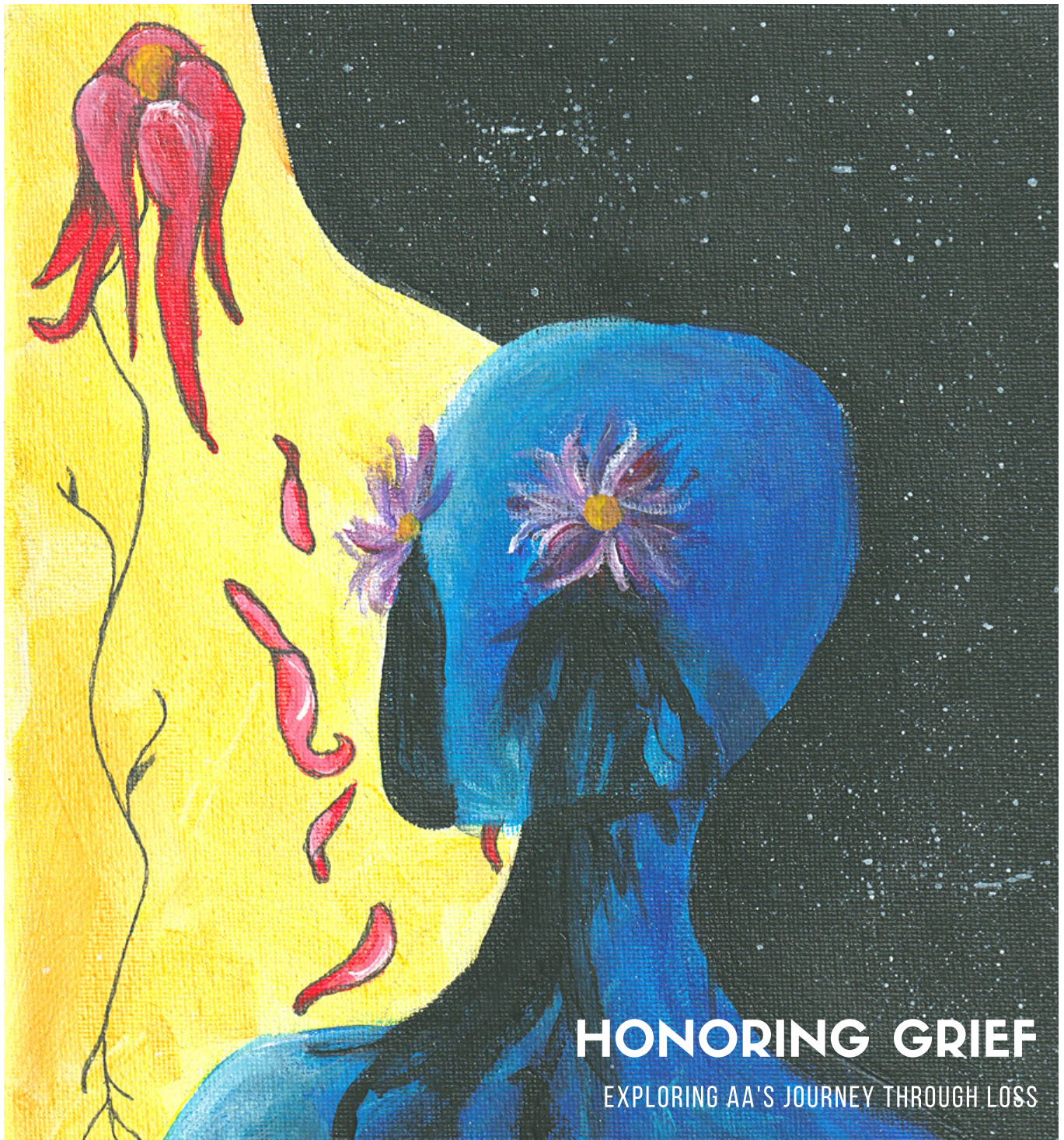


# VOICE WITHIN

DISTRICT 12 NEWSLETTER



# VOICE WITHIN

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2020  
DISTRICT 12 - NHAA  
BEDFORD  
GOFFSTOWN  
HOOKSETT  
MANCHESTER  
NEW BOSTON

Each upcoming issue of The Voice Within will include content from personal interviews on a concept, tradition, and step. Over the course of the next twelve issues we will cover all of the 36 Legacies of Service outlined in the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and 12 Concepts.

