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VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

PAGES 281-288

Big Book - 2.14 (1) The Missing Link

THE MISSING LINK

*He looked at everything as the cause of his unhappiness—
except alcohol.*

When I was eight or nine years old, life suddenly became very difficult. Feelings began to emerge that I did not understand. Depression crept into my life as I started to feel alone, even in crowded rooms. In fact, life didn't make much sense to me at all. It's hard to say what sparked all of this, to pinpoint one fact or event that changed everything forever. The fact of the matter was, I was miserable from early on in my life.

It was all very confusing. I remember isolating on the playground, watching all the other children laughing and playing and smiling, and not feeling like I could relate at all. I felt different. I didn't feel as if I was one of them. Somehow, I thought, I didn't fit in.

My school marks soon reflected these feelings. My behavior and attitude seemed to become troublesome to everyone around me. I soon began spending more time in the principal's office than in the classroom. My parents, perplexed by such an unhappy son, began having difficulties. My house was soon filled with the sounds of arguments and yelling about how to handle me. I found that running away from home could supply me with some sort of temporary solace. Until of course, the police would find me and bring me back to my house and my worried parents.



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Monthly Business Mtgs

- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. –
11/013/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg.-
11/08/2023 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.
11/18/2023 @ 2pm-4pm
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. –
11/20/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. –
11/28/2023 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. -
11/30/2023 @ 7:00 PM

About that time I started seeing therapists and specialists, each with a different theory and a different solution. They conducted special tests and interviews designed to get to the root of my troubles, and came to the conclusion that I had a learning disability and was depressed. The psychiatrist started me on some medication, and the problems in school started to clear up. Even some of the depression began to ease up for a bit. However, something still seemed fundamentally wrong.

Whatever the problem, I soon found what appeared to be the solution to everything. At age fifteen, I traveled with my family to Israel. My brother was to be bar mitzvahed atop Masada. There was no legal drinking age, so I found it quite easy to walk into a bar and order a drink. New Year's Eve fell in the middle of the trip, and since the Jewish calendar celebrates a different New Year than the Gregorian calendar, the only celebration was being held in the American sector of a university. I got drunk for the first time that night. It changed everything.

A stop at a local bar began the evening. I ordered a beer from the waitress and as I took the first sip, something was immediately different. I looked around me, at the people drinking and dancing, smiling and laughing, all of whom were much older than I. Suddenly, I somehow felt I belonged. From there, I made my way to the university, where I found hundreds of other Americans celebrating New Year's Eve. Before the night was over, I had started a fight with a number of college-aged drunken fellows and returned to the hotel stinking drunk and riddled with bruises. Ah yes, what a grand evening it was! I fell in love that night—with a beverage.

Returning to the States, I was determined to continue with my newfound love affair. I found myself trying to convince my friends to join me, but I was met with resistance. Still determined, I set out to find new friends, friends who could help me maintain this fantastic solution to my most desperate problems. My escapades started as a weekend pursuit and progressed into a daily obsession. At first, it took several beers to get me drunk to my satisfaction. However, within three years, it took a fifth and a half of vodka, a bottle of wine, and several beers in an evening's time to satisfactorily black me out. I would obtain alcohol by any means necessary. That meant lying, stealing, and cheating. My motto was, if you felt like I did, you'd have to get drunk too.

As the feelings of hopelessness and depression progressed, so did my drinking. Thoughts of suicide came more and more frequently. It felt as if things were never going to change. Progress with my therapist came to almost a complete halt. The hopelessness was compounded by the fact that the one thing that was bringing me relief, the one thing I counted on to take the pain away, was ultimately destroying me. The end, I feared, was close. garage. It was difficult to manage.

My last semester in high school marked my bottom. It was everyday drinking then. Since I had already been accepted at college, I consciously decided to make that last semester one big party. But it was no fun at all. I was miserable. I graduated narrowly and took a job at a local my drinking and a job since they were both full time, but I concocted all kinds of lies to ensure that nothing would interfere with my drinking. After being repeatedly reprimanded at work for being late in the mornings, I made up a story to hide the fact that I was always hung over. I told my manager that I had cancer and needed to go to the doctor for treatment every morning. I would say whatever I needed to say to protect my drinking.

