

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 33, NO. 12 DEC 2009

Using the Slogans

I was wondering what you thought when you came to your first AA meeting and saw the slogans displayed, as we have them here and at other AA meeting places in the area. Our little signs are—*Easy Does It*, *First Things First*, *Live and Let Live*, and *But For The Grace Of God*. I know groups elsewhere have other thought provoking slogans and I'm sure they all are helpful. I don't recall my original impression, but I'm quite sure I could not figure what these sayings could possibly have to do with me or my newfound desire to stay sober.

The slogans are simple things, we have heard these phrases many times before. Probably their wisdom has served many generations. Even though they may be ages old, it seems as though they were designed especially for us. They can help when we fit them to our everyday needs.

Often I think of the slogans as reminders and, in our present day language, consider them as "tranquilizers"—which are mighty handy to have around. Because we hear and see them frequently, they have become very familiar and can remind us, in moments of stress or indecision, just what is best for us. Since I, personally, do not believe in the use of the medical tranquilizers, I have found these AA tranquilizers to be mighty efficient when facing self pity, resentment or any of the other woes which are dangerous to the alcoholic.

Maybe you, too, can get some assistance from them, as have so many others. *Easy Does It* is the one that probably first attracts our attention. Though this reminder suggests something absolutely contrary to our past performance, still these words have their appeal and maybe even a touch of humor when we learn to smile at ourselves as we slow down.

All of us have our many problems and troubles. We would like to believe we could sober up quickly and take care of all of them immediately, but it doesn't often work that way. However, if we can reach out for this thought—*Easy Does It*—when we seem to panic at an avalanche of troubles, fears and doubts, we might get to know, habitually, that the best way to handle all things is "Easy." It can also be a cautious check on the over-zealousness of the newcomer, who might rush to

do too much in too short a period of time.

This, of course, does not suggest that we put everything off until tomorrow, for there are many worthwhile things we can do today. The reminder is, do it but *Easy Does It*. You'll find yourself enjoying the use of this tranquilizer, taken in moderation and at the proper time.

Then there is another—*First Things First*. That's a real gem. If only it were possible, in our confusion, to keep this foremost in our thoughts we would have gone a long way toward successfully coping with most of our troubles. Quite naturally we in AA contend that the first thing to avoid is the first drink; then there is a good chance that everything else can be cared for later. Unless the first drink is avoided, not much else matters. We emphasize that as being of first importance always. However, we will encounter other situations where a mental flash of this reminder can enable us to set our thinking in order, so that we can decide what should be our first consideration and what is less important. Truly, these AA tranquilizers do not solve our problems, but they can calm us down, remind us of a better way to proceed, and perhaps even put us in a mood to make better decisions.

The reminder of *Live And Let Live* can come in very handy many times. Some may consider it as a plea for tolerance—letting the other fellow live his life with his faults so that he won't criticize our imperfections. Others have found this a good suggestion to preserve harmony within the family or group. It can remind us to pause and reflect a moment whenever we feel inclined to gossip, criticize or envy others with whom we must live.

Others like to think of it in a more positive fashion. When disturbed by the actions or opinions of others, they are reminded that they were put on this earth to live their own lives. The emphasis is on living, based on truths, as they understand them—living with as much honesty as they can command. Perhaps this suggests that when we live our own lives we will have little inclination to find fault with the efforts of others. Live and let live.

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

20th Annual River Roundup
January 7 - 10, 2010
Laughlin, NV
Info: Matt 928-754-4090
Website: www.rcco-aa.org

35th Annual San Fernando Valley AA Convention
January 29 - 31, 2010
Woodland Hills, CA
Website: www.sfvaaconvention.org

S. F. Valley Central Office Holiday Book Sales Schedule:

Thursday, Dec. 24, 2009
OPEN 9:00 AM - Noon

Friday, Dec. 25, 2009
CLOSED ALL DAY

Saturday, Dec. 26, 2009
OPEN 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Thursday, Dec. 31, 2009
OPEN 9:00 AM - Noon

Friday, Jan. 1, 2010
CLOSED ALL DAY

Normal hours will resume
on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010.

Things We Cannot Change...

Jack K.

38 Years

Obviously, the staff of Valley Central Office cannot know all the members of the local fellowship. If you have knowledge of the passing of one of our members, please notify us here at Central Office during literature sales hours or mail us the obituary from the local newspaper. You can also email us at sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net.

Service Committee Schedule

Dec. 21, 2009	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8PM Business Meeting 7PM Get Acquainted Workshop 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
Jan. 4, 2010	G.S. District #11 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 315 W. Vine St., Glendale *****
Jan. 4, 2010	G.S. District #16 FIRST MONDAY 6:15PM meeting 15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills *****
Jan. 4, 2010	G.S. District #17 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
Jan. 5, 2010	G.S. District #2 FIRST TUESDAY 5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta *****
Jan. 6, 2010	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park *****
Jan. 6, 2010	SFV Board of Directors 6:30PM, Central Office *****
Jan. 9, 2010	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY 9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd *****
Jan. 11, 2010	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 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>.