We've also featured an article on a topic that is often overlooked, dealing with loss and grief in the halls of Alcoholics Anonymous.

03

PRELUDE TO  
THE CONCEPTS

04

CONCEPT  
ONE

06

TRADITION ONE  
WITH ADDIE

09

STEP ONE  
WITH TJ

12

HONORING  
GRIEF

14

NEWS &  
ANNOUNCEMENTS



# PRELUDE TO THE CONCEPTS

THE VOICE WITHIN IS PROUD TO PRESENT A SERIES ON THE 12 CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE WITH OUR DCM, DAN L.



## BEFORE WE JUMP INTO CONCEPT I, LET'S COVER PERTINENT BACKGROUND ABOUT AA, THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE, AND THE CREATION OF THE CONCEPTS:

The 12 Concepts were formalized over the course of twelve years, between the 1st General Service Conference in 1951 and their final adoption at the 12th General Service Conference in 1962. Bill's first writings about them appear in the Third Legacy Manual before their formal adoption where he harkens back to the 12 Traditions, saying that through trial, error, and difficulty we arrived at these principles. Like the 12 Traditions, they are not set in stone and they can be deviated from, but if we did deviate from them they're a safe place to return. Now we can pass that knowledge on to any group that starts up without having to make those mistakes all over again.

There's a part of the story that to me personally tracks the growing humility in Bill. Maybe to some extent in Dr. Bob also, but definitely in Bill. He and Dr. Bob were the main points of contact and figureheads of the society up to that point and over time Bill learned to let go and realize that the power driving instinct, the great promoter in him is a liability. He needed to find ways to check it.

At this juncture AA was having a huge amount of success but notwithstanding that success Bill sees potential flaws, and others around him see it too. He wasn't doing this alone, and really it was a group of people that became architects of the conference.

One of the first milestones in this transformation was changing the Alcoholic Foundation to the General Service Board. Where the Alcoholic Foundation stood for tons of money and some big thing in New York, we started practicing the 7th tradition that told us that we weren't going to take any money from another but ourselves.

The General Service Board had a much more humble tone to the name. All this happened before the General Service Conference was put into effect.

While that was happening there was also a lot of resistance to change. The idea had been floating around to create some kind of representative function to AA, where the groups could have a voice. But no one likes to have a new boss and the trustees weren't having it. No one seemed to be having it.

Alcoholics don't like change but the impetus ended up being Dr. Bob's cancer diagnosis. Then they realized that we didn't know what to do when these two figures, Bill W. and Dr Bob, disappear. Then there would be no more link between the AA groups and AA world service.

So why is this important? Well, whether or not an individual AA knows it, AA world service does a lot of things that individual groups and even districts and areas cannot do not their own.

After all, what is service? It is anything that makes 12 step work possible. But there are things you can't do to at the group level. For example, it's very hard for a group to put out something like The Voice Within. Other things are hard to do at the district level, which would be like coordinating corrections for all of Area 43, getting the corrections chairs from every district together and working things out. It would be harder still for an individual area to do what AA World Service does, like publish literature in different languages and provide experience and service support to AA groups all over the world. That's why you want to have a link between the groups and the organization that can do that.

It took time for alcoholics to trust themselves. At that time there were more non-alcoholic trustees on the board (Class A - Amateurs) then alcoholic trustees (Class B - Boozers). Now the composition is more alcoholic than non-alcoholic, so we found trust in ourselves there. Even the first couple of conferences had a lot of doubt, they were experimental conferences. It wasn't until 1955 when they said "Alright, here it is. We're going to entrust the groups as the ultimate authority of our fellowship as in Tradition 2."

