



The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter December 2014

The Voice Within committee would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year. I would like to give special thanks to Tobbie K. for her work in getting this month's news letter together.

Christmas Lights Are Signals Along A.A. Road

The Red Lights of Christmas are glowing at us from friendly windows and outdoor Christmas trees. They're symbols of cheer--but they're signal lights of warning to *us*.

This is a season of "Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men." But, along with the Christmas rejoicing, this is also a season of emotional upset for many of us. For some years, Christmas thrilled me, yet upset me. Some of my most unexpected difficulties seem to have come on me at the Christmas season. Perhaps it was because I was off my guard. Perhaps I drifted along with the color and pageantry, and confused the Christian rejoicing with "just another opportunity for celebration"--alcoholic celebration.

So, as I reflect on the cheery Red Lights of Christmas, I find myself taking heed of their clear warning. And I say to myself: "My Christmas present to *me* this year can be sobriety for the day."

The Christ Child came into a world of poverty and struggle, but came into it to bring relief, salvation. His birth brought re-birth to the transgressors of the ages. It brought promise of life, of death, and of resurrection.

I feel that A.A. is truly in the spirit of Christmas--and follows the Christ Child. It comes to us as a cause for rejoicing that a means for salvation from our special chaos, our special poverty and struggle is at hand. It comes to many of us in our own "stables"--with the wise men of A.A. guided to us by a mysterious bright star. It brings to us a new life. One with firmness of purpose needed, but one with a program to make that firmness possible.

We have a great gift, direct from the hand of our maker, I fervently believe. The gift of *ourselves*--restored. The gift of life. . .under control and worth something to ourselves and others. The gift of being able to help ourselves through helping others. The gift of self-knowledge, through frank appraisal. The gift of tolerance for others.

Yes, as I see them, the Red Lights of Christmas are signal lights, warning me to be on guard against complacency, reminding me that each day needs attention, that the gifts which have been so freely given can be as freely thrown away through complacency or thoughtlessness.

And, as I read their warning, I also read their message of good cheer, of blessing, of rejoicing. And I give thanks that this day has been a true gift, and pray that tomorrow, and all tomorrows, I may again receive the gift, and receive it well. M.F. Chicago Illinois Dec. 1947, vol 4 #7

12 Tips for Staying Sober During the Holidays

It's that time of year! For people in recovery, the holiday season likely included overindulging in alcohol and other intoxicants as a way to celebrate, escape and/or smooth over awkward rough edges among reuniting family & friends. Since the holidays can be a period of emotional highs and lows wherein loneliness, feelings of anxiety, happiness & sadness can be overwhelming collectively or alone, it is wise to plan ahead. By considering a few of the creative tips I've enlisted from fellow District 12 AA's you too, can successfully take from the holiday season what is important for you and leave the rest behind.

Thanks to all of the people who contributed their thoughts and proven ideas!

1. I keep a soda in hand when @ a party or other holiday function in order to assure the host or hostess that I am taken care of, that he or she does not have to continually ask me if I need a drink.

Madge 41 yrs sober

2. I stay mindful of all of the things and people I am grateful to have in my sober life, particularly my own availability to be present for myself and others. Being reconnected with my family is a big incentive to avoid drinking.

Paul 5 yrs sober

3. If you are at a holiday party and someone asks you if you'd like a drink all you have to say is, 'no thanks.' Further explanation is not necessary. Keeping a soda in hand can also be a great way to avoid being asked.

Brian 24 yrs sober

4. Drive own car to event so you can leave when needed.

Cathy 5 yrs sober

5. I start my day, as any other, on my knees. I visit an Alcathon to share gratitude with my fellows and remember why I continue to do the work, one day at a time.

Tami 5 yrs sober

6. Keep in the day- be on good spiritual ground. You can say 'NO.'

Pat 24 yrs sober

7. Center day around a meeting. Help Others stay sober.

Grateful Don 23 yrs sober

8. Embrace the holiday spirit and get involved in something to help others. Be active and avoid isolation this time of year. Do something tangible like buy some gifts for underprivileged kids or ring the Salvation Army Bell. The holidays are a time for altruism and we are an altruistic fellowship.

Wayne 3 yrs sober

9. If you are anxious or worried about going somewhere with alcohol, don't go. If we don't take care of ourselves no one else will.

Jessica 9 yrs sober

10. Don't drink. Be honest. Listen to learn, learn to listen. Keep it simple.

Walter 39 yrs sober

11. I definitely up my meetings and get involved in service work. I also bring my own beverage and car.

Maura 3 yrs sober

12. Have the phone number of your sponsor and other AA's programmed in your phone. Call them!

Tobbie 2 yrs sober

Safeguarding the sobriety you have worked so vigilantly on achieving will speak volumes to your courage and strength, confidence and well-being. This holiday live one day at a time. Enjoy today. Live today. **Celebrate your sobriety.**

Holiday Lessons

I put down my last drink in September of 1977. All through the first three months of my sobriety I was obsessed with the thought of how I was going to get through the holidays without a drink. I was told to stay in the moment, to concentrate on the day at hand, to take my days one day at a time. My sponsor told me that for an alcoholic a holiday was just another day.

I was far away from my family. The many losses brought on by my disease were magnified tenfold at the holiday season, as was the pain of early recovery. The holidays were the true test of my resolve to stay sober that first year. Experience is a great teacher and some of the greatest lessons in my recovery were learned at that time.

I learned about The Fellowship of AA. By staying close to the people in my home group outside the meeting halls, I was able to associate with AA people throughout the holidays. We had Thanksgiving at the home of a newly sober couple. They invited several people who had nowhere to be on that day to their home. We all cooked, watched football, talked program and laughed over "war stories", our common bond. After dinner we went to a meeting and then back to the house for dessert and more coffee and conversation. When I woke up late Friday morning I was surprised to realize that I had made it through the first of the three holidays sober.

Christmas taught me how to ask for help. As the day approached I used the meetings to express my growing anxiety about being alone on Christmas. As a result a new friend invited me to his home on Christmas Day. He had seven kids, very little money and was newly sober himself. Yet when the gifts were opened that morning there was one with my name on it. I was absorbed into his family and spent the day putting together toys, playing with his kids and of course going to several meetings. The previous year I had spent alone with a case of beer and a TV dinner. By asking for help I was able to experience the unconditional love offered by my friend and his family. Another holiday had come and gone and I still hadn't had a drink.

New Year's Eve taught me about getting outside of myself and helping others. In our area it was customary to have "alkathons" which were marathon meetings. The meetings were put on by individual groups each hour and offered food and plenty of coffee. My home group signed up for the midnight time slot on New Year's Eve at Cambridge City Hospital. About ten of us piled into two cars early that evening. We stopped at a nice restaurant for dinner and then took the hour drive to Cambridge.

This inner city meeting was held in a smoke filled, cold basement. There were several hundred people there and the speakers were frequently interrupted by the sound of wine bottles dropping on the floor. For many of the active winos the sandwiches and relative warmth of the hall represented the total of food and shelter in their lives. Their presence helped me to “remember when” and filled me with gratitude for my newfound gift of sobriety.

I had made it through the holidays. I had learned about fellowship, how to ask for help and how to get outside of myself and care for others. Were these holidays “just another day” as my sponsor had suggested or were they, in fact, holiday gifts from my Higher Power? Dave F. 10/2003

Announcements

- Additional "How to Survive the Holiday Tip" If you are planning to travel to visit friends and family, call ahead to get a current meeting list for that area! You are never alone. Ann C.
- **THE HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE GROUP** is looking to provide annual subscriptions to the AA Grapevine for the local correctional facilities. Every July, the Prison Issue highlights the need and value of this magazine, "our meeting in print". Through the end of January, we will accept donations toward this endeavor. Any contribution will be gratefully appreciated.
- District 12's Function Committee is sponsoring the 2014 New Year's Dinner & Dance, from 6:00PM New Year's Eve to midnight. The event will be held at St. Raphael's Church Hall on Ferry street in Manchester, between 3rd and 4th streets. Appetizers, Pork Loin Dinner, Salad, Dessert, Refreshments, Excellent Speakers, Raffles, More Desserts, Live band & Dancing. Tickets, are \$20 per person available in advance or at the door. For more information contact Maggie N at 603-860-8059 or Terry F. at (603)828-7932, or Bob L at 603-320-1282.

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 February issue is January 31st

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