

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 8 AUGUST 2007

What A Group “Ought” To Be

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The first thing Tradition Five tells us is what a group is, or at least “ought to be.”

We are not a sociological entity, although sociologists find us fascinating. We are not a therapy group, although remarkable healing takes place among us. And we are not a religion, even though some people want to see us as such.

We are a spiritual entity, or at least “ought to be.”

“The group gets its spirituality from its members.”

To me, that means that, although we are not saints, we “ought to” strive for spiritual progress. We follow a spiritual path laid out for us by Bill, Bob, and the first one hundred members of Alcoholics Anonymous. That spiritual path consists of the Twelve Steps, and by later development, the Twelve Traditions. They are suggestions only, but very firm suggestions—norms for our spiritual progress. We are a Fellowship of men and women who ought to come together as a spiritual entity.

We deal with two things here: our being and our doing. Clearly, what we are is going to have a lot to do with what we do. And what we do is going to have a strong influence on what we are.

We shake our heads at the “Two-Steppers” who, still on the First Step, take it upon themselves to run around “Twelfth-Stepping” whomever they can corner. We know they have not acquired a solid enough foundation in AA spirituality to pass it on to others. They forget the old saying: *nemo dat quod*

non habet (No one can give what he doesn’t have). Soon, without the gratification of instant success, discouragement sets in. The Two-Stepper must learn to be spiritual first, or give in to discouragement and quit AA.

Can this happen to a group? I think it can. When individuals in a group neglect the spiritual program of Alcoholics Anonymous and come to the meetings as if they were “fellowship” and nothing more; or when they dilute the meeting to focus on other things, or disparage spirituality, thinking it’s the intrusion of religion; then, as a group, they stop being a spiritual entity. The group gets its spirituality from its members.

What does this mean to me personally? It means that my AA spirituality is the very foundation of my sobriety. The group will be as spiritual as its members are spiritual.

So my spiritual condition strengthens or weakens the spirituality of the group. Therefore, it increases or lessens our chances for survival as a group, and our chances for sobriety as individuals in the group.

Besides taking good care of my own spirituality, I try to encourage activity that might strengthen the spirituality of the group, such as Twelfth Step workshops. Weekend events can become very popular and even traditional occasions in the life of the group. Whatever strengthens the spirituality of the group strengthens my spirituality, and vice versa. Whatever does that, increases my chances of staying sober, and at the same time, helps me and the group to remain focused on our primary purpose.

Anonymous

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

The Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting
August 30 - September 2, 2007
Beaver, UT
Info: Greg B. (818) 890-0110
Email: jojopelli@gmail.com

49th Annual ICYPAA
August 30 - September 2, 2007
Los Angeles, CA
Info: (310) 216-8771
Website: www.49thICYPAA.org

56th Annual Southern California AA Convention
September 21 - 23, 2007
Garden Grove, CA
Website: www.aasocal.com

4rd Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA
October 19 - 21, 2007
Valencia, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

23rd Annual Santa Barbara Convention
October 12 - 14, 2007
Goleta, CA
Website: www.sbaaconvention.org

4rd Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA
October 19 - 21, 2007
Valencia, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

The Valley Central Office will be
CLOSED
for literature sales on
Monday,
September 3, 2007
for the Labor Day Holiday.

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.

Service Committee Schedule

- Aug. 20, 2007 **SFV H&I**
THIRD MONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- Sept. 3, 2007 **G.S. District #11**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- Sept. 3, 2007 **G.S. District #16**
FIRST MONDAY
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- Sept. 3, 2007 **G.S. District #17**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- Sept. 4, 2007 **G.S. District #2**
FIRST TUESDAY
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- Sept. 5, 2007 **G.S. District #1**
FIRST WEDNESDAY
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- Sept. 5, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- Sept. 8, 2007 **G.S. District #7**
SECOND SATURDAY
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- Sept. 10, 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 2008 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 July 9, 2007

Rick A. Co-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: Greg - 2 yrs, Billy - 4 yrs, Derek - 6 yrs, Jenny - 24 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:25 PM

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

*These minutes are pending approval on
August 13, 2007*

Next Meeting - August 13, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

July 2007

Colt M.	2 years
Lana T.	20 years
Linda S.	22 years
Diane D.	28 years
Learning to Live Men's Stag	113 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.

Our Gang

“I was shown by example what it meant to be a member of a home group...”

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I was overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy and with a fear of letting anyone get too close. My self-esteem was below my knees while my pride and ego had inflated my head to the size of a blimp. I was sitting at a meeting and I knew I was in trouble. The speaker was saying AA is not an “I” program, it is a “we” program, and to get sober and stay sober you had better get close and stay close to the winners. As the years passed, I learned what he meant.

