

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 12 DEC. 2007

## Taking the Time to Listen

*Step 12 - Part 3 "...and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

"Deck the halls. . ." danced in the air as I walked into the club where our AA meetings are held. I was glad to be there. It was a chance to see many familiar faces, a breather from the "normal" world.

I felt particularly good, with a "I've-just-done-a-good-deed" kind of feeling. Mentally I had done an inventory. I'll share it with you: First, I had over three years of working as a temporary sponsor resource person. I'd worked on the archives committee for the state convention. My one-on-one sponsorship was adequate. I greeted visitors when they attended our meetings. I drove people to meetings, to detox, to treatment centers, and went on Twelfth Step calls. I collected clothes for AAs at the rescue mission and spoke at rehabs. I'd become immersed in helping the sick, suffering alcoholic. Yes, I felt good.

Did I have a tiny flicker somewhere in my heart that something was missing? If so, I ignored the feeling.

The meeting began and many of the smiles on those faces changed as members shared the pain of the season. It seemed that the very joy pouring forth in carols, well wishes, and colored lights was the catalyst for sadness.

I heard stories that touched my heart. Not pity-pot stories but stories of life: relationships broken, jobs lost, children ill, confusion that replaced the sane thinking of someone with long-term sobriety. Mental illness plagued one, cancer another. Their stories were no less tragic than the alcoholic detoxing in a downtown center.

I saw them as if for the first time. Then God nudged me: "Look around you. These people need love and support. Charity begins at home." I thought of the times I'd given a home group member a quick hug and sailed out the door to help a newcomer. The term,

"If it doesn't work at home it doesn't work" took on a new meaning. The members of my home group are my family.

---

*"I want to keep in mind that at any given time, each of us may need the same love and support as someone who is attending their first meeting."*

---

The sick, suffering alcoholic sits in my chair, sits in the chair next to me, or across the room. Newcomers don't have a corner on being sick or on suffering. Maybe my hands don't shake as they once did. I can actually get the coffee cup to my mouth without spilling it. I may look strong but I'm not; but my strength depends on my spiritual condition, which depends on my attendance at meetings and for that I need you.

After all these years I still may not say how I really feel. I may fear rejection. My head monsters may be dragging me around by my thoughts. I may still say, "I'm fine" when I'm dying inside. If I hide my pain, the others probably hide theirs, too.

Now when I look into the eyes of the person next to me and ask, "How are you?", I will take the time to listen. I want to keep in mind that at any given time, each of us may need the same love and support as someone who is attending their first meeting.

*Sandra E., Jacksonville Beach, Florida  
Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.*

# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### **18th Annual River Roundup**

January 10 - 13, 2008

Laughlin, NV

Info: 928-770-4074

Website: [www.rcco-aa.org](http://www.rcco-aa.org)

### **33rd Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention**

February 1 - 3, 2008

Burbank, CA

Info: 818-734-0383

Website: [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org)

### **31st Annual San Diego Spring Round Up**

March 20 - 23, 2008

San Diego, CA

Website: [www.sandiegospringroundup.com](http://www.sandiegospringroundup.com)

### **23rd Annual Orange County Convention**

March 21 - 23, 2008

Costa Mesa, CA

Website: [www.oacaac.org](http://www.oacaac.org)

## **S. F. Valley Central Office Holiday Schedule for Book Sales will be as follows:**

**Monday, Dec. 24, 2007  
OPEN 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**Tuesday, Dec. 25, 2007  
CLOSED ALL DAY**

**Monday, Dec. 31, 2007  
OPEN 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008  
CLOSED ALL DAY**

**Normal hours will resume on  
Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008.**

## Service Committee Schedule

- December 17, 2007 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 7, 2008 **G.S. District #11  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
315 W. Vine St., Glendale  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 7, 2008 **G.S. District #16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6:15PM meeting  
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 7, 2008 **G.S. District #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 1, 2008 **G.S. District #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 2, 2008 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 9, 2008 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6:30PM, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 12, 2008 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
\*\*\*\*\*
- January 14, 2008 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30PM Orientation  
7PM Business Meeting  
St. Innocents Church  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

