

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 32, NO. 7 JULY 2008

Pointers for Beginners for Right Now

It's your first sober day and your first AA meeting...

Every member of AA was once a beginner, and that's what we, who have been beginners ourselves, call any of you who are just coming around to find out something about this trouble you've been having with your drinking. Every one of us sat through a first meeting wondering what the score was. Every one of us had made a decision, or events had made the decision for us, to take a look at this thing called AA and see if maybe here might be the answer to a lot of questions that had been piling up for a long, long time.

You've come to the right place, and for the next few weeks at these little meetings I'm going to try to answer a few of the big questions I know are uppermost, in your mind—the same things I once wondered about. At our regular meetings following these little ones, there will be more answers for you on many, many points, and a chance to ask more of your own questions, too.

But for right now you don't need philosophy; you need first aid. You need to take home with you, when you leave here tonight, not a full understanding of how AA works, not a complete explanation of the complexities of alcoholism, not a blueprint of your life from this day forth—but just what it takes to get you safely through the rest of these twenty-four hours. You need a glimmer of hope and the promise of peace of mind ahead, to take to bed with you tonight so that you'll get a little natural sleep; you need something to take hold of when you wake up tomorrow morning, to steer by through a sober day.

So, first of all, take a look around you. We're pretty normal-looking characters. We're healthy, glad to be alive, surprisingly happy, and not too bowed down by our grim pasts—although that grim past which goes hand in hand with a losing battle with the bottle is our greatest common denominator. We have lived intimately with the worst that alcohol can do to a human being; we have lived in fear and despair; we have known utter disaster and total defeat; we *were* given up as hopeless; we thought we were hopeless.

Yet today, this very day, we've all been going about our business, taking care of our responsibilities, knowing who we are and accepting what we are, and glad to come here tonight and shake hands with our friends. This is recovery in AA. It is not a cure of the disease of alcoholism; it *is* recovery from the sickness of active alcoholism. This was what was promised to each of us when we first came here, and what we found; and what we promise to you and what you will find, if you decide to stick with us.

So take home with you tonight AA's first gift to you—first, even before sobriety itself: the gift of hope.

Tomorrow, try to get to a doctor. He'll probably give you a blockbuster shot of vitamins B1 and B12. It will help those nerves—there's very little virtue in suffering unnecessarily—and will give your appetite a beneficial jolt, too. The sooner you start comforting those nerves of yours with plain, ordinary meat-and-potato nourishment, the sooner they'll stop screaming for a drink.

Don't walk out of here tonight discouraged at the appalling prospect of never drinking again. In fact, don't give it a thought. We don't do it that way. We stay sober just twenty-four hours at a time (and less than that, sometimes, if twenty-four become too many to handle). With us it's always today, and no one can possibly be drunk tomorrow if he doesn't pick up a drink *today*.

You'll probably take a couple of new telephone numbers home with you tonight. Don't leave them there—carry them with you; and if the going gets rough anywhere, any time, use them; they're given to you in all sincerity for just that purpose. You will not be imposing on a stranger by doing this; you will be giving him a welcome opportunity to help you over a rough spot, just as someone else undoubtedly helped him in the past, and as you'll be doing gladly one of these days for someone who's still out there tonight qualifying to follow you here. "Telephone therapy," as we call it, is a

continued on page 4 →

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

16th Annual Foothill Roundup

August 1 - 3, 2008
La Canada - Flintridge, CA
Info: Dayna R. 818-249-9390
Email: rdruby699@yahoo.com

34th Annual Maad Dog Daze

August 1 - 3, 2008
Cathedral City, CA
Info: Dawn T. 760-342-2901
Email: dawn85@gmail.com
Website: www.aainthedesert.org

30th Annual Ventura County AA Convention

September 5 - 7, 2008
Westlake Village, CA
Website: www.vcaac.org

57th Annual Southern California AA Convention

September 19 - 21, 2008
San Diego, CA
Website: www.aasocal.com

5th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA

October 17 - 19 2008
Valencia, CA
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org
Info: 661-310-0384

24th Annual Santa Barbara AA Convention

October 24 - 26, 2008
Goleta, CA
Website: www.sbaaconvention.org
Email: chair@sbaaconvention.org

Service Committee Schedule

- July 21, 2008 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- August 4, 2008 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- August 4, 2008 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- August 4, 2008 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- August 5, 2008 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- August 6, 2008 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- August 6, 2008 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- August 9, 2008 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- August 11, 2008 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30PM Orientation
7PM, Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church

To All Meeting Secretaries

Help us keep your meeting information up to date.