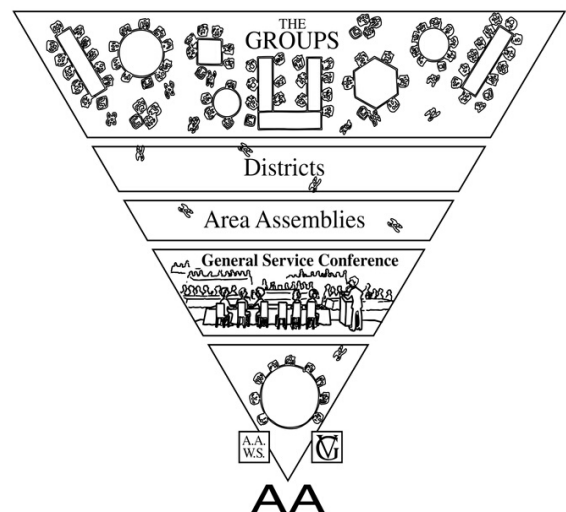
# CONCEPT ONE

FINAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ULTIMATE AUTHORITY FOR A.A. WORLD SERVICES  
SHOULD ALWAYS RESIDE IN THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE OF OUR WHOLE FELLOWSHIP.

*What does this mean?*

Concept One tells us that the fellowship is in charge of policy for world service, the entire fellowship. In AA, the individual is important but Tradition 1 tells us that we have to sometimes subvert our personal ambitions for the greater good of the whole. Really the smallest denominator is the AA group, any two or more alcoholics gathered together. The groups pass on delegated authority to GSR's and delegated authority is passed all the way down the service structure. All the direction for world service stems from there.

What that's setting up is a service structure shaped like an upside down triangle. I think that's important because it gives us a right frame of reference or relationship with the whole, and a humble one. We understand that the master's in charge. In the same way, any authority in AA is delegated so we can be of service.



Concept 1 outlines the structure for world service and AA as a whole: it's a representative democracy with checks and balances; where at every step there is one ultimate authority and then a delegated authority. In one way, you can think of it as Tradition 2 in action, which states that "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience". The Concept takes the idea of our higher power expressing itself in our group conscience and shows us how it looks when we apply it to our whole society. In my view the Concepts do an wonderful job explaining how to have a relationship like that, one built on trust, and have it work in harmony. It all comes down to ultimate and delegated authority.

### *What is ultimate and delegated authority?*

Well, first we should say in this instance that the ultimate authority is our higher power and then that authority's will is supposed to be expressed in our group conscience, to the extent that the members in the group are adhering to spiritual principles. We trust that god's will is being heard. This is the hope, and I believe it to be the case. That's the ultimate authority, and the ultimate authority may then delegate some authority to the coffee maker.

That means that when the coffee maker is at the store and they normally buy the Maxwell House but the Folgers is on sale, they don't have to go back to the ultimate authority to make that decision. That's within their delegated authority. Some of the later concepts cover the rights we give the delegated authority so that they can perform their job well and maintain the harmony between themselves and the ultimate authority.

When the delegated authority feels like they can't choose to do what they need to do, they often feel demoralized. This can have a lot of practicable use even in life outside of AA, because there are many instances where someone has ultimate authority and someone has delegated authority and it can teach you how to work in harmony with them. It could be at work, within the family, all kinds of places.

At the end of the day, adherence to spiritual principles are going to ensure the sobriety of the individual and the viability of the group. In this way it also ensures the viability of AA and AA World Services as a whole. From 1955 to 2019 it's worked out pretty well, its amazing!

### **Questions for Groups to Ask Themselves (from aa.org):**

- Does our group have a general service representative (G.S.R.)?
- Do we feel that our home group is part of A.A. as a whole and do our group's decisions and actions reflect that?
- Do we hold regular group conscience meetings encouraging everyone to participate? Do we pass that conscience on to the district, area, or the local intergroup meetings?
- Is the "collective conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous at work in my home group? In my area?
- Where do we fit in the upside-down triangle of A.A.?
- Are we willing to do what it takes to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions?

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# TRADITION 1 WITH ADDIE

OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST, PERSONAL RECOVERY DEPENDS UPON AA UNITY.

*When were you first introduced to the Traditions?*

One of the first meetings I went to was Raymond Saturday Morning Courage to Change Group and they spent as much time focusing on the traditions as they did on the steps. I liked it but admittedly didn't understand it very much at the beginning. What it did do was help me get a better framework about what AA was outside of the groups I was going to. Our literature says on the front of it "how we get sober and how our society functions", so the Traditions show me how this thing still works 85 years later. The reason they had to put these in place was so it didn't die early on. That's when I first got introduced to it.