## 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 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](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting November 12, 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: Dawn - 12 yrs, Jason - 12 yrs,  
Carey - 17 yrs, Mary Ann - 28 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  
December 10, 2007*

*Next Meeting - December 10, 2007*

*Prepared and submitted by:*

*Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

### **November 2007**

**Michael H. 9 years**

**Janine R. 12 years**

**Melanie H. 20 years**

**Learning to Live  
Men's Stag 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.*

# Sayings – With a Twist

I am just a baby in AA, and I often have trouble applying the AA program in my life. But I've found that clinging to the simple part of the program helps—like the slogans and other sayings.

The other night my service sponsor told me about a speaker who'd said that "the slogans are the handrails for the Steps." That hit home. If you can't work a Step, hold on to a slogan and you won't get drunk. I could understand the concept and saw how it could work for me.

---

*"...the slogans are  
the handrails for the Steps."*

---

It reminded me of how I use the concept of "Let go and let God." When I was unable to admit complete powerlessness and still wanted to control my family members and co-workers, my sponsor suggested that instead of "Let go and let God," I try saying "Thy will be done." She suggested that when things got bad, I should just stop and say "Thy will, not mine, be done." It worked. I found myself stopping mid-sentence and saying, sometimes out loud, "Thy will, not mine, be done." I was able to use this tool when a plane was delayed, when my husband and I argued, and even at work when the computer didn't work. This tool became the guts of my AA program.

Recently a friend suggested that I might look at the concept a little differently. I guess he thought I was old enough to try again. He said, "Isn't it really, 'Let God and let go'?" It was immediately obvious that my sponsor had gotten around my resistance by suggesting this new twist on this saying. I realized that indeed I had never let go without first turning the problem over to God. Every time I said, "Thy will, not mine, be done" I had already "let God." Every time I had "let God," I had then let go. My spiritual growth is a direct result of recognizing that I am powerless, that my life is still unmanageable. I have a new director today. I am able to turn my will and my life over to God's care. It works, when I let God and let go.

I don't think we should change the concept. The twist is best kept a secret until you are ready.

*Suzanne S., Leavenworth, Kansas  
Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.*

# Wrong Turn

*Step 10: ...and when we were wrong  
promptly admitted it.*

The first question I had about Step Ten was: How soon do I have to admit when I am wrong? "Promptly" seemed so vague. The answer from an AA old-timer was: "How long you been sober?" Annoyed, I asked back: "What has that got to do with it?" The answer was: "The longer you are sober, the shorter the 'promptly' gets!"

The next thing I had to learn about Step Ten is that it doesn't say anything about being "sorry." When I was drinking I had a constant stream of "Sorrys." Now that I have been free of the booze for a few thousand days, I rarely have to say I'm sorry, but I often have to say that I was wrong. There is a big difference.

I've been taught that if I say "I'm sorry" and then leave it like that, it means that I am leaving a lot unsaid that should be said. I am really asking for forgiveness or some sort of "general absolution." But that's not what this alcoholic usually needs.

---

*"What I need to say is  
how I was wrong  
and where I went wrong"*

---

What I need to say is how I was wrong and where I went wrong (thinking of the exact nature of my wrongs, Step Five). And, thinking of Step Nine, how I was going to make it up to the person or set things right. What are my amends here? No empty promises of "I'll never do it again!" No begging for forgiveness. An amends makes me work to put things back to the way they were before my wrong was committed.

To say I was wrong is also part of that AA medicine of ego deflation at depth. I'm not sorry because you are hurt but rather I am admitting that I am wrong because I did something to harm you. Big difference in my book!

I have spent time figuring out what exactly I was wrong about, and I have spent time figuring out a proposal of how I am going to straighten things out, since that too is my responsibility and not yours. But I am going to confer with you about this and not impose my solution on you. I may offer several options for you to choose from. I am going to continue a radically honest (but calm and tactful) dialog with you in whatever way is appropriate. ⇨

# Wrong Turn

*cont.*

Another thing I had to learn about this Step was that it means that I only take responsibility for when I was actually wrong. If I wasn't wrong on one part but was wrong on another, I say so. I cop it sweet for the parts that I was wrong about but not for the rest of it.

