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VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP

Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

PAGES 89-103

[Chapter 7 - Working With Others - \(pp. 89-103\) \(aa.org\)](#)



Working With Others

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends — this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Perhaps you are not acquainted with any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, ministers, priests or hospitals. They will be only too glad to assist you. Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately a lot of prejudice exists. You will be handicapped if you arouse it. Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish, but it happens that because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. So cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim.

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Monthly Business Mtgs.

- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg. -
08/03/2022 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. -
08/08/2022 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. -
08/15/2022 @ 6:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.
08/20/2022 @ 10 AM&12PM
- ◆ District 27 Business Mtgs.
08/20/2022 @ 12PM-3PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. -
08/22/2022 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. -
08/25/2022 @ 7:00 PM

How to Approach Fellow Sufferers

The first bit of advice offered by “Working With Others” pertains to finding a fellow sufferer in the first place. It is suggested that we try asking around. Suggestions include medical professionals, religious leaders, and others who might regularly counsel addicts and alcoholics. The only problem with this is that most of these individuals are bound to confidentiality. But if you truly feel a calling, you can always consider going into these fields yourself. Until then, you might simply try asking other people you know in recovery. Some sponsors don’t have time to take on anyone new, and they might appreciate a bit of help.

“Working With Others” notes that we shouldn’t push the issue if someone doesn’t want our help. They might just not be ready at the moment. This doesn’t mean that they won’t come to us at a later date. But if they see us as pushy, we may ruin the likelihood of them returning to us in the future. “Working With Others” also suggests that we not present ourselves as evangelists or reformers. Some might appreciate such a tactic, but many newcomers might not. Again, we don’t want to put them off.

One of the best ways to keep ourselves from ruining this opportunity is by learning a bit about the addict or alcoholic in question. “Working With Others” states:

“If there is any indication that he wants to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in him—usually his wife. Get an idea of his behavior, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition, and his religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if the tables were turned.”

It’s best for us to wait until the addict/alcoholic in question reaches rock bottom. In many cases, however, the family might not be okay with waiting until they go on another spree. “Working With Others” notes that there’s no perfect advice for this particular situation. But when they are ready, and they agree to speak with us, we should keep the conversation focused on substance abuse. Don’t focus on recovery just yet. Also don’t go on a rant or lecture. Let the subject of your service work talk when they feel up to it, but don’t force it on them. Once they accept that they’re speaking to a fellow user—and once they appear to feel comfortable in our presence—we can begin turning the conversation toward recovery.

Helping to the Best of Our Ability

As always, it's best to begin from the beginning. We should speak of the times we tried to stop, and how confused we were to learn of our disease. Again, there are some cautions here, as noted in "Working With Others":

“Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can—if he is not too alcoholic. But insist that if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself.”

At some point during the conversation, your new friend may ask how you recovered. This is when you begin explaining your journeys in sobriety. "Working With Others" suggests stressing the spiritual aspect of the program. Even if this person is atheist or agnostic, make sure they understand that faith and religion are two separate entities. Again, don't make this a lecture. Frame the conversation by discussing your own experiences in recovery. Also, try to keep your language as plain as possible—without speaking down to them. Don't assume they're stupid, because they likely aren't. But remember that you aren't here to intellectualize. You're here to help.

Once you've outlined the spiritual principles, turn your focus toward action. Talk about how you worked the steps to remove your character defects. Tell your new friend exactly what worked for you, leading up to the present conversation. Let them know that you are helping them as a part of your own recovery. But don't be pushy about it. If they hear you out and remain uninterested in your help, let it go. Remember that this conversation has helped you as well. And if this person hears enough to eventually seek help from someone else, then you've still fulfilled your duty. If they do want to see you again, lend them your copy of the Big Book until they get their own. Tell them to read it if they wish to know more about how you got sober.

There are a few more cautions to bear in mind. First, do not spend too long on a prospect who doesn't seem interested in what you're offering. In doing so, you may deprive others who might be more willing. Second, be sure that you aren't playing the role of banker or babysitter. If your prospect needs help finding employment or paying their bills, you *might* help them to an extent. But don't run the risk of enabling, and don't help them in ways you can't afford. If you can't spare any money, or if your money is going toward chronic relapses, you need to put your foot down. You aren't here so that people can take advantage of your kindness. You're here to help someone stay sober. If they make it clear that they aren't interested, you might need to let them go.