I love the line "Without unity, the heart of AA would cease to beat." The image of that is really meaningful to me, that unity is at the core of this thing. It speaks to principles over personalities; that at the core we have to stay together because if we don't, we die. And then I think of the thousands of people after us and what would they do? Where would I have been? I would be dead by now if it wasn't for that. That imagery of the heart beating, pumping the life giving blood out to keep the rest of AA going, it's literally keeping it us all alive. And the thing at the very core of it is the unity. We spend so much time doing personal growth and the steps teach us how we can be decent human beings again. But it's not just about us. I needed to get sober so I could be a useful person to people around me. I needed to get sober and stay sober so I could actually be a part of and do this thing.

Here's another one: "Most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group." That's the thing too, is that I can't do this alone. Every time I tried to do sobriety on my own I screwed it up ... so bad! Or I thought I could find this magical combination that was going to make it so I could be okay. But that was never the case! It was a matter of figuring out what would work for me, and what would keep me sane and sober. I was fairly young when I came into the program, I was 27. I know a lot of people get sober way younger than that but in the area I was in I was by far the youngest. It was good though, because I was surrounded by old timers and they helped to curb that nervous, spastic energy that was going on. They were really tolerant, they were like "Ok, Addie. Bring it back."

I was learning just how to have a conversation and share in a meeting about the topic, instead of vomiting what was going on in my life. That's what I had a sponsor for, that's what I had friends for, and doing things outside of the halls kept me active but when I was in the meeting I needed to focus on what was going on. That was the beginning of learning of how to make it about AA and not about me. One of the things I ended up doing was taking notes during the meeting. I never read them again, never shared them with anyone ever but I needed so much help focusing! I couldn't focus to save my life because I was always in my head. The truth is that they can have a meeting with out me but I can't have a meeting without everyone else there. I had to find a way to actively participate in what was going on and not just be a spaz! It was really helpful.

So I have to put how I feel about someone or some situation to the side if its getting in the way of me being useful and helpful to people around me and to the program. So even when I want to sit in frustration, I can't! Because that's old behavior, that's not how I want people to see me, it's not how I want to be behaving, it's not right!

There's no reason for me to be detracting from our primary purpose. Someone might propose a really great idea at a business meeting but if we go by group conscience and it gets turned down I have to be okay with it. After all, what keeps AA alive? Turns out it was not me, it's actually all of the people in the program, and I've had to learn how to love all of the people in the program even when I didn't like them.

I have to ask myself: "Am I helping or am I hurting the situation? Am I adding to or am I detracting from? Am I making this more difficult for everyone in my home group or am I making it easier for people? Am I making it about me or am I making it about AA? What's the most important thing?" Not me, it's what's best for the group.

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MORE DIFFICULT FOR EVERYONE IN MY HOME  
GROUP OR AM I MAKING IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE?"**

I got active right away in the step work. I came into a couple meetings and someone hooked me up with literature. I read the steps and the Big Book and started going to meetings after that. I still had one or two jags left while I was still reading the literature but I knew that I had to work the steps. Someone said you have to work the steps. I really didn't know what that meant.

Manchester's a great place to get sober because there's a lot of old timers with a lot of good sobriety and they cut right to it - you've got to surrender. That's what they talk about, surrendering. But it wasn't just surrender, I had to accept that I surrendered

*What does this Tradition mean to you now, especially in the service work you've done at the District level and at your home group?*

Early on it kind of felt like I was a big fish in a little pond and the more involved I get at the different levels it turns out I'm a little fish in the ocean - and that's a good thing. I never wanted to be that, I always wanted to be the big fish in the little, tiny pond. But now I like just being a part of, I like just being a cog in the machine. I never thought I would but service keeps me plugged into AA at all the different levels. Since then my sober circle has expanded exponentially.

Today I feel truly blessed that I get to be a part of this organization! We're on every continent and the Big Book is in 71 or 72 translations now. The most recent were American Sign Language and Navajo, which is a spoken language. That is really cool! I learned about a delegate from Iran who had to overcome incredible obstacles to get Big Books there. The amount of effort it takes to get the Big Book to people in a language they can read and understand is incredible. So I need to keep doing what I'm doing so that people who are in places like that, who don't have the easy access that we have, can still get sober.

*Continued on Page 8*

We take for granted that we have so many books and meetings. In Manchester we have 75 meetings a week, just for AA. That's huge! There are places where people are driving four or five hours to get to a meeting, once a week, because those are the closest ones. But there are so many different ways people can get to a meeting now.