For instance, I often have to say something like: "Son, I want to tell you that I was way out of line by raising my voice and yelling at you like that. It was wrong of me to do it in a public place and in front of your friends because that is not only embarrassing but also rude and insensitive. In the future I propose to take you aside or wait until we are away from your mates. I will work on getting my volume and impulsive anger under control. Can you help me by telling me that I am yelling or that I am embarrassing you if I forget? On the other hand, I believe that what I said was correct. What you were doing was risky and a bit dangerous. I stand by my statement but was wrong to yell and embarrass you. I'll make it up to you by—"

Lastly, I've been taught that this Step contains the most important word out of the 200 (count 'em) words in all of the Steps. That word is "continued." Makes a nice word to meditate upon.

*Chuck F., Canberra*

*Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.*

# Humor from the Grapevine

Said she, accusingly: "I saw you coming out of McCarthy's saloon last night!"

Said he, blearily: "Well, I had to come out sometime."

« « « » » »

After long and solemn deliberation Pat and Mike had decided to swear off and were on the way to the priest's to take the pledge. En route they came to a saloon.

Said Mike to Pat: "Let's stop in for our last drink together."

Said Pat to Mike: "No, indeed. The Father might smell it on our breaths. Better wait till we come back."

« « « » » »

The latest invention is said to be a beer glass with a magnifying bottom for watching television.

« « « » » »

Sedate and well-mannered Pasadena even knows how to caution tipsy citizens.

We spotted this cocktail lounge sign: "Patrons, please do not stand while the bar is in motion"



*Co-founder  
Quotes*

## **Bill Wilson**

Of course, the immediate object of our quest is sobriety—freedom from alcohol and from all its baleful consequences. Without this freedom, we have nothing at all.

Paradoxically, though, we can achieve no liberation from the alcohol obsession until we become willing to deal with those character defects which have landed us in that helpless condition.

*AA Grapevine, June 1976*

# Warning! Holidays Ahead

*“Suffer this moment to be fair and clear.” It’s the moment we can handle...*

It never seems to fail that when November rolls around there’s a struggling newcomer in our group who asks at a closed meeting: “But how am I to get through the holidays?”

The answer from old-timers present is, just as unfailingly, the same: “A holiday, like any other day, need not be coped with until it comes. And when it does come, it is only twenty-four hours long.”

---

*I believe that the twenty-four-hour concept was the most immediately effective tool I was given.*

---

There are other answers, of course—to the effect that one mustn’t get too tired, must remember to eat, and would do well to avoid the kind of festivities that present particularly difficult temptations. It may be suggested that the newcomer try to look beneath the tinsel commercialism for the deeper meanings of thanksgiving, peace, good will, and the dawning of a new year. All very helpful advice.

But, remembering how I had my own last drink one late October, and how near I came to panic at the thought of the meant-to-be-happy season ahead of me, I believe that the twenty-four-hour concept was the most immediately effective tool I was given.

As a beginner in AA, I was one of those who had to break the concept down into periods of thirty, twenty, or even ten minutes at a time. Often the lines of a favorite poem ran through my head as a kind of prayer: “Suffer this moment to be fair and clear.” It is indeed only the *moment* we can hope to handle, whether or not that moment falls on a hectic holiday.

As it happens, I had then (as I have now) a home to manage, a family to feed, and an office job to do. Then (though to a much lesser degree now), I had hard-drinking friends who loved to party. So the holidays meant too many demands on my time, as well as on my emotional and physical strength. I have learned this is apt to be especially true of women, even if they are not alcoholics.

But the holidays may be just as hard in quite another way for the man or the woman who has lost home and family and job and friends, who lives quite alone, haunted at such a time by the rest of the world’s apparent gaiety. The desire to escape too many people and activities and the desire to

blot out loneliness and boredom can lead equally fast to the bottle. This is a frightening truth for one still battling the physical compulsion to drink. But it need not be fatal.