The Rewards of Helping Others

Some may worry that helping others makes our lives difficult. At times, this is quite true. We sacrifice time that we could be spending with our families. Sometimes, we lose gas money because someone relapses and we must drive them to treatment. We make ourselves available and give the best of ourselves, sometimes just to watch a fellow addict or alcoholic continue to suffer. But despite all of this, we reap many rewards. And, as “Working With Others” notes, many of these pertain to seeing the good that we create.

Much of this good takes the form of families who find themselves healing after years of struggle. We cannot—and often should not—help an addict or alcoholic get back together with a spouse from whom they’ve separated. But we can help them become better sons, daughters, siblings and parents. And as they learn to embrace a spiritual lifestyle, their families often embrace these principles as well. The following passage from “Working With Others” also outlines the joys of watching another person recover:

“Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”

More than anything, “Working With Others” notes that our spiritual fitness will increase. We may quote one last relevant passage concerning this component of our recovery:

“Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn’t think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.”

Do not take this passage the wrong way. We shouldn’t tempt fate by running headlong into our triggers. It’s only acceptable to enter a location in which drinking occurs if we can identify a truly legitimate purpose for our presence there. We don’t hate liquor or those who drink—we simply accept that our condition makes it impossible for us to join them. Intolerance stands against our code in recovery. If we truly wish to be of service to others, we must bear this in mind. “Working With Others” reminds us that we often created our own turmoil. But by helping others learn about sobriety, perhaps we can finally turn things around for the better.

STEP
8

Make List of Amends



**Made a list of all
persons we had
harmed, and became
willing to make
amends to them all**



AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Eight:

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

1. Does my own behavior accurately mirror the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get some reward—even if not money—for my personal AA efforts?
4. Do I try to sound in AA like an expert on alcoholism? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On AA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or, heaven help me, even on humility?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. Do I know where my local meeting directory comes from?
7. In my own AA life, have I had any experiences which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?
8. Have I read the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions? How about the pamphlet “A.A. Tradition—How It Developed”.
9. Can my group rely on me to fulfill my service responsibilities without someone checking on me?

Upcoming Events

AUGUST 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Archives Committee Mtg: 6:00 pm	4	5	6
7	8 Steering Committee Mtg.: 6:00 pm	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 Intergroup Rep. Mtg. 6:60 pm	16	17	18	19	20 District 27 Committees Mtg.: 10am-12 pm District 27 Business Mtg.: 12pm-3pm
21	22	23 District 37 Mtg.: 7:00 pm	24	25 District 7 GSR Mtg.: 7:00pm	26	27
28	29	30	31			

ARCHIVES CORNER



The Vancouver Archives Committee meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Intergroup and all are welcome!

The Pacific Northwest Conference was held June 24-26, 2022 via Zoom. The Archives Committee set up a Display in St Pauls Church and spent eight hours setting up and recording a 19+ minute video. Our Archivist, Penny D. narrated the display. Jeff C. was the director, Noah S. was the videographer and editor, with Paul J. and Cindy M. assisted as needed. Cindy uploaded and ran the video in a Zoom break-out room at the PNC. We all worked hard and had a lot of fun! We consider this our "dress rehearsal" and will produce another video this Fall, incorporating lessons learned. We plan to make this available to Area 72 Districts and other interested members.

THANK YOU Districts 7 and 37 for your support of the Vancouver Archives Committee and our Vancouver Intergroup Office, which has graciously hosted our meetings, work parties AND has allowed us to use their scanner in digitizing our paper records, such as Primary Purpose Newsletters and Group Minutes, Financials and fliers!

Ongoing projects:

- Grapevine Project: We will be refurbishing our expansive collection of Grapevine binders, by replacing steel rods that have rusted repairs as needed. This is long overdue and the Districts have supported a budget which now makes this possible. Work parties will be conducted in the near future on Saturdays (to be determined) and we need your help! If you are available to participate, we look forward to having you and your sponsees join us!
- • Continued digitization of paper records and audio cassettes, cd's and group histories. This includes storage of "born" digital documents, such as Minutes, Agendas, Financial Reports and event fliers. You can bring your items to the next Archives Committee Meeting, which meets OR call Cindy at (702) 806-6466 and I can meet you, and give you a receipt for your items, which can be digitized, where applicable, and permanently store in the Vancouver Archives Repository, which is secure and climate controlled. You can also email electronic records to us for digitization! Contact Cindy M. with any questions or comments at: dist7archives@area72aa.org