There are web meetings, which are wonderful for people who are in remote locations or in the military serving. There are meetings where a whole bunch of people call in so you can hear their voices. I never realized how many different levels there are to AA until I started to work my way down that triangle. It's been really good for me.

I'm alive because of this program so I'm willing to do what ever I can to help out. I want to keep it going for the next person that's completely broken and lost that comes through the door. They're just like me, and I want them to have the same opportunity that I had. I love that... I love that about this program.

**~ Article based on a personal interview with Addie, member of the Manchester Original Group**

## TRADITION ONE: LONG FORM

*Our AA experience has taught us that each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.*





# STEP ONE WITH TJ

## FINDING A PATH TO RECOVERY THROUGH HUMILITY, SURRENDER, AND THE 12 STEPS



*What did Step 1 mean to you when you first got sober?*

When you go for a period of time sober you start to gain a perspective in your rear view about what brought you to that place. It could be a bottom, or it could be a series of bottoms. I knew I was a real alcoholic for a long time but I didn't suffer any consequences.

In reality I was, but I wasn't aware of them. Then a close friend of mine drank himself to death. We ran together, and his passing made it more real for me. I thought: "Wow, I'm going in that direction, am I ready for that?" For a while I thought I was, but it didn't sit well with me. I went to see him just before the end and was ugly. It was brutal.

After living in California for 23 years I was running out of money, my career wasn't taking off anymore, I wasn't able to bounce back from stuff, I was living in a really lousy neighborhood, and I was losing my drinking buddies to alcoholism. A lot of people talk about changing their venue when they're trying to figure this thing out. But no matter where you go, there you are! So I went back to New Hampshire from California which was a big fall for me because I had a big ego about being the successful guy from California who journeyed across the country and made his way out there. But suddenly I was back and moving in with my mom. I wasn't humbled by it, it felt humiliating.

I came back to clean up my act and I started drinking again not long after. I realized it didn't matter where I was. I became really aware that I couldn't stop even when I changed my life so drastically by moving across the country, it was hopeless. After trying to hide from it, using every excuse in the book to try to rationalize it, and suffering from delusions, I had to come to grips with the fact that I'd burned my life to the ground.

And I still wasn't quite sure why until I started looking up about recovery. As soon as I heard people in the groups talking about their recovery I started feeling over and over again: "That's exactly what I'm going through, that's exactly what happened to me." I was identifying all the time. I came to an awareness, came to realize, came to know. It hit me so solidly that I knew. I start every day right there on my knees thanking my higher power for another day sober because I remember what it was like before. I remember what it was like killing myself. I remember what it was like to be in a free fall of alcoholic madness, cascading in every direction.

Step 1 has really kept me tethered to the program, because in those first few months I became so aware of my disease that I became ready. I knew I was whooped, I knew I was beat. And accepting that! Accepting that I was beat was such a gift, it was such a miracle because my life wasn't like this before and now it is. It's just following the program I guess.

Then there's the whole story about plumbers. Plumbers definitely 12 stepped me into the program!

I moved back to New Hampshire with two cats and they weren't exactly welcome in the home that I moved into because there are people who visit my mom that have asthma or an allergy to cats. Moving home was okay but the cats weren't a part of the negotiated settlement package. But I brought them anyway, so I had to think quickly when I got home. I offered to take a section of the basement and build an enclosure for them.

I fashioned together some screen doors from Lowe's along with chicken wire and strapping and I fashioned it into a little section that was cordoned off in the basement and the cats lived in there. It's enough room for cats, but not really. And of course they're playing in it and it's so sad, they're crying and they're used to having unfettered access to wherever they are. So I started feeling guilty... It was March and it was freezing cold so I just put a bed in the enclosure and started sleeping with the cats to keep them company.

Then one evening the water heater broke and my mom called the plumber because it was in the middle of a cold snap. The plumbers show up with four guys first thing in the morning, like contributing members of society, to haul the old heater out and haul the new one in. They came down in the basement with flashlights, the beams shining all around. They trained in through the chicken wire to the blankets and my head. I could see through everything the look on these guys faces, they're like "What is....? What is a grown man doing in a cage in this woman's basement?" It really just pulled the scales off my eyes, it was the last fig leaf.

I got active right away in the step work. I came into a couple meetings and someone hooked me up with literature. I read the steps and the Big Book and started going to meetings after that. I still had one or two jags left while I was still reading the literature but I knew that I had to work the steps. Someone said you have to work the steps. I really didn't know what that meant.

