything that had to do with my disease with complete humility but I never had extended this wonderful freedom from pride, resentments, envy and need for perfection and competition, into “all my affairs.”

So it finally came to me in this time of really deep need: I had had no understanding of the meaning of spiritual awakening. And because I accepted all things in AA as natural and just and healthy and good, I was only permitting an unconscious use of my spiritual awakening in AA areas. And I had never brought it out and looked at it before.

Now I hope and pray I can indeed carry to all my affairs the conscious use of surrender and humility and gratitude, employing them with the knowledge that, if I do, my affairs, under God’s direction have a better chance of reaching a daily truth.

H.W.

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# God and Newcomers

*Don't be afraid to talk about God.*

*Yours, that is—not his.*

As I HAVE “24-houred,” “tabled,” read, and found great serenity, I have been bothered by the wariness with which God is used as an AA tool in helping newcomers. I heard a great talk by a thirty-nine-year-old with sixteen beautiful years of sobriety. He made a point of stressing God, asking where else he could have received the help to get to AA. He further asked, “Why do we beat around the bush about God when we talk to newcomers?”

In meditation, it came to me that my own case—matched by countless repetitions of it by others—was that I had been afraid of my Higher Power when I first stumbled into AA. Why? Because I had conned myself for twenty-five years into a belief in myself as a god. To put it another way, I had created a god in my own image and likeness. No wonder I was afraid of God! If that kind of guy were running the big operation, what chance did I have for forgiveness? When had I ever forgiven? What love could He have? I had none.

No matter when my life became unmanageable according to others, I now look at it as unmanageable from the age of sixteen, when I got drunk for the first time. (And it probably had been that way earlier.) So I grew up in many ways, but

my concept of God remained childish at best. Truly, from that time forward, I did create a god in my own alcoholic image, and what shortcomings such a god has!

So, when a newcomer arrives, maybe I shouldn't talk about his god—that might scare him as it did me. But what about God? How could love, wisdom, life frighten anyone? Not to talk of God, to say merely, “Stick around, bud. You'll catch on. Easy Does It”—that is really and truly lying. It is just not the honesty that I claim, or that the Big Book chapter “How It Works” says we should have from the start.

How can I practice “rigorous honesty” if I don't talk about God? What else is there? By not talking about what it really was that brought serenity into our lives, we are denying one of the most basic tenets of the whole AA Fellowship. No wonder there are so many slips—by denying God to the newcomer, we are putting some anthropomorphic god in His place, and the results are nil. Let us give the newcomer a break and be honest with him.

D. W. R.  
Detroit, Michigan

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## Co-founder Quotes

### Emotional Sobriety

If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling liabilities.

Then we can be free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth-Step ourselves, as well as others, into emotional sobriety.

Bill W.

« « « » » »

### Simple In Language, Plain in Meaning

Much has been written, much has been said about the Twelve Steps of AA. These tenets of our faith and practice were not worked out overnight and then presented to our members as an opportunist creed. Born of our early trials and many tribulations, they were and are the result of humble and sincere desire, sought in personal prayer for divine guidance.

As finally expressed and offered, they are simple in language, plain in meaning. They are also workable by any person having a sincere desire to obtain and keep sobriety. The results are the proof. Their simplicity and workability are such that no special interpretations, and certainly no reservations, have ever been necessary.

Dr. Bob

# Open Your Tool Kit

When I entered the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, ending my relationship with King Alcohol, I discovered I had a serious problem. I now had to deal with all the difficulties of the real world, and I had no practical set of tools to get by on a daily basis. The prospect of being happy, joyous, and free was not yet a reality. It appeared, and I accepted, that life without the numbing effects of alcohol was going to be scary and miserable. At least, I wasn't gagging in the morning and peeing in my pants. As difficult as early recovery was for me, it was clear that the tornado of my alcoholism had ended and new damage inflicted on others had stopped.

What I realize now, and what I think is so very important for newcomers to understand, is that the whole world of Alcoholics Anonymous—meaning the Twelve Step program, the fellowship, the service work, and the path to a personal higher power—provides us with a full set of tools that allows us to go through life without finding it necessary to take a drink. Think about that. To be able to get through all of life's realities without finding it necessary to take a drink! Births, deaths, weddings, funerals, getting a job, losing a job, promotions, demotions, hurt feelings, good feelings, going on vacation, staying home sick, making a friend, losing a friend, arguments, nice long talks on the beach, Cubs games, business trips. . . That's a lot of reality for me to feel in its fullest without escaping through artificial numbing. So what are these new tools I was given as a free gift in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous? This is what I've learned.

1. Share your feelings. When things hurt on the inside (fear, frustration, anger, etc.) pick up the phone and call someone and honestly tell them what the problem is. When you're confused and trying to figure something out by yourself for hours or days, do yourself a favor and call someone and ask them for help. If you start to consider the pluses and minuses of taking a drink, act with the same sense of urgency that you would if your house was burning down—i.e., go immediately to a meeting or call anyone in AA, and tell these people what you're thinking. The 911 attitude is called for.

