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VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP

Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

PAGES 58-71

[Chapter 5 - How It Works - \(pp. 58-71\) \(aa.org\)](#)

How It Works

RARELY have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided that you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought that we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that we deal with alcohol - cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you find him now. Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.



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Monthly Business Mtgs.

- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. –
06/13/2022 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg.-
06/08/2022 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. –
06/20/2022 @ 6:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.
06/18/2022 @ 10 AM&12PM
- ◆ District 27 Business Mtgs.
06/18/2022 @ 12PM-3PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. –
06/23/2022 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. -
06/28/2022 @ 7:00 PM

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it."

Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we were willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter of the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

This section of “How It Works” goes on to say that we often recover through the power of the Twelve Steps. But for those who cannot embrace these steps, the road to recovery will be long and difficult indeed. We must embrace the fact that we can only achieve progress, not perfection. We must embrace the fact that we need help, that we cannot achieve everything on our own. Once we accept our need for a sober support network, we can begin relying on others. Once we can begin relying on others, we can accept that we are not in complete control. These admissions will assist our recovery—but only if we are willing to make them.

The Daily Meeting Reading

Nearly every Alcoholics Anonymous meeting begins with a recitation of “How It Works” before moving on to the primary topic. What makes this passage so significant? It reminds us that if we are not honest with ourselves, we may damage our own recovery. We can accomplish great things when we look inward and accept that we have much work to do. Without this ability, they cannot complete Step One (those who recover are those who are willing to make a vital admission as to their powerlessness). There is no way around it: honesty is integral to the recovery process.

Emphasis on Step Three: Admitting We Are Unmanageable

Once we have admitted that we are unmanageable and have accepted that we are powerless to cure our own disease, we must become convinced that the only solution is to turn our back on the illusion that our willpower has gotten us anywhere.

“The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased.”

No matter how we go about this type of control, “How It Works” notes that the show is usually a flop and the players do not often appreciate our efforts. So we blame others, even though it was our own illusions of control that led to the mess in which we now find ourselves. Eventually, however, we will learn that to give up our self-will is to experience true relief. The more religious among us may then recite the Third Step Prayer:

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”

The less religious among us may not use prayer, but we will still come to realize that we cannot exert our will onto every situation. Having made this realization, we will be ready to embark on a journey of reflection and self-improvement. And this is when recovery will begin truly elevating us to new heights.

Step Four: Taking Moral Inventory

Once we have begun to let go of selfishness and egocentrism, we are ready to begin Step Four. We cannot do this without Step Three, for we must learn to see how many of our troubles were of our own making. We have to learn to see how our downfall has been caused by self-will run riot. An analogy is made in the text of “How It Works” to the manner in which a business takes inventory. They look for damaged or missing goods to determine whether or not their store has any issues that need solving. When taking a moral inventory, we do much the same thing with our own character. Primarily, we are looking for resentments, which can be much like poison to us if left unchecked.

“How It Works” explains how this moral inventory may be written:

“On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?”

It should be noted that their sample list also includes pride and fear. Living our lives in fear is no better than holding onto resentments. Furthermore, hurt pride can drive us to abuse drugs and alcohol, or to commit vengeful acts against people who might have meant no wrong. We have to see how our emotions have gotten the better of us if we wish to grow and remain sober. It is noted in “How It Works” that we will only be successful in this endeavor if we leave no stone unturned. We must be thorough, or else we may as well have not bothered with the list at all.

We must also realize when doing our moral inventory that those who have wronged us were not perfect. If we can attribute our own wrongdoings to spiritual sickness, we must be willing to do the same for others. It is important to focus on our side of the street. Our resentments. Our fears. And lastly, any sexual conduct that could be called selfish, dishonest, or otherwise harmful to the other parties involved. The conduct of others is not our concern—not if we wish to remain sober, anyway.

Upon completing this step, we will learn much about ourselves. Some of this knowledge will not sit well with us. Nonetheless, “How It Works” states that we will have made a good beginning. And as long as we continue striving for progress, with a willingness to return to Step Four in the future if need be, we will have done well. For the more we learn about our condition, the more we can do to change it. Knowledge of ourselves is the key to recovery. If we can embrace this key, we will unlock the joyous path that leads us to the wonders of sober living.

STEP 6

**We were entirely ready to
have God remove all these
defects of character.**



AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Six:

An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

1. Should my fellow group members and I go out and raise money to endow several AA beds in our local hospital?
2. Is it good for a group to lease a small building?
3. Are all the officers and members of our local club for AAs familiar with "Guidelines on Clubs" (which is available free from GSO)?
4. Should the secretary of our group serve on the mayor's advisory committee on alcoholism?
5. Some alcoholics will stay around AA only if we have a TV and card room. If this is what is required to carry the message to them, should we have these facilities.

Upcoming Events

JUNE 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Gratitude Dinner Planning Mtg. 6:00 pm	7	8 Archives Committee Mtg: 6:00 pm	9	10	11
12	13 Steering Committee Mtg.: 6:00 pm	14	15	16	17	18 District 27 Committees Mtg.: 10am-12 pm District 27 Business Mtg.: 12pm-3pm
19	20 Intergroup Rep. Mtg. 6:60 pm	21	22	23 District 7 GSR Mtg.: 7:00pm	24	25
26	27	28 District 37 Mtg.: 7:00 pm	29	30		



Your Vancouver Archives, serves Districts 7 and 37 of Western Washington Area 72.

