



East Central Illinois
District 12
AA Newsletter
APRIL 2008
www.aa-eci.org



Tradition Four

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. Does my group always consider the welfare of the rest of AA? Of nearby groups? Of Loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?
3. Do I put down other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths-his lengths, not mine-to stay sober?
6. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?

What am I turning over to God's care?

We admitted we were powerless and our lives were unmanageable. We found a source of power Greater than ourselves. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of this power, as we understood it. **What exactly am I turning over? This is the exact purpose of the Fourth Step inventory.**

To know what we are turning over to God, I need to find out what my will is and what are the components of the various aspects of how I am living. To do this we need to take the time and effort to sit and begin to record, as accurately and honestly as we are able, where we are now and what patterns of thinking, attitudes and behaviors has brought us to this point. What is 'our stock in trade'? What are our weaknesses and strong points? An inventory is not done entirely in "red" ink. We develop a picture of ourselves as we are at present. We list people, ideas and institutions with which we are in conflict. We list people, ideas and institutions in which we are in accord. We list our fears and our desires. We leave 'no stone unturned'. We are as thorough and fearless as possible. The anxious 'feeling' we experience may not be fear but apprehension since we have never been so thorough about

ourselves before. Much of what we discover may be painful and uncomfortable. This is the benefit of a sponsor in this process. They can assure us we are not alone and that others have had similar experiences.

So we sit and write. We produce tangible evidence of our decision to work the AA 12 Steps; to begin the process of 'turning our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand God'. We trust our Higher Power to only allow us to uncover as much as we can deal with at this time.

We learn the life long skill of taking inventory. We dig out things we wish to discard. We follow veins of positive longings to their sources. We find ourselves, usually a 'stranger' we have left behind toward whom we can learn to relate to with compassion and love.

The Fourth Step is the beginning of a journey. A journey of self-discovery. A journey along the Road of Happy Destiny. Bon voyage! Or, perhaps more aptly, "Via con Dios"! - Anonymous

SPOTLIGHT ON:



HOME GROUPS

For most A.A.s, membership in a home group is one of the keys to continuing sobriety.

In a home group, they accept service responsibilities and learn to sustain friendships.

The home group affords individual A.A.s the privilege of voting on issues that affect the Fellowship as a whole; it is the very basis of the service structure.

While most A.A. members attend other groups regularly, the home group is where they participate in business meetings and cast their vote as part of the group conscience of the Fellowship as a whole.

As with all group conscience matters, each member has one vote.

The Long Form of Tradition Three and a section of Warranty Six, Concept 12, aptly describe what an A.A. group is:

Tradition Three: "Our membership ought to include all

who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation."

Warranty Six: "...much attention has been drawn to the

extraordinary liberties which the A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group; no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles; no fees or dues to be levied-voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from A.A.-membership always to be the choice of the individual; each group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group they have no other purpose of affiliation."

A.A. Service Manual

Chapter Two The Group and Its G.S.R. Page S23

S.W.A.T.

It is hard to put in such a short amount of space why I enjoy my home group. I will try. Some years ago there was no Sunday noon meeting, and one friend of Bill decided to ask fellowship circle if she could start an open meeting. I helped and so the meeting got opened and it has shined ever since. I just would like to say that the name SWAT came from a joke of 5 girls(at that time) trying to come up with an acronym and I suggested SWAT that stands for serenity, willingness, acceptance ,and tolerance. So you all can blame me. My home group is filled with wisdom and integrity and a love that radiates throughout the room. I get to be a part of that feeling. We work together, and always have a way to stay in the solution. We pick members of the A.A community to do a lead and it is always exciting and insightful. Another thing I like about my home group members is that they are serious about recovery and continue to carry the message. I look forward to all of the people that come every Sunday to the meeting and I have been privileged to see miracles. I think that we try to the best of our ability, with a higher power overseeing our group, to carry a message that sticks with me and others all week, and then we get to hear more the next week. I also like the fact that at the end of each meeting we ask for a show of hands of those available to sponsor. That is key in carrying the message and I and others have worked with people just because we raised our hands. My home group thoroughly insists on having fun and enjoying life. This meeting has grown into the acronym it stands for. I would like to thank the members of the A.A community and my awesome home group for keeping me sober and I hope anyone who has not attended the Sunday Noon SWAT Group to please join us and experience the blessings I do every week. Can you tell I love it?

Thank you, Cathy G.

H.O.W.

At our first meeting of AA, and hopefully every other meeting, we hear the basic suggestions: "Go to meetings", "keep coming back", "get a sponsor", "study your big book", "work the steps". Sometimes we also hear: "get a home group". Why should you get a home group? Isn't it enough if you do those other things? From my experience, I can say

that if you do those other things, you'll find yourself in a home group simply because you want to be in one.

The HOW group at Fellowship Circle has been my home group for most of my sober life. I don't really remember what it was like to be sober without being in a home group. Nor do I have any desire to find out! The sense of belonging that I developed after I joined the HOW group was an order of magnitude greater than it had been before. All of a sudden it mattered that I go to certain meetings - I had a responsibility. I had to show up on Thursday nights to chair. I had to show up early to make sure things were ready, and stay late to make sure things were put away. This gave me more opportunities to get to know other recovering alcoholics. And as an added bonus I was even allowed to take the trash out to the street!

Being in a home group has been a wonderful experience for me. But what has really impressed me about home groups is the change and the growth that I've seen in others. I can't count the number of AAs that I've seen struggling, in and out, then come in and join a home group and do a complete turn around. All of a sudden they're chairing meetings, planning fellowship events, participating at the district level, taking the steps, and STAYING SOBER! That's what it's really all about, right? If you knew there was one more thing you could do that was easy and fun and increased your chances of staying sober, you'd do it, right? If you're in a home group, you already know what I'm talking about, If you're not, please don't let another day go by without finding out for yourself. I don't expect you to take my word for it!

My home group has a business meeting on the first Thursday of the month, following the 8PM candlelight meeting. Come on out - we'd love to have you! -John O

THE GREAT FACT GROUP

My home group is "The Great Fact" (see AA, P. 164) group which meets on Wednesdays at 6pm in the House at 718 S. Randolph St., Champaign. We are a Closed AA meeting (limited to those who have a desire to stop drinking) Big Book discussion meeting.

After introducing ourselves, reading the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, the leader (changed on a monthly basis) selects a short passage from the Big Book which serves as the focus of discussion for the remainder of the hour. Every effort is made to stick to the topic as it has impacted on our journey in sobriety. At the end of the meeting the following selection is read followed by the Lord's Prayer.

"See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us." It has become a custom for several of those attending the meeting to meet at a local restaurant for dinner and fellowship after the meeting, with everyone welcome to join in.

Why do I belong to a Home Group? I have found that it the first line of service within AA. In the group I commit to ensuring the meeting is held at the appointed time and that everything needed is arranged. We want the hand of AA to be available to those reaching our for help and provide the fellowship that is craved. In our particular group we help each other, and those attending the meeting, to by "sharing our experience, strength and hope, as it relates to the

material in the Big Book, the basic text of our society. Our GSR brings the group conscience to the District meeting where the District conscience is formed. Being a member of a Home Group puts me in touch with the wider world of AA, both carrying our message into it and relating the wider experience through the group.

If you are looking for a Home Group, "the Great Fact" group would welcome your participation. Our business meeting, where the group conscience is discussed and determined, is held the Wednesday after the District meeting, immediately following our Big Book discussion. All who have a desire to stop drinking are welcome to attend. - Ray Mc D.

FOUND!! 18 YEARS SOBRIETY COIN!!! AT THE SERENITY SHACK ON 3/18/08 CONTACT JOHN: 217-778-1872

12 STEPS OF A SPONSOR

1. I WILL NOT LET YOU STAY AND WALLOW IN LIMBO.
2. I WILL HELP YOU TO GROW, TO BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE BY YOUR DEFINITION.
3. I WILL HELP YOU BECOME MORE AUTONOMOUS, MORE LOVING OF YOURSELF, MORE EXCITED, LESS SENSITIVE, MORE FREE TO CONTINUE BECOMING THE AUTHORITY FOR YOUR OWN LIVING.
4. I CANNOT GIVE YOU DREAMS OR "FIX YOU UP" SIMPLY BECAUSE I CANNOT.
5. I CANNOT GIVE YOU GROWTH OR GROW FOR YOU. YOU MUST GROW YOURSELF BY FACING REALITY, GRIM AS IT MAY BE AT TIMES.
6. I CANNOT TAKE AWAY YOUR LONELINESS OR PAIN.
7. I CANNOT MAKE SENSE OF YOUR WORLD FOR YOU; EVALUATE YOUR GOALS FOR YOU OR TELL YOU WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU IN YOUR WORLD, FOR YOU HAVE YOUR OWN WORLD.
8. I CANNOT CONVINCING YOU OF THE CRUCIAL CHOICE OF CHOOSING THE SCARY UNCERTAINTY OF GROWING, OVER THE SAFE MISERY OF NOT GROWING.
9. I WANT TO BE WITH YOU AND KNOW YOU AS A RICH AND GROWING FRIEND; YET I CANNOT GET CLOSE TO YOU WHEN YOU CHOOSE NOT TO GROW.
10. WHEN I BEGIN TO CARE FOR YOU OUT OF PITY, WHEN I BEGIN TO LOSE TRUST IN YOU, THEN I AM TOXIC AND BAD, INHIBITING FOR YOU AND YOU FOR ME.
11. YOU MUST KNOW-MY HELPING IS CONDITIONAL; I WILL BE WITH YOU, I WILL HANG IN THERE WITH YOU AS LONG AS I CONTINUE TO GET THE SLIGHTEST HINTS THAT YOU ARE STILL TRYING TO GROW.

12. IF YOU CAN ACCEPT ALL THIS, THEN PERHAPS WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER TO BECOME WHAT OUR "HIGHER POWER" MEANT US TO BE-MATURE ADULTS-LEAVING CHILDISHNESS FOREVER TO THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

SPEAKER MEETINGS / EVENTS

Friday 4/07/08

1st Friday Food & Fellowship 6:30-? SHACK (every 1st Friday)

Saturday 4/12/08

AS BILL SEES IT Speaker - John P. 8pm HALL (every 2nd Saturday)

Sunday 4/13/08

2009 Area 21 Spring Conf Planning Mtg.-2pm HALL

Saturday 4/19/08

KEEP IT SIMPLE MINI-CONFERENCE Charleston 1-8pm \$10 includes dinner! contact Tom S. 217-345-5263

Serenity Shack Speaker- 8pm SHACK (every 3rd Saturday)

Sunday 4/20/08

District 12 Traditions Panel-10am HALL

District 12 Business Meeting-2pm HALL (every 3rd Sunday)

Thursday 4/24/08

HOW group Speaker-Carol W. 8pm HALL (every 4th Thursday)

HALL = 718 s. Randolph, Champaign, IL
SHACK = 117 N. Ohio St., Rantoul, IL

A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL

One Tuesday night a lonely confused woman named "Sara" walks through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. Sara feels alienated and depressed, feelings she has had most of her life. She is completely demoralized and knows she will never be accepted or feel loved by anyone again. But through all this despair she doesn't want to die. So, cautiously, she slips in and sits in the far right chair in the very back row. She doesn't raise her hand as a newcomer because she is too paranoid. She is too afraid they will see her and know and then she will be rejected one more time. Every Tuesday night she comes back and quietly sneaks into that chair in the back row because she doesn't want to die and she has no place else to go.

And then one night she is called on and she tries to speak but cries instead. Or maybe one night someone notices her and walks up to her to welcome her. She is given a schedule of meetings and a list of AA phone numbers. She learns she is not alone, but she is still terrified. She learns about establishing a home group and makes the Tuesday night meeting her home group. A woman talks about the things she wants in her life, about how she wants to be and sound and look, and that woman becomes her sponsor.

Now when Sara walks through the door of Alcoholics Anonymous, people come to her and say, "How are you doing, Sara?" and they mean it. She begins to feel a part of something for the first time in her life. Sara smiles now and looks over

her family with love as she begins the meeting—she is now the secretary. She sees a lonely woman sneak quietly past everyone and sit down in the very last row on the far right-hand chair—she sees herself two years ago. She walks over and tells the woman she is home and can begin to belong now.

A year later Sara is the general service representative(GSR)for the Tuesday night meeting and then becomes district committee member(DCM) and continues to give back what she has received by carrying the message that she heard in her home group on Tuesday nights.

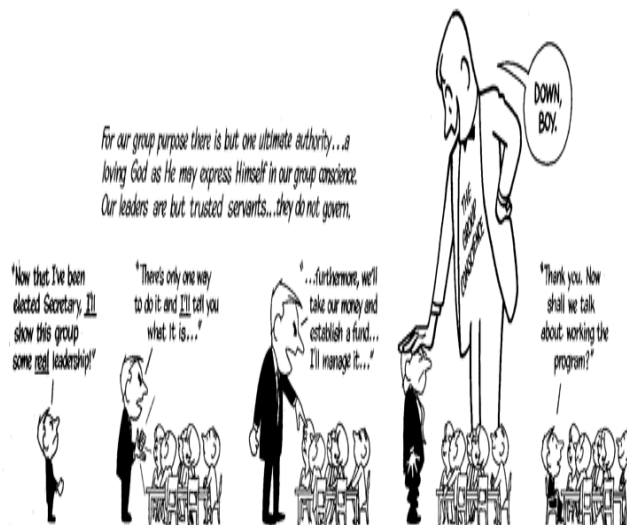
This is why home groups are so very important to Alcoholics Anonymous. This is where the AA member begins to learn about the how of Alcoholics Anonymous. By selecting a home group, the newcomer begins to feel like he belongs somewhere. He begins to know people and let people know him. He feels safe in this meeting because he knows everyone's story and where they came from. He gets to watch people come and go, so he can actually see what works and what doesn't work. He develops close friendships and when the sea gets rough, he has people who can see over the swelling waves.

The home group is where the AA member takes the first tiny step into making the support system of Alcoholics Anonymous work. This may be by just putting one dollar into the basket every week and knowing where it is going, or by washing coffee cups. By going to the same meeting every week, the AA member hears where the money is going, what the "central office" is, what a coordinator and GSR do. This gives him a chance to participate in service work. If he did not have a committed home group where he was allowed to vote on issues in AA, he might never listen to anything the GSR or coordinator says to the group. Hence, by getting a home group, the AA member accepts the responsibility of participating in the whole system, thereby keeping the wheels of Alcoholics Anonymous rolling.

Home groups become the spokes in the big wheel of Alcoholics Anonymous. The wheel, according to the Seventh Tradition, cannot be moved by any outside contributions. Because each group is responsible to all AA services, this wheel can roll along and touch those Lone members who do not have the luxury of an AA meeting with coffee, donuts, hugs, and people sharing their experience, strength, and hope. It can rumble along and carry literature and experience, strength, and hope to institutions, treatment facilities, new groups, and all AA groups.

Though home groups contributing to all AA services, Alcoholics Anonymous will continue to touch more and more families, men, and women each year. Because of this kind of support in your home groups, one Tuesday night a lonely alcoholic will not walk up the stairs to Alcoholics Anonymous and find the door barred shut. One day more and more Saras will come tiptoeing through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous and get on that giant wheel that keeps so many of us clean and sober and free.

District 12 is HOSTING
THE 2009 AREA 21 SPRING CONFERENCE
 April 3rd, 4th, and 5th at the NEW I-Hotel
WATCH FOR FLIERS & OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



District 12
Little Book Store
 515 Bonnymeade Dr.
 Champaign, IL 61821-3490
 217-359-3457