



The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter April 2014

We must never be blinded by the futile philosophy that we are just the hapless victims of our inheritance, of our life experience, and of our surroundings-that these are the sole forces that make our decisions for us. This is not the road to freedom. We have to believe that we can really choose. (ABSI, pg 4)

?????????????Suggestion/Must?????????????????

Upon entering AA, I was informed that this is a program of recovery based on suggestions that I would read and hear. I came to AA with the gift of desperation, then was informed that there were no musts, only suggestions, but is this true? It is suggested I don't drink, that I get a sponsor, go to a meeting every day, do a 90 in 90, get active, find a higher power. Only these decisions can be made by you, though some seem more clear than others. Let us not forget about the man about to jump out of an airplane, and his coach suggests to him that he may want to pull the rip cord, though if he wants to live, he must pull the rip cord.

Please remember that this paper is your voice. The chances of it being read are high, for the printed form ends up in most of the meetings within district 12, and out on the world wide web. You can write whatever you desire, as long as it stays within the confines of AA, its traditions, and concepts. Below are two articles dealing with the above subject, one old, and one recent. The May/ June newsletter is going to focus on sober trips and events for the upcoming summer, and how you are able to stay sober during the upcoming vacation time.

Believes 1st Step Has Become A "Must"

We say or used to say there are no "musts" in A.A. That was true when the book was written because at the time AA was in the formative stage and everything was really trial and error. There was no substantial proof that AA would work in more than a few cases. The major portion of AA is still trial and error and I hope it will always remain that way because we are dealing with individuals and each case differs.

But the fact remains that although each case differs in the final analysis the basic starting point is the same. Each individual finally has to admit that "he is powerless over alcohol and that his life is unmanageable"; therefore I believe that the first step in the program of AA has passed the trial and error stage and that we have come to the place where we can and should say that the alcoholic must swallow that first step hook, line and sinker. He must chew it up and digest it so thoroughly that it is absorbed into his system and becomes a living part of him.

If necessary he could and should develop as much of an obsession not to drink. His "no thank you" must become as automatic a thing to him as his former "don't care if I do" answer to an invitation or urge to drink

That 1st step is the keystone to the arch, the hub of the wheel or the corner stone of any structure he wishes to build out of his remaining life. The whole AA program, for the alcoholic, revolves around it or is based on it. There is no use in continuing the treatment for any disease until the patient has arrived at a decision that he has the disease he is being treated for, because as long as he is not thoroughly convinced that he has the disease he will not follow through on the doctor's orders. And when he doesn't follow the doctor's orders he has a relapse or recurrence of the disease.

The first step in the diagnosis of his case is for him to really make a decision that he is an alcoholic and that his life is unmanageable. Then he is ready for the treatment to take effect. The treatment for the alcoholic is the balance of the program of AA, the other 11 steps. And the best part of it is that the balance of the program, although it comes slow to most of us, becomes a pleasure and a joy to try and live by.

I, for one, am thankful that I didn't have any sudden spiritual awakening, because if it had been too easy at the start I probably would have done the same thing I have always done before, lost interest or said, "This is a cinch, all I have to do is not drink." If that happened I would have missed the boat and by this time I would have been drowned and forgotten. So I say that we have come to the place in AA, where we should tell the new man that he must get that first step and get it good. The evidence is all in the favor of that statement and conclusion. ---J.F.H. AA Grapevine, 1947 Linda Vista, California

The *Musts* are Mere *Suggestions*: What do you Think?

We've all heard the phrase, "There are no *musts* in the program, only *suggestions*!" But wait a minute! Dave F. found 103 *musts* and similar declaratives in the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. (see footnote) When this phrase, "no *musts*, only *suggestions*" is uttered in a meeting, heads nod and folks tend to agree. No one likes to be told what to do, especially the defiant, self-driven and prideful alcoholic.

So in easing us into acceptance of our alcoholism and the program of AA, a phrase such as this one may be just what we need. Sure, I can take a few suggestions just as well as the next girl. But don't tell me I *have to* do anything (ego!) because, by the way, I know it all! Thank God for the wise co-founders of this program who labored in love for many hours hashing out the linguistics of this remarkable book, choosing just the right words, phrases, and directions to get our attention and keep us here.

We read in chapter 5, "How It Works," the words "Here are the steps we took, which are *suggested* as a Program of Recovery." So if they are mere *suggestions*, than how important *are* the 12 steps really? To me, and so many others who work through the steps and incorporate them in our daily lives, they are vital. Did I get sober by doing the steps? Without knowing it, I came to AA, accepted powerlessness over 103 Musts in the Big Book by Dave F. found at <http://www.barefootsworld.net/aa103musts>. alcohol, and admitted the unmanageability of my life. I later became willing to turn the power over to the God of my understanding. Steps 1, 2, and 3 were being worked on within just a few weeks without my knowledge of them at the time. The steps and traditions displayed on the vinyl screens on the walls of AA were like a foreign language to me. How was I going to figure it all out?

But once I followed the "suggestions" - going to meetings each day, getting a sponsor I could talk to, joining a group, and getting active with a "job" in a group - I was able to really begin to digest and "work" each step at my own pace with my sponsor. And the results? I didn't want to drink anymore; I began to experience peaceful sleeps, serenity in my day, steady work, wonderful friends, relationships healed and compassion for others. I am now able to sponsor women and try to help others. In doing so, I learn more about myself each day. I attend a full schedule of meetings and enjoy every one of them because I know that this is where I get to learn more about life, love, and God's amazing grace.

"AA. MUST continue to live or most of us will surely die." (Page 565) If I don't go to meetings, I will drink or worse, live a dry, miserable, lonely life. We are given a daily reprieve, we are given the tools (steps), and we are given understanding and loving comrades with whom we may walk this amazing journey of recovery. "But after a while we had to face the fact that we MUST find a spiritual basis of Life - or else." (Page 44) To live free from the bondage of alcohol and the bondage of *self*, and to awaken to the miracles of each new day with one hand in God and one hand in AA, is the gift we all may receive here. The twelve steps are mere suggestions... but for me, I MUST live them in order to be happy and serene. I *suggest* you try them too. Thank you God and thank you AA.

Submitted by: Laurie N. Hooksett, NH

103 Musts in the Big Book by Dave F; found at <http://barefootsworld.net/aa103musts.html>

Announcements

Happy Hour East is having their anniversary party on April 23rd, f

It is not too early to start looking into reserving your room for the 80th AA International Convention, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, July 2nd-5th, 2015. The theme will be "80 years-Happy-Joyous-Free".

This issue of The Voice Within was sponsored through the 7th Tradition

Submitting Articles

Length and format: The newsletter may publish work of different lengths, from snappy one-liners and one-paragraph anecdotes to full-page articles (word count 500 max) **Text** sent by e-mail should be submitted in the body of the message or as attached files, saved in "Word," Handwritten text should be written clearly on one side of the paper. Include your phone number please. **Comments? Email us your comments on any articles, topics, etc.**

Articles are reviewed, selected, and edited by the editorial team. The contents appropriateness is at the sole discretion of the Newsletter Committee.

Absolute Deadline to be considered for April 2014 issue is March 25, 2014

**Newsletter Chair – Richard S. 603-340-6390 The Voice Within News Voicewithinnews@gmail.com
Snail Mail: District 12 NHAA PO Box 3814 Manchester, NH 03105-3814**