We need your group history for the 2022 Pacific Northwest Conference (PNC) on Zoom! Archives will have a Zoom breakout room with a video display of our local group history! SHARE YOUR GROUP HISTORY through books, letters, fliers, reports, coffee mugs, fliers, anything that represents your group through the years. Sharing our history is vital for our future generations in carrying the message! You can bring your items to the next Archives Committee Meeting, which meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Intergroup Office OR call Cindy at (702) 806-6466 and I can meet you, and give you a receipt for the temporary display of your items, which will be returned upon completion of our video. We can also permanently house your historical items in our Vancouver Archives Repository, which is secure and climate controlled.

Current Projects:

- PNC planning. Possible Zoom break-out room for local display.
- Refurbishing Grapevine binders that have developed rust.
- Continued digitization of audio cassettes, cd's and group history. This includes storage of "born" digital documents, such as Minutes, Agendas, Financial Reports and event fliers.

Email to: dist7archives@area72aa.org

Upcoming Events:

- 06/08/22 5:30-6:30 p.m. Archives Committee Meeting at Intergroup Office.
- 06/24-26/2022 Pacific Northwest Conference will be via Zoom.

Our Area 72 is hosting this year!

Contact Cindy M. with any questions or comments at:

dist7archives@area72aa.org or call/text: (702) 806-6466

In Service, Vancouver AA Archives Committee

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS MAY 2022

May 2022	Group Name	Contribution
04/29/2022	Primary Purpose of Camas & Washougal	20.00
05/02/2022	Sunday Night Alternatives	333.60
05/02/2022	Rock Bottom Recovery	200.00
05/03/2022	Women's Daily Supplemental	7.00
05/03/2022	Sunday Night Alternatives	333.60
05/03/2022	Primary Purpose	20.00
05/04/2022	Hockinson Group	133.09
05/05/2022	Women's Daily Supplemental	22.50
05/05/2022	RoundTable Group	100.00
05/06/2022	Chapter 9 Couples	100.00
05/06/2022	Ready And Willing	50.00
05/06/2022	The Lighthouse	50.00
05/06/2022	Sunday Solutions	19.13
05/06/2022	Name In The Hat	328.61
05/06/2022	Sober Uppers	250.00
05/09/2022	A New Morning	278.43
05/09/2022	First Shot	170.16
05/10/2022	Camas Group	58.43
05/16/2022	Wayfarers	41.76
05/16/2022	Wayfarers	104.69
05/16/2022	B&P	1386.00
05/18/2022	There Is A Solution	56.00
05/25/2022	Rock Bottom Recovery	25.00
Individual Contributions		300.00

SHARED BY MEMBERS

FROM RARELY TO NEVER?

I have heard so many people in A.A. say that Bill Wilson wanted to change the word "Rarely..." to the word "Never..." in the opening of "How It Works", that I just wanted to bring this rumor to the light of truth. In the book "Pass It On" (the green AA history book which came out 13 years after Bill died) it says on page 200:

"According to an apocryphal story (which means "a story of doubtful authenticity"), Bill was asked in later years whether there was any change he wished he could make in the Big Book, and he replied that he would change 'rarely' to 'never'. Bill himself said he never considered that change."

"Rarely - or Never?"

How co-founder Bill Wilson answered a frequently asked question.

The AA Grapevine, December 1978

From time to time over the years, some AA members will question the wording of the first sentence of Chapter 5 of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." Why, the enthusiastic member asks, doesn't the Big Book say, "Never have we seen a person fail..."?

This question was answered - several times - by an AA well qualified to speak on the subject, since he wrote the book, with the assistance of other early members.

Bill Wilson, AA's co-founder, answered a 1961 letter from Minnesota with these words (preserved, like those of the following letter, in the archives at the AA General Service Office): "Concerning your comment about the use of the word 'rarely' in Chapter 5 of the Big Book: My recollection is that we did give this considerable thought at the time of writing. I think the main reason for the use of the word 'rarely' was to avoid anything that would look like a claim of a 100% result. Assuming, of course, that an alcoholic is willing enough and sane enough, there can be a perfect score on [a person of this sort]. But since willingness and sanity are such elusive and fluctuating values, we simply didn't want to be too positive. The medical profession could jump right down our throats.

"Then, too, we have seen people who have apparently tried their very best, and then failed, not because of unwillingness, but perhaps by reason of physical tension or some undisclosed quirk, not known to them or anyone else. Neither did we want to over encourage relatives and friends in the supposition that their dear ones could surely get well in AA if only they were willing. I think that's why we chose that word. I remember thinking about it a lot.

And at the 1970 General Service Conference, this Ask-It-Basket question was addressed directly to Bill: "If there was any change you would make in the Big Book, would it be to change the word 'rarely' to 'never' at the start of Chapter 5.

Bill answered, "No."

Vancouver Area Intergroup 2022 Newsletter will be distributed in the first week of each month instead of the middle of the month.

If you would like to share your :

- AA Birthday on the Calendar
- Experience Strength & Hope
- AA related content or topics
- AA Flyers

In the Upcoming Newsletters please feel free to email :

vancaa@vanintgrp.com

You Are Wanted Needed & Loved!

****** The Primary Purpose will no longer include the Financial Reports or the Meeting Minutes from either the Steering Committee Meeting or the Intergroups Rep Meeting. Reports and Minutes can now be found on the website under the documents tab.******

[Documents | Vancouver Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous \(vancouveraa.org\)](http://vancouveraa.org)