*“I learned the importance
of having a home group—
people who know you, love you,
and want what is best for you.”*

Before we opened the meeting on my fourth anniversary in AA, my sponsor made these announcements: “This Saturday we are going to move Larry from his old house to his new home. If anyone wants tickets to the circus next weekend, see Rick. There is a sheet going around the table for everyone to sign up for Thanksgiving dinner—who you are bringing and what you are bringing. Don’t forget the group commitment we have next Tuesday at the VA hospital.”

Maybe this auspicious occasion made me reflect on what he was saying but I know a bell sounded and a light went on in my head. It hit me full force: I belong to something wonderful. I not only fit in, I am an integral part of a group of people who are extremely close and who are all winners. AA is a “we” program and my home group is a gang of winners who collectively stay sober and have a powerful message.

That night, someone read the Twelve Traditions and brought me back from my moment of insight: “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.” A quick calculation and I figured that I must have heard the Traditions read at least a thousand times in the past four years. I now heard their meaning for the first time. The group must survive or

each of us will not and AA dies. Looking around the table at the members of my home group, I felt an irresistible strength of purpose and action—and real sense of pride in my gang.

I did not always feel that way and it didn’t happen overnight. At first, I was afraid of losing my individuality, of becoming my sponsor’s clone; I could imagine being swallowed up in a home group. I didn’t even get a sponsor until I had hung around AA for about three months. (I do not recommend that to any newcomer. Get a sponsor immediately.) In any case, my first sponsor insisted that I join her home group. I was desperate enough to go along with anything I was told. I was given the important job of cleaning ashtrays for the home group meeting. I thought it was a very demeaning task for someone as important as me, but I did it. Eventually I was promoted to coffee maker. I complained bitterly about having to show up almost an hour before the meeting and staying after to clean it all up. But sponsors are clever and slowly I began to feel a sense of commitment to this group of people. After all, what would they do without me if there were no ashtrays and no coffee?

Gradually, the walls came down and I got to know the members of the group. My sponsor never told me that I was being taught commitment or unity of purpose or how my life depended on obedience to spiritual principles. I was shown by example what it meant to be a member of a home group and that no personal sacrifice was too great for the survival of the group.

The lessons continued through my first year in AA. I learned the importance of having a home group—people who know you, love you, and want what is best for you. On short notice, I had to move myself, my three children, my dog, and my canoe to a new house. Members of my home group showed up with six pickup trucks and two vans. Two hours later I was moved, and dishes were being unpacked to get ready for pizza lunch. It was a miracle. The following year, my children went to live a thousand miles away from me and the emotional support and love I received from my home group pulled me through. After the first winter in my new home, an outside faucet decided to shoot water into my kitchen. There is a plumber in my group and all I had to do was ask for help. When I bought my first new car sober, my sponsor was the chief negotiator. I was so excited and thrilled, I couldn’t wait to tell my home group. The joy was shared equally. Graduation from college, my wedding, and several more moves brought my home group together for more joyous occasions. ⇨

Our Gang

cont.

Feelings of worthlessness began to fade. I now had a purpose and I belonged. My home group believes in sponsorship, group commitment, and in the spiritual values of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was taught you have to give it away to keep it, and my responsibility is to pass on the gifts that I have been so freely given in this program. The alcoholics that I sponsor empty ashtrays, make coffee, give rides to meetings, and belong to my home group (which of course is the best home group!).

A newcomer once asked me what a home group was and I gave the standard, academic response including a discussion of commitment. Today on my fourth anniversary, I would answer differently. My home group is my gang; it's the family I never had. It is a group of winners whose primary purpose is to stay sober and help others achieve sobriety. The members of my home group loved me until I could love myself; allowed me to grow in Alcoholics Anonymous; and accepted me for who I am, an alcoholic. Alcoholics Anonymous has everything that I need; there is enough experience, skill, knowledge, love, and caring to help me handle anything that life may send my way.

We are the Way of Life Group. It is the best show in town. The doors are open and I invite you to come along and be a part of our gang.

Margo W.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

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Where, o' Where

(are the old-timers)?

I love it! Where are all the "old-timers" they ask. Why is AA falling apart? What about all the differences of opinion?

The old-timers are probably down at the local hospital visiting those of us who need a helping hand or a lift of the spirit.

We (some of us) still make house calls, take the new "babies" out to meetings, introduce them to those who will help them.

You'll find "old-timers" at your local prisons and jails, carrying the message inside. Usually the same few, week after week.

You'll find "old-timers" on the telephone, checking in with a program friend not seen at meetings for a couple of days.

If you value your sobriety, you'll do something about it (besides complain).

J. S.

Asheville, North Carolina

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*Co-founder
Quotes*

Dr. Bob

Of far more importance was the fact that he [Bill W.] was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience. In other words, he talked my language.

Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 180

Bill Wilson

...I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going.

Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 15

Tradition One: My Sponsor's Favorite Word – Unity

Being self-centered in the extreme, I noticed that “our common welfare” in the First Tradition includes me. *My welfare* is a part of *our* welfare. The phrase also includes alcoholics with very different backgrounds, occupations, abilities, and handicaps. “Our” really does include all of us.