What do I remember about those first holidays? We had a houseful of guests for Thanksgiving. I know this only because I find it noted in an old date book. The day is a blank in my mind. On Christmas we had more guests, people who enjoyed cocktails before the feast while I hid out in the kitchen fussing over the food. We were invited to “open houses,” which I had to skip. On New Year’s Eve I asked my husband to take me to a double feature at the local movie. I was thus removed from temptation all evening, and when we came out it was past midnight. A new year had begun.

I know that I cried some during those holidays. I was often tight-lipped. More than once, I flounced out of the house to walk off a temper or a temptation. It was rough. And I was helped by remembering that, in a very different sense, it was rough for the Pilgrims on the first Thanksgiving, for the shepherds of Bethlehem on the first Christmas. Somehow, as I clung to the sobriety of the present moment, I felt closer than ever before to the long-ago origins of the holiday season. For all my shows of temperament, I believe I even made it a happier time for those around me than I had done in the past. Most importantly, I got through without a drink.

It was not until the evening of January first that I felt a full surge of thankfulness—blessed emotion—to my AA friends and to the Power beyond us all that had sustained me a few hours, a few minutes at a time. I had discovered that the program works, and I was far stronger within myself than I had been in mid-November.

If there is any message here for those coming to our Fellowship new and shaky in the late fall, it is this: Hang on; stick close; live for the day or the moment; don’t let the mechanical reactions of the past sneak up on you; don’t spoil the present, imperfect as it may seem, with a single shot, a single glass of enticingly sparkling wine. The sense of accomplishment and *comfortableness* that follows on making it through one’s first sober holidays is beyond compare. There may be tensions in later years, but none quite so traumatic. And if ever the holiday blues do strike, call on your AA friends. They understand because they’ve been there, too. They have learned, as you will, the more than compensatory joys of gratitude, and giving, and beginning each day anew.

*M. C., Pleasantville, New York*

*Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.*

# What the Traditions Mean in My Life

*"I believe the Traditions...are essential for me to apply to my own life."*

I believe the Traditions not only keep together the different groups within the AA community but are essential for me to apply to my own life. For example, the First Tradition refers to the common good and the concept of unity, and its message is that if I apply harmony, serenity, and unity in my workplace and within my family, life will have similar characteristics.

Keeping in mind that a Higher Power is above everything else (Second Tradition), if I act according to divine and natural law, nothing evil can destroy me.

Helping others in whatever way I can without prejudice or discrimination (Third Tradition) forces me to set fear aside and to give the best of myself to my fellow humans. Within my commitment to my job, my studies, or my group, I sustain my individuality but don't allow it to harm those around me (Fourth Tradition).

When I set a goal, I work toward it with perseverance, not letting outside influences steer me away from my primary purpose (Fifth Tradition).

I'm aware that when property, money, and prestige enter into my personal situation, I must walk a straight path, because I am susceptible to those temptations (Sixth Tradition). I try to be financially self-sustaining, not borrowing from others, practicing moderation in my

expenses, and balancing my budget (Seventh Tradition), always working toward keeping a prudent reserve in savings.

I don't know everything, so I seek the advice of others who know more than I do and that of professionals and specialists (Eighth Tradition). I can't do it all alone, and help from those wiser than I am can help me reach my objectives.

Delegating and sharing were habits I didn't have before I began to accept people, places, and things (Ninth Tradition). "Live and Let Live"—this axiom distances me from controversy and teaches me that it is best to keep quiet at opportune times than to win an unproductive battle (Tenth Tradition). When I have a good idea, I try to share it with those who might be interested in that concept, but I don't try to promote my ideas the way I did in bars and taverns (Eleventh Tradition).

Whether a task is big or small, the important thing is to keep it to myself, maintaining my anonymity even though it is hard to do so. After all, this is all about working toward perfection, and I am (Twelfth Tradition).

*Daniel Z.  
Miami, Florida*

*Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.*

---

**Newletter 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 \_\_\_\_\_