



Sober , COVID-19 and no in person AA Meetings

In the hundreds of AA meetings I have attended since my first one, I have heard many speakers comment that they have no idea how someone could get sober during this pandemic.

But as one of those newly sober alcoholics, my answer is simple: I didn't have a choice. I was dying.

My sobriety date is March 24th, 2020. Winter seemed endless then, and another storm had just dumped a foot of snow in Western Maine. COVID 19 was still Coronavirus. Nobody knew for sure how bad it could, or would get, but watching the news coming from Europe, the U.S. was bracing for the worst. Shutdowns had just begun, and masks were starting to fly off the shelves.

The toilet paper was already gone.

For me, however, on that morning, the pandemic was the furthest thing from my mind.

The previous night while I was sitting on a cot alone in a cell, I told God, "I've tried to do this thing (meaning life) my way, and I give up. I'll do it your way now." I knew then that this meant one thing: I would have to ask for that help. That was perhaps the single biggest dread I had experienced in my drinking, and the thought of asking for help had always filled me with fear. What came to mind at that moment were the occasional but persistent emails from an individual through work. He would simply say he understood that many people in our line of work struggled with alcohol and had a desire to drink less or stop altogether. He put out a phone number and invited anyone to call and maybe meet with his small group, who supported each other in that cause. I had saved one or two of his emails, just in case I heard of a coworker who might be in need, of course. In my time desperation, his simple persistent act became the door through which I entered into AA rooms.

When I say entered into the rooms, I mean figuratively, of course.

What might have been a shaky walk down a flight of stairs into a room full of strangers a year ago was a phone call for me. After the phone call and a text, I found myself trying to figure out what the heck "Zoom" was and how to get it downloaded.

But on the night of March 24th, I found myself in, or instead on, my first AA meeting.

Since that first meeting, I have come to believe in many things. Coincidences aren't one of them. I firmly believe that I got sober in the pandemic because I had to. I was meant to. The evidence is in the many struggles turned miracles that were to follow my first meeting. For example, I wanted to get myself to a treatment center. However, the program I had heard about, and was familiar with, had shut its doors because of the new COVID concerns. Through a series of non-coincidences, I found another center willing to take me as an inpatient. When I walked through the door, one of the first things the admissions counselor did (after screening me, taking my temperature, and handing me a mask, and of course) Handed me a Big Book More about Alcoholism I found the answers I was seeking. I later learned the treatment center I originally wanted to go to wasn't based on a 12 step program, and I might not have found that book. Because of the pandemic, my treatment center experience was unique. Patients had to be given their own rooms, and I was able to have space to breathe, cry, and calm my mind with reading and writing. With this room arrangement, the center could only take half the usual patients, so the groups were small and intimate. The counselors were available, and the lines to food and phones were never too long. At the same time, I was in treatment, the courts were scrambling to make changes, and my legal proceedings were delayed. This gave me the time to concentrate on my recovery first. The more I reflect on the experience, the more the list of little blessings grows.

Perhaps the most apparent advantage to early sobriety in a pandemic is the growth of virtual meetings.

Attending many meetings when you live in a rural setting is challenging in and of itself, particularly when you find yourself, as some of us alcoholics do, without a driver's license for a while. Because of the online meetings, I have attended as many meetings as I want or need, wherever and whenever. I have met so many beautiful people and heard so many great speakers I otherwise may never have seen.

It is true, some things have been difficult. Finding a sponsor, for example, is not easy when you are trying to find **CNT PG 2**



to find someone to connect with through a screen. Then again, is asking someone to be your first sponsor ever not awkward? Participating in service feels next to impossible sometimes, and it is something I look forward to. However, I think that I can't really miss something that I haven't experienced yet. I do want to be part of the fellowship I've heard so much about. Hugging strangers, holding hands while praying, crappy cups of coffee, the whole 9 yards. But 9 months ago, I decided I wanted to let God do his thing, and I agreed I'd do my best to stay out of his way and follow orders. Therefore, I have no choice but to believe that being in early sobriety in the middle of a global pandemic was part of his plan for my story. The flood of significant life changes and the blessings I have begun to experience in sobriety indicate that I have been set on a path of healing and growth. That pandemic or not, if I continue on that path, I can find what it means to be happy, joyous, and free. No matter what the circumstances.



God Bless, Sarah M

Self Esteem



Not enough" Not good enough. Not smart enough. Not capable enough. Just not ever measuring up to some standard that I knew must exist somewhere.

I know today that I am not the only one who came into the rooms with that deep

belief, fostered from my youth. That feeling of being 'different.'

I was not fitting in, not belonging. The laughter, the groups, the teams, and the circles are always on the outside edge of the fun. Just the way it was. I was always intrigued by people around me who were comfortable in their skins and at ease with everyone. I wanted so badly to ask them, "how do you do that?" But by asking, by admitting my ignorance, I would risk appearing stupid, or deficient or 'less than' or even worse, to be laughed at. So I continued my silence.

Until I discovered what alcohol could do for all those feelings. Until I found that alcohol could free me 'from the bondage of [an inferior] self.' And for a time, it did all that, and more. I became the person that I'd always thought I could be in 'my mind's eye.' For a time, alcohol gave me wings and then (as I later heard) it took away the sky, and I crash-landed.

The same unappealing solution kept resurfacing, no matter how I tried to reject it. Admit defeat and Surrender. Become willing to try a new way. Kicking and dragging my feet, I found myself back once again in the Rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Fast-forward now, some number of years:

Through many meetings, great sponsors, inspiring 'long-timers,' and hard work on the 12 Steps of the Program (more than once), I have come to realize some pretty important

things, things that challenge my old ways of thinking. Things like:

Don't measure my insides by someone else's outsides, or I will always come up short.