Manchester's a great place to get sober because there's a lot of old timers with a lot of good sobriety and they cut right to it - you've got to surrender. That's what they talk about, surrendering. But it wasn't just surrender, I had to accept that I surrendered.

If I surrender that I'm an alcoholic but don't accept it, I'm going to be resentful towards my alcoholism. Thinking "Why me? Why did I have to be an alcoholic?" It wouldn't be a thorough first step without acceptance. So I started the first step right away. Some of the others took a little longer but I knew I was defeated. That really helped me with the higher power concept too because once I realized I was powerless over alcohol and it had me.

I saw that alcohol was my higher power. So I already knew there's a higher power out there, now which higher power am I going to surrender to? The higher power that took away my insanity. That's the higher power that leads me where I'm going right now, that's the higher power I trust in.

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WITHOUT ACCEPTANCE.**

*Continued on page 11*

*What does step 1 mean to you now? What does powerlessness and unmanageability mean now that you've been separated from booze for almost 3 years?*

I had to apply Step 1 to all facets of my life. I've got this musical group that I work with and I used to try to dominate and run it, now I have to acquiesce to it. Let it run its own course, and just suggest course corrections. But I still don't run it! I have to look at the way the world is today and just let it go.

I'm the type of person that can be really caught up in current affairs and my opinions about the way I think the world should be. I live with and hang around people who are polar opposites of my ideology and I can either sit there and discord with them all the time until we don't speak with each other or I could just let it go. And that is a surrender, that means that I'm not running the show.

And sometimes I fall short but that's how I know I'm on the beam, right? I fall off. If I didn't fall off the spiritual beam of serenity once in a while I wouldn't know it existed. It's like this undulating, reverberating process of coming back on and away, back on and away. And that's ok. I think that's the rhythm of it. And hopefully the rhythms elongate over time as I practice over years and go deeper into the sacred heart of the program. I don't think there's a certain day where it doesn't come up for me to practice Step 1. And as a result I've really found serenity in Step 1, I've found a lot of serenity in Step 1.

**~ Article based on a personal interview with TJ, member of the Goffstown We Understand Group**



*1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had become unmanageable.*

*– pg. 59, Alcoholics Anonymous*

# HONORING GRIEF

EXPLORING AA'S JOURNEY THROUGH LOSS



IN THIS ISSUE WE WANTED TO ADDRESS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM AND PROVIDE HELPFUL TIPS TO TRUDGE THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES WHILE MAINTAINING YOUR SOBRIETY AND SERENITY.

Whether it's the loss of a family member or the unexpected death of one of our fellows, loss and grief is a part of the AA way of life. When we witness the impact of alcoholism it's a stark reminder that, even though we don't take ourselves too seriously, we are part of a community that deals with a chronic and fatal disease that carries serious consequences if it goes untreated.

This isn't the most fun topic for us to address, but it is a reality that we as AA members deal with on a regular basis. Our goal is to let you know that you are not alone and to provide suggestions on how to maintain your sobriety and serenity after the loss of a loved one or friend.

As we explore this topic we'll delve into managing your emotions, actions that you can take, and ways to practice the AA principles in ALL of your affairs.

Like anything that we come up against in our recovery, staying close to other members, trusting and relying on your Higher Power, and being of service are great ways to ensure that you stay on the AA beam.

Honoring your grief does not have to be a lonely business. Take these as suggestions, use what works for you, and leave the rest.



THE STAGES OF GRIEVING ARE NOT A LINEAR JOURNEY. WE JUMP THROUGH THE STAGES OF DENIAL, ANGER, BARGAINING, DEPRESSION, AND ACCEPTANCE, AND BACK AGAIN. AND THAT'S OK! DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP FOR HAVING THE FEELINGS.



### **Feel the Feelings**

When an event occurs that leaves us experiencing grief, it's ok to acknowledge and feel your feelings. Without judgment. We are not robots and it's not the goal to be devoid of all emotion. It's natural to feel sadness.

By allowing ourselves to be with and feel the feelings they become less and less powerful each time they arise. When we try to resist them we are apt to cause ourselves more pain in the long run.

The stages of grieving are not a linear journey. We jump through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, and back again. And that's ok! Don't beat yourself up for having the feelings.