More often, I was having these little moments of clarity, times I knew for sure that I was an alcoholic. Times when I was looking at the bottom of my glass asking myself, Why am I doing this? Something had to give, something had to change. I was suicidal, evaluating every part of my life for what could be wrong. It culminated in one last night of drinking and staring at the problem. It made me sick to think about it, and even sicker to continue drinking it away. I was forced to look at my drinking as the chief suspect.

The next day I went to work, late as usual, and all day long I could not stop thinking about this very real problem. I could go no further. What was happening to me? Therapy hadn't fixed my life—all those sessions; I was still miserable. I might as well just kill myself, drink my way into oblivion. In one last desperate fight for a solution, I reviewed my life, searching for the missing link. Had I left out some crucial bit of information that would lead to a breakthrough, making it possible for life to become just a little more bearable? No, there was nothing. Except of course my drinking.

The next morning I went to see my therapist. I told him I'd decided to quit therapy, because after eight years, it wasn't working. But I decided to tell him how I had been searching through my life for that missing link and had come up with only one thing I had never told him: that I drank. He began asking me questions—he asked about quantities, frequency, what I drank. Before he was even halfway through, I broke down and began sobbing. I cried, "Do you think I have a problem with drinking?" He replied, "I think that is quite obvious." I then asked, "Do you think I'm an alcoholic?" And he answered, "You are going to have to find out for yourself." He pulled a list of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings out of his desk drawer; he had already highlighted the young people's meetings.

He told me to go home and not drink at all for the rest of the day. He would call me at nine p.m. and wanted to hear that I hadn't taken a drink. It was rough, but I went home and locked myself in my room, sweating it out until he called. He asked if I had had a drink. I told him I had not and asked what I should do next. He told me to do the same thing tomorrow, except tomorrow I should also go to the first meeting on the list he had highlighted. The next day I went to my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was eighteen years old.

In the parking lot, I sat in my car for about fifteen minutes before the meeting started, trying to work up the courage to go in and face myself. I remember finally working up the nerve to open the door and get out, only to close the door, dismissing the notion of going into the meeting as ridiculous. This dance of indecisiveness went on about fifty times before I went in. Had I not gone in, I believe I would not be alive today.

The room was very smoky and filled with apparently happy people. Finding a seat in the back, I sat down and tried to make sense of the format. When the chairperson asked if there were any newcomers present, I looked around and saw some hands go up, but I certainly wasn't ready to raise my hand and draw attention to myself. The meeting broke up into several groups, and I followed one group down the hall and took a seat. They opened a book and read a chapter titled "Step Seven." After the reading, they went around the table for comments, and for the first time in my life, I found myself surrounded by people I could really relate with. I no longer felt as if I was a total misfit, because here was a roomful of people who felt precisely as I did, and a major weight had been lifted. I happened to be in the last chair around the table to speak and, confused by the reading, all I could say was, "What the heck are shortcomings?"

A couple of members, realizing I was there for my first meeting, took me downstairs and sat down with me and outlined the program. I can recall very little of what was said.

I remember telling these members that this program they outlined sounded like just what I needed, but I didn't think I could stay sober for the rest of my life. Exactly how was I supposed to not drink if my girlfriend breaks up with me, or if my best friend dies, or even through happy times like graduations, weddings, and birthdays.

They suggested I could just stay sober one day at a time. They explained that it might be easier to set my sights on the twenty-four hours in front of me and to take on these other situations when and if they ever arrived. I decided to give sobriety a try, one day at a time, and I've done it that way ever since.

When I entered Alcoholics Anonymous, I had done some damage physically, had a bouquet of mental quirks, and was spiritually bankrupt. I knew I was powerless over alcohol and that I needed to be open-minded toward what people suggested for recovery. However, when it came to spirituality, I fought it nearly every step of the way. Although raised in an ethnic and religious Jewish household, I was agnostic and very resistant to anyone and anything that I perceived to be imposing religious beliefs. To my surprise, Alcoholics Anonymous suggested something different.