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.

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 2010 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:sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting November 9, 2009

Josh S. 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: Melisse - 5 yrs, Dawn H. - 14 yrs,
Marilyn - 18 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:20 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 14, 2009*

Next Meeting - December 14, 2009

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

November 2009

Joann	4 years
Jorge	12 years
Anonymous	19 years
Sarah M.	22 years
Anonymous	25 years
Frank K.	25 years
Mary Jane A.	27 years
Reseda BB Study & Disc.	9 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.

Using the Slogans

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But For The Grace Of God is another appropriate reminder. This, too, is subject to different interpretations and a variety of uses. At one time this phrase came to mind whenever I heard of someone whose history of alcoholism involved greater hardships and seemingly more misery than mine. I was happy that I was more fortunate than they.

I no longer make such comparisons. Rather I use this reminder as a prayer of thankfulness for the many favors and bountiful help I receive each day. I remember that whatever sobriety and little capability I may have today is the result of the mercy and kindness of an ever-loving God. His help, sometimes channeled through AA, is entirely responsible for anything I may accomplish each day. You, too, may welcome this reminder that help, freely offered and entirely undeserved, is available. Without it we were powerless and our lives can again become unmanageable. It is truly a

“tranquilizer” that keeps an inflated ego under control.

These are a few of the practical working tools AA offers to bolster your desire to stay sober. Oft-times the mere repetition of these phrases will tranquilize unstable emotions and suggest better thinking. Later on, they may suggest more serious meditation.

These reminders are suggestions for you. They can be useful. Time and time again you will hear from AAs that they were able to recall these thoughts in moments of crisis, with truly wonderful results. When in need of a “tranquilizer” take one of these. When disturbed by the thought of a drink, these reminders can give you a good thought to replace a harmful one. They are simple but powerful remedies.

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The Year Santa Couldn't Come

After my mother had gone, my father continued her practice of making Christmas a joyous time for us, so our home sparkled with lights and holly and happy music. When my children came, I tried to recreate this for them. I must have succeeded somewhat, as their memories of past Christmases are joyful.

One Christmas looms before me. It's the Christmas Santa couldn't come. He, too, was powerless over alcohol.

For years, I fought the great fight against the disease—not knowing what I was fighting against or even that I *was* fighting. The dams broke, as they always do, and the torrent of progression swept everything in its path. Down those swirling, insane falls raced everything I held dear—courage, honor, love, self-respect, faith—all dashed on the rocks of alcohol.

All I had left were fear, distrust, resentment, and self-loathing.

Finally, and worst of all, came not caring. I could not care, though I tried. I knew I was doomed to live out my life as a falling-down, fearful drunk, and I could not care.

Then, as that Christmas drew near, I heard the children's glad whispering of things to come, and I felt a stab of pain. I knew their Santa would not come here that year. I could not think of Christmas. I asked my kind sister to take them. She did. They went. They had a lovely time. They never knew.

Christmas Day came to my lonely house. It was grave-silent

and dark. The awesome fears were maddening. I knew despair.

AA plucked me from that insane place. It dried me out and told me I need never be afraid again—never be lonely again—never loathe myself again. They even told me that Santa Claus would come again.

All I had to do was keep away from one drink one day at a time, with the help of a Higher Power whom I was to ask and thank for help.

Impossible, I thought. Humpty Dumpty could not be put together again—or, surely, not so simply. Unbelieving, I tried, and unbelievably, it worked. It worked!

The fear has gone. The loneliness has gone. And the miracle is that I like myself, but most of all, that I care. I care!

It has been twenty-odd lovely years since that black Christmas. Again, I am in the midst of happy whisperings (from other small ones) and am secretly preparing grand surprises for the great day.

How can I thank AA, not only for my life, my beautiful life, but for giving me back my lovely Christmases, complete with Santa in full regalia coming to call?

May the Higher Power by and for whom all this joy is felt bring Santa to your houses this Christmas, my AA family, to whom I owe so much.

K. C., Cos Cob, Connecticut

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The Fellowship Is My Lifeline

“One thing’s for sure, it will keep you sober.” These were the first words out of my sponsor’s mouth when I called to tell him that my home group wanted me to be the GSR. Then he said, “Study the Traditions, and we’ll talk.” It’s hard to believe that this conversation took place just a little over a year ago.

My sponsor, as usual, was absolutely right. In the past year I’ve developed a strong love for the Steps, Traditions, and the Concepts. For me, the Fellowship is my lifeline. It’s very important for me to tell how doing service work has affected my sober life.