One of the first things I noticed when I came into AA was that nobody seemed to be trying to get anything from anybody. People spoke kindly to and about one another. There weren't the usual putdowns and gossip about one another which seemed normal in most circles, and I didn't worry about what people said about me after the meeting finished. People seemed to just want to be helpful and make the group a place that other alcoholics would want to come to.

...she explained that it was the unity within the group, unity of members with God, and unity of AA groups all over the world that keeps us together.

My sponsor's favorite word in AA was “unity.” I didn't understand why at first, but she explained that it was the unity within the group, unity of members with God, and unity of AA groups all over the world that keeps us together.

When I came into AA, I had to learn to get along with other people. Although it is not necessary to like everyone who shows up at a meeting, I do have to treat them with the same courtesy, kindness, tolerance, and love that people afforded me when I came in. As long as I do that, it is pretty rare to meet someone I don't like. I was certainly not a bundle of joy when I arrived in AA, but people were able to see past that and treat me more like someone I could become, instead of the person that I was.

When I sponsor someone, one of the first things we do is go through the Big Book together. It is impossible for anyone to pass on the AA message to others without first knowing what it is. Also, it's important to know what AA literature is available and may be helpful to the newcomer.

Before I came into AA, I had tried every means of dealing with my illness—psychiatry, religion, exercise, a geographic cure—and AA finally worked when all else

failed. My solution has been the program, and my favorite word in AA has also become “unity,” because that is what will keep the basics of the program unchanged.

When I first came into AA, the people were most important. Then as I came to see the importance of the group, principles became more important, because I saw unless the group survived, I wouldn't. Relationships in my group are very important because I know that I cannot stay sober alone. I need the Fellowship today just as much, if not more when I first came into the program.

When I had an opportunity to be a part of our intergroup, I began to see how AA fit into the community. Whatever was required to best carry the message became more important than personalities. It was more important to elect the people who would do the best job—whether or not they were my favorites.

For a long time, getting along with people seemed like an impossible task, but from learning how to get along with people in my group I found that practicing the same principles outside AA brought the same results. Most things in society happen in groups. As a result of Tradition One, I have reached a point where being a part of something is more important than being the center of attention.

When I first moved from another city, I missed my AA family. I compared the group I was attending here to my previous group, the people I was meeting to my old friends, the conferences here to former ones—and I was getting more miserable as time went on. One night after the meeting, we went for coffee and the members started showing their first-year medallions. Each had their favorite expression engraved on the back. One of them said: “Identify, don't compare.” That for me was a turning point because I realized I wasn't giving the people, the group, or myself a fair chance. I was shutting myself off and refusing to allow myself to be a part of the Fellowship here. It was like a whole new beginning.

A short while ago one of the younger members of our group spoke at a birthday meeting. His talk was concentrated on the Steps, ideas presented in the Big Book, and the slogans. One of the things I was grateful for that night was that those were the things that were passed on to him. How different it would have been if the meetings he had attended spoke about things other than AA.

The past year has been a time of growth and increasing honesty. Not in the sense of truthfully relaying facts, but

⇒

Unity, *continued*

being honest with friends in AA about how I am really feeling. These are the things which are of most difficulty for me—my emotional reactions to life. Although talking doesn't change a situation or an event, it does help to change my reaction to it. Being able to accept the help of the Fellowship, as well as offer it, has been a big factor in my recovery.

Although the amount of time in AA does not mean that I will be spared any of life's difficulties, it does mean that if I stay close to the winners in the Fellowship, and practice the AA principles to the best of my ability, I will be able to face life on life's terms. Nothing can happen today that I cannot face with help from the God of my understanding, the Fellowship, my sponsor.

AA has given me a way of living that is far better than even my active imagination could have dreamed up. I am grateful to the old-timers who passed the message on to others, and to the other members who continued to pass it on.

If AA is to continue as it is, then it is up to each member to pass it on. As the Responsibility Declaration states: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

Sandy M., Ottawa, Ontario

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Grapevine Humor

A drunk driver was stopped and interrogated by a patrolman. "Why don't you guys get organized?" complained the inebriate. "One week you take away my driver's license, and the next week you demand to see it!"

« « « « » » » »

Give a drunk a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a drunk how to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

« « « « » » » »

A slice of pizza is in the stomach, waiting to be digested.

Suddenly, a shot of whiskey barrels down. The pizza lets it pass in front of him. A few minutes later, another shot of whiskey comes through. Courteously, the pizza lets it pass in front of him, too. A few minutes later, a third shot of whiskey tumbles into the stomach.

The pizza asks the whiskey, "What's going on up there?"

"They're having a great party!" says the whiskey.

"Really?" responds the pizza. "I think I'll go up there and take a look."

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

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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.*

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