The idea that religion and spirituality were not one and the same was a new notion. My sponsor asked that I merely remain open-minded to the possibility that there was a Power greater than myself, one of my own understanding. He assured me that no person was going to impose a belief system on me, that it was a personal matter. Reluctantly, I opened my mind to the fact that maybe, just maybe, there was something to this spiritual lifestyle. Slowly but surely, I realized there was indeed a Power greater than myself, and I soon found myself with a full-time God in my life and following a spiritual path that didn't conflict with my personal religious convictions.

Following this spiritual path made a major difference in my life. It seemed to fill that lonely hole that I used to fill with alcohol. My self-esteem improved dramatically, and I knew happiness and serenity as I had never known it before. I started to see the beauty and usefulness in my own existence, and tried to express my gratitude through helping others in whatever ways I could. A confidence and faith entered my life and unraveled a plan for me that was bigger and better than I could have ever imagined.

It wasn't easy, and it has never been easy, but it gets so much better. Since that first meeting, my life has completely changed. Three months into the program I started college. While many of my college classmates were experimenting with alcohol for the first time, I was off at meetings and A.A. get-togethers, becoming active in service work, and developing relationships with God, family, friends, and loved ones. I rarely thought twice about this; it was what I wanted and needed to do.

Over the last seven years, nearly everything I thought I could not stay sober through has happened. Indeed, sobriety and life are full of ups and downs. Occasionally depression can creep back into my life and requires outside help. However, this program has provided me with the tools to stay sober through the death of my best friends, failed relationships, and good times like birthdays, weddings, and graduations. Life is exponentially better than it ever was before. I'm living out the life I used to fantasize about, and I have a whole lot of work still in front of me. I have hope to share and love to give, and I just keep going one day at a time, living this adventure called life.



AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films .

1. Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I might make it seem unattractive?
2. Am I always careful to keep the confidences shared with me as an AA member?
3. Am I careful about throwing AA members' names around—even within the Fellowship?
4. Am I ashamed of being a recovered, or recovering alcoholic?
5. What would AA be like if we were not guided by the ideas in Tradition Eleven? Where would I be?
6. Am I careful not to identify myself or others as members of AA when I post certain things on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram?
7. Is my AA sobriety attractive enough that a sick drunk would want such a quality for himself?
8. If my group has its own website, have we considered this Tradition when we designed it, how accessible it is, and the type of content that it offers?

CONCEPT ELEVEN:

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

How do I measure my service in A.A.? This concept suggests that I inventory the quality I give to the tasks God gives me, and the dedication in which I go about performing these tasks. Do I prepare myself through prayer and meditation before each session I spend with someone I sponsor? Will I speak with the same dedication at a meeting with five people as I do at a meeting of over a hundred people? What about quality and dedication in my home and work life? Will I make amends or change or do whatever is necessary in my program to maintain the quality of my love relationships? Will I not be content with an acceptable level of performance in my job when I know I could do an assignment better if I spent more effort on it? Do I examine my day and plan to do my toughest job first? The toughest job for me is to write inventory and work the step, tradition, or concept of service I am on in my program of spiritual growth. Successes in A.A. do things that failures don't like to do. I also want to examine how I can be of service to you in helping you give quality and dedicated service. Am I as willing to go to any length to help you do a good job, as I am to do a good job for myself? Will I take the time and trouble to share whatever experience, strength, and hope that I might have that you might want? Bill now comments on the importance of quality and dedication in A.A. since the "lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service." The reading then names the twelve standing committees of the General Service Board.