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS JULY 2022

July 2022	Group Name	Contribution
07/01/2022	Westside Group	40.00
07/11/2022	LaCenter Group	37.98
07/11/2022	Ridgefield Recovery	30.00
07/11/2022	Sunday Night Alternative	97.00
07/11/2022	Name In the Hat	701.57
07/11/2022	First Shot	188.20
07/11/2022	The Lighthouse	50.00
07/11/2022	Cathlamet Group	441.85
07/11/2022	Ready And Willing	50.00
07/12/2022	Women's Daily Supplemental	16.00
07/13/2022	There Is A Solution	30.00
07/14/2022	McGillivray Study Group	46.72
07/18/2022	East County Women Shoulder to Shoulder Bingo Fundraiser	1723.00
07/19/2022	Cascade Locks Spiritual Breakfast	60.00
07/19/2022	Men's Eastside	350.65
07/21/2022	Lewis River AA	200.00
07/21/2022	A New Morning	406.29
07/21/2022	Camas Group	22.98 35.74
07/24/2022	Anchor Point Counseling	10.00
07/25/2022	Hockinson AA	121.02
07/27/2022	Stevenson AA	250.00
Individual Contributions		330.00

SHARED BY MEMBERS

The History Of The Serenity Prayer

As found on the backs of sobriety chips, The Serenity Prayer, the most popular of the prayers now used to open or to close a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, was written by an American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, in about 1932-33. This is the form used in Alcoholics Anonymous:

***God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.***

Reverend Niebuhr is believed to have written the original version of the Serenity Prayer, which reportedly shows up in sermons at Heath Evangelical Church in Heath, Massachusetts throughout the 1930's, where it caught the ear of church goers. Because of its resonance, it quickly became popular with them.

The prayer seems to have gone through many changes in wording in its early days of circulation. One source suggests the prayer originally asked for courage first, as in "Father, give us courage to change what must be altered," without commenting on acceptance (Wiki). Published in A Book of Prayers and Services for the Armed Forces in 1931, its phrasing was, "O God and Heavenly Father/Grant to us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed./Courage to change that which can be changed, and wisdom to know the one from the other/through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

In a slightly abbreviated form, one close to the way it's now repeated in AA, the prayer made its way into an obituary in the New York Herald newspaper in 1942, where AA member Jack S. read and liked it. He brought the prayer to the attention of Bill W., who reportedly later said, "Never had we seen so much AA in so few words." Members at the General Service Office agreed to mail out 500 separately printed copies of the Serenity Prayer donated by Jack S. to AA groups nation-wide in late 1942.

From there, it caught on like wildfire in AA groups, where it took its place alongside the traditional Lord's Prayer and the Prayer of St. Francis, both cited in the Big Book. Its popular appeal quickly made it a favorite, perhaps in part because of its powerfully calming impact and its secular appeal. The Grapevine published the Serenity Prayer as it is now known in AA in 1951.

Genuine Precursors

There are several genuine precursors to the Serenity Prayer in religious history. The idea that we should carefully consider what is actually under our own domain to change or control is found in the early Greek philosopher Epictetus, who advises: "Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens. Some things are up to us and some things are not up to us. Our opinions are up to us, and our impulses, desires, aversions—in short whatever is our own doing. Our bodies are not up to us, nor are our possessions, our reputations, or our public offices" (Wiki). Precursors are also traced to an 8th century Buddhist scholar, a 12th century Jewish philosopher, and Mother Goose, which is juxtaposed by 20th century philosopher WW Bartley with Niebuhr's prayer without further comment:

***For every ailment under the sun
There is a remedy, or there is none;
If there be one, try to find it;
If there be none, never mind it.***

Although the ideas embraced in the Serenity Prayer are popular and it is quoted regularly in AA meetings, emblazoned on tokens, and familiar to many, it is not easy to apply to day-to-day living. The unqualified acceptance of things as they are, and the knowledge that nothing very much can be done to change anything outside of our own attitudes and beliefs, is humbling, to say the least. But that, of course, is why it remains as the most popular of AA's prayers. "God, Grant us the Serenity..."

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 :

vanintgrp@gmail.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)