2. Remember, it's progress not perfection. One day I was struggling with something I knew I needed to do but couldn't get the courage to take action on. I beat myself up continually for not doing it and had a miserable day. I called my sponsor, Lenny, and he started telling me about something that he couldn't do that day but was likely he would get to tomorrow. There was acceptance and peace in his voice on this subject and I knew I'd found a powerful tool. Maybe I can't do it today but maybe I'll be able to tomorrow. I'm a human being who's going to make a lot of mistakes; the sooner I realize and accept this, the better my life will become.

3. Make new friends. It became very clear to me, after some pain and learning, that if I'm going to travel this new path of recovery, it will be much easier and more enjoyable if I'm in the company of a bunch of people going down the same road. We need people who understand what we're talking about and who want to live a life that is happy, joyous, and free—and are willing to take the necessary steps to get there. I have to get rid of my old ways and ideas, and it will be much harder if I continue to hang around my old gang. We need to find new friends and do things with them that celebrate our road to freedom.

4. Let go and let God. My friends in my home group taught me to find a friend in God. They said, "you'd better find a relationship with him so when you're alone in some new environment you have someone to talk to—someone who cares about you and whom you can tell your problems to." Here is the big key for me: I do believe there is a God of the universe, all-powerful and loving; the question is, do I trust him? Do I talk about turning everything over to him and then in my thoughts and actions continue to play God myself? Unfortunately for me, I like playing God most of the time. Heck, I've done it for a long time, it feels comfortable. But you know what? Yesterday it became crystal clear to me, God is a much better manager than I am. The sooner I really turn things over, the sooner I will receive serenity. Powerful tool!

5. Help somebody. Really, anyone will do. In my old life I was convinced that the more I did for myself, the happier I would be. Wrong! Selfishness and self-centeredness are the root of my problem. The words from the Big Book sink deep into my heart: the cure for the problem is to help others. I particularly find it useful when I spend time with a new member of AA, especially one who is crying from the pain. Humility and gratitude seep in and all my "big problems" shrink in a matter of minutes. It's really interesting, isn't it? Help others and you help yourself. One day I was going to work and a lady was having a hard time getting her kids through a revolving door. As always, I was in a hurry. But I stopped and helped her and she gave me a smile and said, "Thank you very much." I keep thinking that this twenty-second action was the most important thing I did that day, maybe that week. When you are into yourself, your problems and your world, pull this one out of your tool bag. It's a beauty.

As we walk down the road of recovery, we will undoubtedly run into life's struggles. We can get through these bumps if we remember to open our AA tool bags and find some tools, are willing to use them, and humbly share them with others.

Anonymous  
Roselle, Illinois

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# Ham on Wry - humor from The Grapevine

## Fast Thinking:

“ON a trip from Ireland to Eire, Pat was stopped at the border line by the customs officer, who asked if he had anything to declare.

‘Only a bottle of water,’ replied Pat.

‘What kind?’ asked the official.

‘Holy water,’ replied Pat.

Long experience had taught the official to take nothing for granted, so he asked to see the bottle. Pat protested but finally handed the bottle over.

‘Whisky!’ cried the official.

‘Glory be!’ exclaimed the quick thinking Pat fervently, ‘a miracle!’ “

« « « » » »

The eight year old son of a California AA father was asked by the teacher to spell the word “straight.”

“S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T-!” quoth Junior promptly.

“That’s fine, Junior!” beamed the teacher “Now can you tell us what the word “straight” means?”

“Certainly,” replied Junior. “Without soda!”

« « « » » »

The doctor put away his stethoscope and shook his head. “I don’t find anything wrong with you, George,” he said. “It must be due to drinking.”

“That being the case,” mumbled George, “I’ll come back when you’re sober.”

« « « » » »

The recently appointed director of the Grand Rapids alcoholism rehabilitation center is a big man in the eyes of his nine-year-old son, says a clipping from a local paper.

The boy, starting classes at school, was asked by his teacher: “What is your father’s occupation?”

The boy replied: “My father is the chief alcoholic in Grand Rapids.”

« « « » » »

Tolerance is the ability to sit quietly in a closed meeting and hear everybody in the room say everything you were going to say when your turn came.

« « « » » »

The Guest Speaker at an AA meeting was talking at some length.

Came a voice from the audience: “You’re terrible.”

The guest speaker coughs and adjusts his necktie.

Voice from audience, louder: “You stink.”

Guest speaker to Chairman of the meeting in a whisper: “What kind of a group is this? This is awful—”

Chairman: “That’s good—just fine!”

Speaker: “What do you mean—fine?”

Chairman: “That guy has been coming around for six months and this is the first time he’s opened his mouth.”

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**Newsletter Subscription:** If you wish to receive your copy of the Recovery Times at your home, please complete this form and return with a check (\$7 donation to cover delivery cost) to:

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

## Current Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

New

Renewal

Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Moving ???:** We need your former address as well as your new address to correct our records. Fill out both forms and mail to the address above.

## Former Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_