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS OCTOBER 2023

October 2023	Group Name	Contribution
10/03/2023	Castle Rock Survivors	300.00
10/03/2023	Women In Recovery	150.00
10/09/2023	Name In The Hat	771.01
10/09/2023	She Who Remembers	40.00
10/09/2023	Ridgefield AA	40.00
10/11/2023	Men's Fireside	100.00
10/13/2023	Ready & Willing	16.01
10/13/2023	First Shot	127.20
10/13/2023	East County Women's Group	141.00
10/13/2023	Lighthouse	50.00
10/17/2023	Sunday Night Alternative	421.00
10/18/2023	Coffee Break	4.00
10/23/2023	Over 55	240.00
10/23/2023	Cathlamet Group	144.34
10/23/2023	Cascade Locks Spiritual Breakfast	99.00
10/23/2023	Recovery Bound	200.00
10/23/2023	B&P	319.00
10/25/2023	Doin' Right on Thursday Night	170.00
10/31/2023	Minnehaha	138.00
10/31/2023	A New Morning	346.99
10/31/2023	Anchor Point	10.00
Individual Contributions		85.00 pp 35.00 82.64

Upcoming Events

November 2023

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

Archives Corner November

D7/37ArchivesCommittee
Business Meeting Highlights
10/11/2023

Old Business:

Paul acquired a “New Cover” copy of the 4th Edition of the Big Book for the archives.

Paul reported that he had spoken to a representative of the Clark Co. Historic Museum and found

that he was mistaken about them moving. When he asked as to what openings they had on their

1st Friday venue he was told that both November 3rd and December 1st were open. After briefly

describing the nature of the event, Paul asked if there was a motion to try and put together a small to medium size display for December 1st at the CCHM. Jeff made the motion, James seconded it and it was approved unanimously.

New Business:

11/04/2023 @ 10am Western Washington Area 72 Archives Quarterly. Hybrid Quarterly hosted

by the Archives Steering Committee, Area 72 Archives Repository, 3905 Steilacoom Boulevard

SW, Lakewood, WA 98499. Zoom ID: 850 7828 7751 Password: Archives

Motion to adjourn by James H. at 5:56pm, Seconded by Jeff C. Closed with the Responsibility Statement.

Feel free to e-mail with any questions or comments: dist7archives@area72aa.org

TREATMENT AND FACILITIES

Carry the Message VOL 2

There is no doubt in my mind that getting involved in treatment panels has helped me stay sober. I'm the type of alcoholic that needs both accountability and to get outside myself. Besides getting a sponsor, taking the twelve steps, and starting my road to recovery with ninety meetings in ninety days; getting involved in treatment panels has been key in my spiritual growth. At seven months sober my sponsor signed me up for a panel at a local detox facility. I was excited to try something new, but also uncomfortable and nervous. Prior to sharing on this panel my experience speaking in front of people was limited. I was unsure if I could carry a message with "depth and weight" (as Dr. Silkworth describes in the *Doctor's Opinion*), but my sponsor encouraged me to give it a try.

At this point in my recovery, I was working through the ninth step: direct amends to all persons I had harmed. I was living at a friend's house because my marriage was in its last days.

This transitional period of my life was the most emotional and revolutionary days I have experienced. Service work was exactly what I needed at that time. I am grateful that my sponsor pushed me to do something outside of my comfort zone.

After finishing that first detox panel I felt better about my abilities to share my experience, strength, and hope with others who suffer from the same condition. It also made me feel like I was giving back. The program as outlined in the Big Book of A.A. along with a higher power, and the fellowship had, at this point, pulled me back to some semblance of sanity. The next month I volunteered for the same panel. I realized that inspiring hope in others would only be a byproduct of keeping myself sober. Selfish altruism, that is the paradox of AA.

The next month the Treatment and Facilities Coordinator position at my home group became vacant and I volunteered to fill it. The group required at least 9 months of sobriety, and I was two weeks away from that requirement. The group made an exception and I have been serving in the role for nearly a year.

My home group now organizes two treatment panels every month and a third in months with five Wednesdays. It is by far the most fulfilling service work I have been involved with. There are so many still suffering in our local treatment facilities and beyond. You can spark change and inspire hope!

Getting involved with treatment panels is a great way to give back and keep what you have. We all have stories of hope to share. Your story may save someone's life. If you are afraid of sharing your story, ask God for the courage to change. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

If you are interested in volunteering, or just want more information on what we are doing for treatment centers, please contact the District Seven Committee Chair, Matt G. at

dis7treatment@area72aa.org.

Vancouver Area Intergroup 2023 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 \(vancouveraa.org\)](https://vancouveraa.org)