In the past year there has been an overabundance of “events” in my personal life. This is where the service work has really paid off for me. Thanks to the group, I have a wonderful opportunity to get out of myself. I’ve learned what self-sacrifice is all about.

I’ve also learned that I need always keep an open mind, accompanied with love and tolerance. In order for me to be able to do this, there has to be acceptance—acceptance to allow situations and people to be exactly what they are at any moment in time.

There are now aspects of service work I’m no longer physically capable of doing but God has opened new doors for me. Previously, whenever anyone called needing a ride to a

meeting or other assistance, I was there. Today, God is allowing this privilege to others so that I can get to meetings.

Today I answer the hotline, I’m still the GSR, and I chair one meeting a week. I try to do anything I can to help others. I’m not saying this to boast or brag, just to let you know that it’s the service work that keeps me going. When I begin to feel useless, I’m quickly reminded that when anyone calls me, I am there.

There’s a whole world out there. It doesn’t end at the group level. With each new opportunity comes another form of growth and blessings. I’m forever grateful for being given the opportunity to meet new and interesting people from outside my own little world. I’m able to enjoy a richer life by doing what I can to help someone else along the path.

Service work really does keep me sober and adds to my quality of life. You know the phrase “Contempt prior to investigation.” In other words, don’t knock it until you’ve tried it!

Hang tough, get active, and may God bless you on your journey.

Debbie L., Kissimmee, Florida

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Co-founder Quotes

Bill W.

Watch any A.A. of six months working with a Twelfth Step prospect. If the newcomer says, “To the devil with you,” the twelfth-stepper only smiles and finds another alcoholic to help. He doesn’t feel frustrated or rejected. If his next drunk responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other sufferers, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn’t feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his former prospect is sober and happy.

And he well knows that his own life has been made richer, as an extra dividend of giving to another without any demand for a return.

*Reprinted from As Bill Sees It, page 69,
with permission AA World Services, Inc.*

Autonomy Is Not an Excuse

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

The Fourth Tradition seems to me to be one of the least understood and most misinterpreted. During discussions of Tradition Four I've heard opinions expressed all the way from "Autonomous means we can do whatever we want" to "AA as a whole is affected by everything a group does—it's just a matter of degree." In my experience, the truth lies somewhere in between these two.

The idea that a group is autonomous has been used to justify breaking other Traditions (such as affiliating with a club or a treatment facility or failing to be self-supporting by accepting gifts of money or services or rent-free meeting places from other organization), and to justify failure to participate in AA as a whole through the service structure. Disunity has been seen as independence, and self-will has been justified, all in the name of autonomy.

Familiarity with the long form of Tradition Four has helped me understand the principle involved. The long form reads: "With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount."

In the long form, the emphasis is on responsibility to the group conscience, and independence from outside influence. No mention is made of separation from other groups or AA as a whole. Instead, emphasis is placed on concern for the welfare of other groups and of AA as a whole: "On such issues our common welfare is paramount."

On matters affecting only my group we have unlimited freedom. No other group can say when, where, or how often our groups should meet. Our format, meeting length, room setup, and internal business affairs concern only the mem-

bers of our group. We are guided by all of the Twelve Traditions in making our group decisions, but they are our decisions to make. And no other individual or organization has a right to dictate to a group regarding these matters. We ensure our autonomy from outside influence by applying the other Traditions—we are self-supporting; we do not endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to other organizations or causes; we avoid public controversy; we remain nonprofessional.

When the actions of our group affect other groups, however, we are told those groups ought to be consulted. Such situations might include scheduling conflicts, public information efforts, carrying the message into local treatment and correctional facilities, and directing the activities of our local central office. Our group has found that these matters can best be handled in cooperation with other groups through participation in the AA service structure at the district level.

And what about matters affecting AA as a whole? Our group feels strongly that any public anonymity break, solicitation of funds from outside our Fellowship, affiliation with other organizations or institutions—in short, any violation of the Traditions has the potential to affect AA as a whole, and in these matters it is essential to confer with the General Service structure through our area delegate.

We also have a responsibility to share with our delegate, and through him with the entire Fellowship, any bright and shining idea for improvement of Alcoholics Anonymous we may come up with. Do we have a more effective way to carry the message? Have we found the answer to encouraging better communication and participation? Are we aware of a strong need for an additional service committee, pamphlet, video, or other tool for carrying the message? We have not only the opportunity, but the obligation, to share our ideas and information.

Mickey H., Springville, Utah
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Humor from the Grapevine

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."

« « « » » »

Heard on a London sightseeing bus:

Guide: We are now passing one of the most famous pubs in England . . .

Voice: Why?

« « « » » »

Two drunks found themselves walking along a railroad track. "Sam," said one, "I believe this is the longest flight of stairs I ever saw."

"Never mind the stairs," said his pal. "It's this low hand rail that worries me."

« « « » » »

Tact is the art of telling someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip.

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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Current Information

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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

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