If your meeting has changed its Location, Time of Meeting, Meeting Name or Type of Meeting, please update this information *as soon as possible* with your Central Office. Updates can be completed by mail or in person during Literature Sales Hours at San Fernando Valley Central Office. Our address is listed on the back cover of this newsletter. Meeting updates *must* be completed in writing. Any questions can be answered by calling your Central Office at (818) 988-3001 and asking for a staff member.

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>

Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs
telephone volunteers for all shifts,
especially the Overnight (12 Midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous
sobriety, we invite you to join us and help your
fellow alcoholics. You can sign up in the office
or online at <http://www.sfvaa.org/involve.html>.

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 June 9, 2008

Rick A. 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: Joey - 1 yr, Joe - 2 yrs,
Diane - 5 yrs, Josh - 17 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:22 PM
The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for June is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.

*These minutes are pending approval on
July 14, 2008*

Next Meeting - July 14, 2008

*Prepared and submitted by:
Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

June 2008

Belinda T.	3 years
Paul D.	15 years
Dan J.	16 years
Roger P.	19 years
Doug R.	21 years
Tony R.	21 years
Grace M.	33 years
Robert O.	40 years
Reseda BB Study	33 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.

Pointers for Beginners *continued*

very real and effective AA technique in maintaining our sobriety. The taking of positive action against any compulsion can actually break the compulsion; if you pick up a phone *before* you pick up a drink, chances are better than good that you'll stay sober.

From time to time you may be unexpectedly hit with a caving-in feeling that makes you think you're falling apart. You aren't, so don't panic. Try having a snack. See if it doesn't help you get over the feeling. Start, tomorrow, making sure you eat three times a day; never mind how much, or the state of your appetite; you've been out of the habit of eating, that's all, and you're hungry, whether you know it or not; get back into the habit of regular meals. We cannot caution you enough against getting too hungry or getting too tired. There isn't one organ of your body that requires alcohol to sustain it, but excessive hunger or fatigue can make you *think* you need it.

At the regular meeting after this, you'll hear a round-robin discussion on a topic that may not seem to have too much bearing on your immediate needs, but it *will* deal with some one phase of our common cause of learning to live sober. For tonight, just listen and get the feel of the thing; you won't be expected to contribute to the discussion unless you wish to. Undoubtedly, the most valuable thing you'll get out of the meeting is a pretty good picture of a group of sober people who want to stay sober, sharing their experiences and ideas with each other, seeking points of agreement rather than disagreement, and working together seriously on something that is important to their sobriety. This is our "group therapy." At the moment, *your* job is simply to hang on to your brand-new sobriety one day at a time; the rest will come along gradually as you become ready for it. For this twenty-four hours, you've done all you need to, just by being here.

To help you *right now*, let me tell you about what we call the AA Slogans, which are much more than ordinary slogans as you have known the word. These are for *doing*, not saying, and because they're tremendously helpful in smoothing out anyone's day and thus helping him to stay sober, right now is the time to start putting them to work for you.

There is one called *First Things First*. We have all learned and we all agree that the thing in our life of first, vital, and constant importance is our sobriety; but practicing *First Things First* can also bring order out of chaos in the mechanics of your ordinary day when you simply don't know

where to start, what to do first; when there's so much to be done, so much lost time to make up for; when things pile in from all sides and the pressure builds and you're confused. *Do First Things First*. Pick out the one that's bugging you the most; dispose of it; reduce the pressure by that much, and go on to the next. This actually works.

Then there's one called *Easy Does It*, which doesn't necessarily mean do nothing; it does mean simmer down, take it easy, cut your cruising speed, keep it simple, *stop charging*.

Live and Let Live puts the lid back on your temper, nips resentments in the bud, and enables you to give the other fellow the same right to his opinions and behavior that you want for your own, *without getting upset* if his don't agree with yours.

None of this means that we're trying to make a doormat out of you. What these so-called Slogans do is help you control your emotions, which are bound to be a little unpredictable these days while your nerves readjust to getting along without their usual soothing syrup. In other words, the Slogans can teach you another, better way of handling the small everyday problems and incidents and ordinary routines that used to have you reaching for a quick drink.

Finally, take this knowledge home with you tonight for your comfort: Alcoholism is a disease, not a crime nor a sin. It can be arrested. Thousands upon thousands of us are walking, living proof of this. There is no completely painless way to get through the first days of sobriety; a killer disease—and that's what alcoholism is—can hardly be expected to turn us loose that easily. But all of us around you here are living witness that the transition *can* be made and that *we* found it well worth the try. You're entering a time of convalescence now; try being a little good to yourself for a change, and see what happens. Physically you've been punished enough; don't waste your energy punishing yourself mentally; don't demand more of yourself than your depleted resources can handle just now. Concentrate on getting well, and one day at a time you will make it.