*\*If it is uncomfortable or hazardous for you to be with these feelings, consider seeing a licensed therapist or counselor who can help you process your emotions*

### **Take Action**

It's a program of action... Managing times of loss and grief require action to keep your emotional sobriety on an even keel, and ultimately your physical sobriety in place.

- Pray and Meditate - get closer to your Higher Power during difficult times. Ask for guidance and strength to endure.

- Go to Meetings - any time you are experiencing emotional turmoil, increasing your meeting attendance is a always great suggestion.
- Show Up - attending services, being there for family members and friends, lending a helping hand or a listening ear are all great ways to get outside of yourself. Be a source of strength for others.
- Reach Out for Help - if you are struggling, call a friend and share what you're dealing with - "a problem shared is a problem halved."
- Do Service Work - go on a commitment, work with a sponsee, or help out at a meeting.

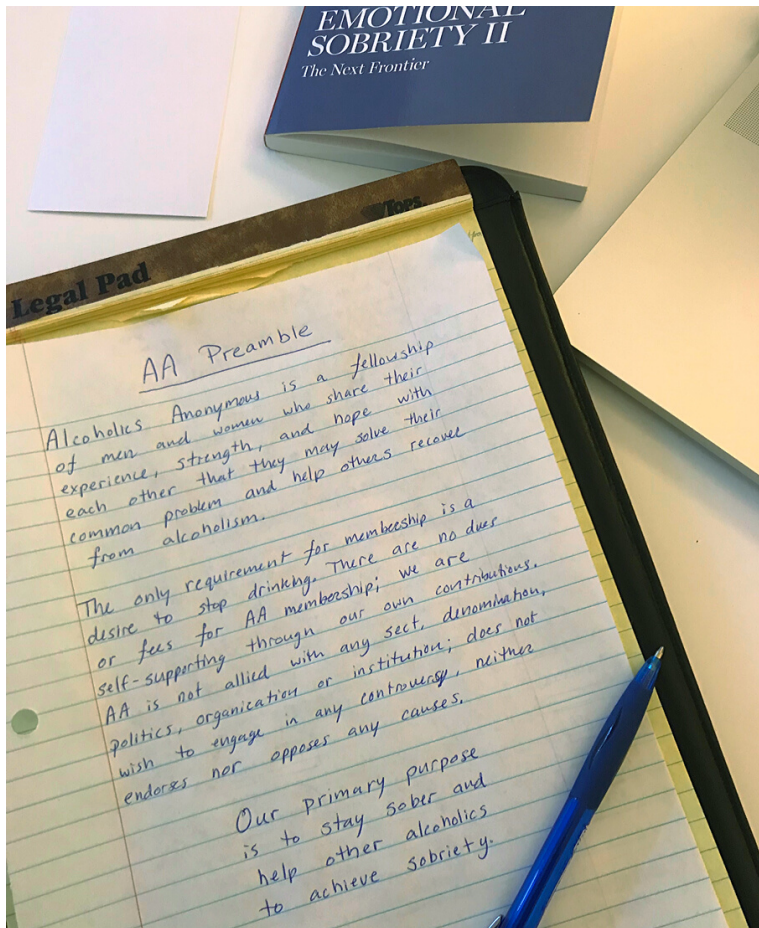
### **Practice THESE Principles**

Living on a spiritual basis is a key to the 12 steps. Bringing the principles of acceptance, compassion, and gratitude you can come to peace with your grief.

Be kind to yourself, use the event as an opportunity to look at what your grateful for; the relationship and the good times had with the person, your own sobriety, family, fellows, and friends, and the gift of a life lived one day at a time.

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE DISTRICT



## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**February 21 - 23** - The Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly (NERAASA 2020) will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Nashua, NH. (visit [neraasa.org](http://neraasa.org) for more details)

**March 13 - 15** - The New Hampshire State Conference of Young People in AA (NHSCYPAA) will be held at the Double Tree in Nashua, NH. Visit [nhscypaa.com](http://nhscypaa.com) to register and book your hotel.

**March 17, 2020** - District 12 & Manchester Original Group are hosting a St. Patrick's Day Dinner. FOOD AND ADMISSION IS FREE - ALL ARE WELCOME!

**Attention:** The Pass it on Group is looking for support on Sunday nights, 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm