



The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter August 2014

Trembling, I stepped from the hospital a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day 1934, I was off again. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere, or would stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before the dawn! In reality that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.

Chapter 1, Bill's Story.

An AA way of life, or a Program?

Greetings fellow members of district 12. One of the benefits of being your editor is that people approach me with idea's that help keep me sober. A comment may be made that allows me to dwell about the subject matter, and try to formulate it into a text which may be beneficial to another alcoholic to help achieve one more day of sobriety. Analyzing if there is a difference between a program versus a way of life is an example of what was presented to me.

When I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous, I kept hearing that one needed to have a program. What is a program, and how does one get this? Are there different one's to choose? Can I Google "program" and find one that will keep me sober? An AA way of life? what is the difference? Is there a difference? If you refer to the two definitions listed below, you can see a difference.

Program: A plan of things that are done in order to achieve a specific result (Merriam- Webster)
A Way of Life: A typical way in which a person or group lives (Macmillan Dictionary)

When I first came into AA, I was taught the importance of having a program. Today, my program has evolved into a way of life. Things I do which enhance my recovery are common practices, which are a combination of prayer, meetings, and working all 12 steps in my daily life, everyday.

Below are three articles from the AA Grapevine magazine, (printed in 1944,1945 and 1949), all authors writing about the importance of a program, and of tolerance. I will end with a quote from Peter M. of Putnam, Conn. who said "**Dear Lord**, so far today I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help.

Yours in service, Richard S.

God Not Important

What is there about a man that causes him to slip? Why, having once accepted something which he so desperately wanted and needed, does he suddenly get drunk? Surely there can be nothing wrong with the Program. It has been effective in too many cases to lay the blame on it; it even proved effective for the slipper for a good period of time. It can and will prove effective for him again if he chooses to use it. If the fault does not lie within the Program then it must be that the fault lies within the man himself. Either he never actually accepted the Program in the first place, or else he accepted it with reservations.

Too Much Attention

But perhaps, and most likely, he gradually lost sight of the A.A. Program in favor of some other related activities and thus just as gradually began re-inflating an ego that had once been satisfactorily deflated. Perhaps he began paying too much attention to the related activities that have somehow become attached to A.A. The result being that he began attaching more and more importance to these related activities and his relation to them and less and less importance to the real A.A. Program. Perhaps he began to believe that these activities *were* the Program.

Over-emphasis

Thus the over-emphasis on the attached but basically unrelated activities tended to obscure in his mind his continuing need for the basic A.A. Program. He began to drop his own A.A. in favor of conventionitis and banquetitis to such an extent that what was once recognized as a desperate need gradually came to be considered as no need at all. His ego and self-sufficiency began to build itself up again. From a program of personal salvation the shift was to a program of personal glorification. Instead of worrying about the problem of alcohol, he began worrying about making his speeches click. Instead of seeking help, he began to seek applause. Pride began to replace humility. He began to lose his salvation because he forgot that he needed it. He no longer needed to be saved because he was saved already. He could now turn his attention to things more important than the search for God.

God Not Important

God was not so important anymore because he had become important in himself. His prayer was no longer "Thy will be done," but "My will be done." The poisonous vapors of self-concern began to cloud his vision. The reliance upon God was over for he had become a self-sufficient alcoholic again, concerned about his own importance and welfare. Then lo and behold--he slipped. In view of these slips it seems essential that we continue to re-examine ourselves as alcoholics and our relationship as alcoholics to the A.A. Program as our way of life.

L.T.C. Ponca, Nebraska (AA Grapevine, 08/1945, Vol5, #3)

On Cultivating Tolerance.

During nine years in A.A. I have observed that those who follow the Alcoholics Anonymous program with the greatest earnestness and zeal, not only maintain sobriety, but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in educational advantages, and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own. I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes. We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes.

To say that one spoke is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance, each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance we might tend to become a bit smug or superior--which of course is not helpful to the person we are trying to help, and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others. No one of us wishes to do anything which might act as a deterrent to the advancement of another--and a patronizing attitude can readily slow up this process.

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important--in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire tolerance should be made by each one of us.

Dr. Bob of Akron AA Grapevine July 1944 Vol 1 #2

WHY lose the first enthusiasm after being a member of A.A. a few months? Isn't the need for sobriety just as great after six months, a year, or many years as when we first entered the new way of life? To me, yes.

The fact should never leave us for a moment that we need this Program now as badly as we did in the beginning. One way to do this is to keep busy in our own group or even visit other groups often. There are always many things to be done to help your own group.

Do we stop and give the thanks so justly deserved for this new life, or do we just drift along? Do all of us read the *Big Book* and all the literature we can, even study it long after the first reading? Sometimes I wonder, when I hear a member say he has never read the 12 Traditions.

To me this Program will always remain a first, and I hope I shall never lose my first enthusiastic reaction. Each day I gain the happiness that was denied me during my drinking years. Each day the thought comes to accept the things I can not change. Each day I give a thought to what my life could and would be without this Program. These are some of the thoughts that keep me enthusiastic.

Z.S. San Anselmo, CA.

March, 1949 Vol 5 #10

Announcements

How long have you been sober? You can get an exact time of your days, hours, minutes and seconds at the AA Grapevine web site.

AAdistrict12.org (our local website with updated information)

October 4th Roundup at St. Raphael's, corner of 3rd and Ferry Street, Manchester NH.
9:00AM to 3:30 PM (\$10.00 contribution gratefully accepted).

October 18th Fall Dinner Dance at The Greek Assumption Church, 111 Island Pond Road,
Manchester NH. 5:00 PM to 11:00 PM \$20.00, \$10.00 after 7:00 PM

Humor

"Only an alcoholic would believe that the solution to loneliness is isolation" (NY, 12/2012)

All issues of The Voice Within are sponsored through the 7th Tradition.

Length and Format: The newsletter may publish works of different lengths, from snappy one-liners and one-paragraph anecdotes, to full page articles (500-1000 word count). Text or attachments sent by e-mail should be submitted in word. Handwritten text can be delivered to myself, or your GSR, who can deliver them to the next district meeting. Articles are reviewed, selected, and edited by the editorial team. The contents appropriateness is at the sole discretion of the newsletter committee.

Deadline for the October issue is September 25th.

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