I have saved to the last a very simple little prayer that helped all of us in all of this a very great deal, and it can do the same for you: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.*

Bob N., Scarsdale, New York

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One Among Many

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

When I first came into the Fellowship, I fell in love not only with AA, but with the business meetings. I loved to sit there and watch the members arguing back and forth, hashing and rehashing the tiniest bit of trivia and expounding on why and why not something should change or stay the same. I heard some members say they didn't like business meetings and didn't like to see the members disagreeing. I couldn't identify with this. Why, I thought, it added an exciting dimension to meetings!

In the beginning I was made aware of my inflated alcoholic ego by working the Steps. What I didn't know at the time was that I would get in touch with other defects I didn't even know I had—little things like power driving, tunnel vision, and numerous other lovable traits. Humility, self-sacrifice, principles before personalities, and anonymity were not my favorite words. To begin with, I didn't really know what they meant.

After my first Fourth Step, I thought I had discovered all there was to know about me—oh, boy! With each additional Fourth Step, I found I was only scratching the surface. The Twelfth Step told me that after having a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, I would try to carry this message to alcoholics and I was to practice these principles in all my affairs. So far, so good. Little did I know, when I started out in service, that these principles would become a reality I couldn't have imagined.

It happened that I moved from my old home group, which had nurtured me for five years, to a group that was entirely different in the way they did things (or so I thought). No

one told me to grab a club when I started telling this group about the Traditions and how they were breaking them all, but I did. God help the alcoholic who discovers a bit of truth and needs to tell others about it, come hell or high water. I became the group's watch dog, making sure they did everything "according to Traditions." Without even realizing it, I was breaking our First Tradition. Unity went out the door when I walked in. This was the beginning of the realization of just how deep my defects of character went.

As I trudged this happy road of service, many challenges surfaced. Could I become one among many who are also in service positions? Could I see there is no "chief" drunk, and no "peon" positions, either? That we are all an important part of the whole—that any position I might hold is in direct relationship with the positions others hold? Could I realize, when needing to voice my opinions and make sure all hear, that I have lost my ability to listen? Could I see that tunnel vision isn't practical when I need to see the whole?

Could I do what I was trusted to do and let others do what they were trusted to do without making sure it was done and self-righteously picking up the slack (all for the good of AA, don't you know)? Could I put any position I might hold in proper perspective to its relationship with AA as a whole? If I don't do these things, my job either gets escalated in my mind and I end up with an overrated ego, or I see my job as not that big a deal and do half a job or none at all.

After a while, I began not to take myself so seriously. I am developing the ability to laugh at myself when I get off the beam in these areas. Like I said, AA is a journey that takes a lifetime.

Anonymous, Winthrop, Maine

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob

"I want to make something easy for you. Try to find your own God—as *you* understand Him."

Reprinted from Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, page 281, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Bill W.

The moral inventory is a cool examination of the damages that occurred to us during life and a sincere effort to look at them in a true perspective. This has the effect of taking the ground glass out of us, the emotional substance that still cuts and inhibits.

Reprinted from As Bill Sees It, page 140, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

So, Who Needs the Slogans?

Framed prints of the slogans were hanging on the walls at the rehab where I got sober. How I hated seeing those trite and simple phrases. With my complex and intellectual mind, I thought they were ridiculous. Who in the world could live “One Day at a Time”? I certainly could not! I needed to know what was going to happen so I could plan ahead; I needed to be in control of my daily, weekly, monthly, yearly activities. It was impossible for me to think about today. I was usually worried about yesterday and fretting about tomorrow. I couldn’t stay in the day because I couldn’t stay alone with myself; being alone frightened me into anxiety and restlessness. I used alcohol to soothe the loneliness. The reality was that alcohol heightened my loneliness. The fact was I wasn’t comfortable enough in my own skin to live one day at a time.

“Live and Let Live” seemed easy enough at first. But I was so used to controlling people and feeling responsible for them that my boundaries were practically nonexistent. I personalized everyone else’s feelings and reactions, while what I did was a reaction to what I thought others wanted me to do. I had to be involved with others to feel worthwhile so it was difficult to allow others to live their lives without my interference. I wasn’t sure they could succeed without me! Or was it that I wasn’t sure I could have a relationship with anyone unless I controlled them?

I blew off “Let Go and Let God” as having already been accomplished. I was spiritually very arrogant when I came into the program. Being a religious woman, I felt I had already given everything over to God. However, alcohol had replaced God in my life. I was spiritually bankrupt. Letting go was, in fact, the scariest thing I could imagine. If I let go what would happen? I wouldn’t be able to predict the outcome and that paralyzed me.

“Keep It Simple” was a joke. Didn’t anyone understand how complex and complicated my life was? Events in my life were anything but simple! My alcoholism had not only cost me a relationship with God, it had caused damaged relationships and separation from everything that was familiar in my life, as well as negligible self-esteem, and failing health. With self-pity oozing from every pore, nothing was simple.

“Think, Think, Think” was an obstacle as well. Thinking meant taking time to be alone. It meant being responsible. I was incapable of being responsible and really didn’t want to be. And I couldn’t keep my mind on anything for any length of time. All I had thought about for years was getting my own way, getting my alcohol, or covering myself so people wouldn’t know I’d been drinking. There was little time left for quiet thinking.

Since those early days in the program, a gradual change has been occurring. Those slogans have been transformed from stumbling blocks to cornerstones. Today they are sources of freedom and serenity.

“One Day at a Time” frees me to be present to people and things at hand. I’m freer today to think about and be concerned for the day I am living. How wonderful to shed the tension of living in yesterday and tomorrow. I realize that I only have the grace to live the present moment; I can’t do anything about the past and I can’t control the future. I’m better able to turn over the results to my Higher Power and be responsible only to plan for coming events.

Control remains a thorn in my side at times, but living today means staying in my own stuff and allowing others to live in theirs. “Live and Let Live” frees me to be truly present and less manipulative toward others. I’m powerless over other people and their choices. It’s such a relief to use my energy, which once went into controlling others, to help me to feel serene and liberated.

The Third Step is the basis of “Let Go and Let God” for me today. Becoming right-sized has helped me to recognize my need for others in the program and to trust that my Higher Power loves me and is present for me. I feel a tightness in the pit of my stomach when I’m being resistant and need to let go of something. That’s a barometer for me, a sign that I’m being called to let go and let God. When I do, the tightness goes away and is replaced by a sense of peace and relief.

“Keep It Simple” relieves the complication of life. It’s easy for me to complicate the Steps—I can complicate anything. That’s why living the Steps is so important. Following the Twelve Steps of AA given to us by Bill W. and Dr. Bob helps me to forge a new way of life.

As my alcoholic fog began to clear, I was able to “Think, Think, Think.” I had time in rehab to do just that. But I need to continually guard against stinking thinking and to take responsibility for my sobriety. Gradually, I have become more comfortable with quiet time.

Today I have a job that I never thought possible, new relationships based on healthy living, a love for myself that I never knew before, a relationship with a Higher Power based on trust, love, and forgiveness. And as my sobriety progresses, so does the importance of the slogans in my recovery. These simple sayings are a cornerstone of truth in my life today.

Joanne N., Au Sable Forks, New York

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Forgetting the Basics

After six wonderful years of sobriety, or maybe I should say five years, and one year of being “dry,” I finally did the one thing I was told I would do “if I discontinued attending AA meetings.” I drank.

During the first years of my sobriety, I never let a single week go by without attending meetings. It was a pleasure to attend. But, we moved to another state, where “the AA was not the same.” I had all of a sudden become God again and I forgot several very important facts: These new AA members were in fact sober and enjoying life; their meetings were being conducted according to the Traditions; control of them and their meetings was not my assignment in life. I needed them. But all of the above was forgotten and I soon became “not as bad off” as the other AAs. The inevitable happened—I quit going to AA, and eventually drank. The drinking continued for nine months. I lost my job, had to relocate again, then became too ill to continue and ended up hospitalized (again). This period of sobriety lasted only ten months.

Oh, how disturbed we can become when we forget a few basics. Acceptance, willingness, surrender, going to any length. My last drunk only lasted two weeks, thank God. I became so physically ill I could not continue. I finally called “those people” and asked for help. Help was at my front door within fifteen minutes. I checked into another treatment center, this time with a different perspective. I started over with Step One and followed all instructions given to me. Some things I did only because I was told to, and amazingly, it has worked to date.

It is amazing how the AA meetings have improved since I stopped drinking and “became a part of” the meetings, instead of sitting on the outside looking in, trying to change something which is, and was, working just fine.

R. V., Elkhart

*From P.O. Box 1980 (letters to the Grapevine)
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Humor from the Grapevine

An AA group flying together to Hawaii decided to hold a meeting in the air, which was okay until one guy, called on to share, identified himself and everybody yelled, “Hi, Jack!”

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As the cop helped the bruised and battered boozier up from the pavement in front of the bar, he asked, “Can you describe the man who hit you?”

“Oh yes,” said the drunk. “That’s just what I was doing when he hit me.”

« « « » » »

Then there’s the story about the henpecked dipso and his wife, touring in Italy, who were gazing down into a famous wishing well. Suddenly, the woman lost her balance and tumbled headfirst into the depths of the well.

“How about that!” said her spouse in wonderment. “And I always thought these things were a lot of bunk!”

« « « » » »

Finally, we have this version of the Tenth Step: “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly omitted it.”

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

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City..... St ZIP

New Additional Contribution

Renewal \$.....

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