That feeling of 'different?' There aren't many people who are so secure that they never feel that way. And among the Fellowship, it is a common feeling until we learn otherwise. We're all different - yet we are all the same - that's called 'being human!'

Today I know that if I feel like I am outside of a circle, I put myself there. If I act like an outsider, I will feel like an outsider. It's risky to join the circle, but more dangerous not to.

I've learned that if a person has a quality that intrigues me, I can compliment them and ask how they achieved it. And most times, that person will gladly share the experiences that helped them.

But most of all, I learned that I am enough, I am not inferior to anyone, nor am I above anyone. I am a person of worth, and I can make sure that I have people in my life who treat me that way. No one can make me a doormat unless I first lay down, and as the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says, "we bow before no one." [BB pg.83]

The first time I read of Dorothy's story ("Women Suffer Too) I saw me - in giant, bold print. Today those words are highlighted and underlined - I never want to forget who and what I was in those last, lost days. Dorothy spoke for me when she said, "I had been hypersensitive, shy, idealistic. My inability to accept the harsh realities of life had resulted in a disillusioned cynic, clothed in protective armor against the world's misunderstanding. That armor turned into prison walls, locking me in loneliness - and fear. All I had left was an iron determination to live my own life despite the alien world. In addition, here I was, an inwardly frightened, outwardly defiant woman who desperately needed a prop to keep going. Alcohol was that prop, and I didn't see how I could live without it." [BB pg.204]

With Much appreciation to the people and the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am not that person today. In fact, I am more apt to find myself in the Big Book, where it says, "The real rewards aren't material in nature. I have friends now because I know how to be a friend and I know how to nurture and encourage valuable friendships. Instead of the prolonged one-night stands I used to call my boyfriends, there is a special man in my life I've been involved with for almost five years. And, most importantly, I know who I am. I know my goals, my dreams, my values and my boundaries, and I know how to protect, nurture and validate them. Those are the true rewards of sobriety and they're what I was looking for all along. I am so grateful that my Higher Power stepped in to show me the way to truth. I pray every day that I never turn my back on it. I came to A.A. in order to stop drinking. What I received in return was my life [BB pg.327]



([BB pg..83, pg..204 and pg.327]Reprinted from the Big Book with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)



District Six met for the monthly business meeting on January 8th via zoom. The business meeting link can be found on the District Website or can be provided by committee members upon request. There were 12 participants with two non-voting, five GSR, and five committee members. The meeting opened with the serenity prayer and acknowledging the monthly tradition before moving on to roll call. The December minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

The District Chair gave a report on the area 28 business meeting and motions that Area 28 will be considering at the spring assembly. There are three motions, the first allowing a vote to Past Area 28 Delegates at all assemblies and committees. The second motion moves that the first Sunday of December be designated as a "swap meeting" where a group of old and new officers and Past Delegates would put forth committee members' recommendations to be standing committee chairs for the next panel. The third motion asks that any changes to the General Service Area 28 financial chart of Accounts will require the Area Finance Committee's approval and changes be reported to the following assembly. Any questions or comments about these motions could be directed toward GSR's to be brought back to the District for discussion.

The decision was made to change the business meeting order so that old and new business is conducted before the committee and GSR reports are given. This will ensure the District can address any old or new business earlier in the meeting, making it less likely to exceed the group conscious that the meetings conclude by 7:30 pm. Old business found us continuing to discuss opening a PayPal account. This topic has been discussed in several previous meetings. Still, this month, a motion was made a seconded that the District opens a Venmo account. Further discussion was tabled, awaiting clarification of how payments may or may not be accepted. New business discussed the prudent reserve that the District holds specifically for functions that totals \$750.00. It was explained that the amount was chosen to allow the Functions Committee to pay for things upfront to have events. Some felt this was too high or that perhaps we held too many events. Others wondered why the Function's Budget would be treated differently than any other line item in the Budget. While the conversation about this continued for some time, ultimately, no motion was brought to the table. The District moved on.

The Corrections chair reported that the jail zoom meetings have halted due to a COVID outbreak but that meetings at local IOP's have continued and are going well even while remote. The Newsletter chair reported more feedback each month from our growing list of 84 subscribers. It reminded the committee that anyone interested in submitting an article could do so to the editor's email, listed on the district website. The Website chair reported that updates had been made to the live and zoom meeting lists and 89 page views. The Love and Service chair reported that they are working on a virtual event in the next few months. GSR reports went well, with

most meetings still occurring online or in small in-person groups.

The meeting concluded with announcements, which were as follows: The Area 28 committee meeting will occur on February 7th. There are service workshops put on by Area 12, 28, and 29 on Thursdays from January 7th through February 11th. The District's next business meeting will be on February 12th, and NERASSA will be held online from February 26th through the 28th. Next business meeting will be on February 12th, and NERASSA will be held online from February 26th through the 28th.

HELP WANTED

The following positions are open at the District level
ARCHIVES

The right person for this position would be willing and able to maintain files and documents that are historic for the district and the districts meetings, as well as attend the monthly business meetings for district six and area. There is a recommended guideline of 2 or more years of sobriety and proficiency with computers. Further information can be found at the district six website or the monthly business meeting.

FUNCTIONS CHAIR

Looking for self-motivated person, willing and able to serve a 2 year term running a committee responsible for planning and throwing events for AA's in district 6. The role includes managing seed money, proposing events to the district committee and working with a team to throw each event as well as attending the monthly district meeting. More information can be found on the district website or the at the monthly business meeting.

GRAPEVINE CHAIR

Anyone willing and able to serve as grapevine chair should be prepared to attend monthly business meetings, bring subscription cards with them to any and all meetings attended as well as making the grapevine and subscriptions to it available to AA's and meetings in the area by encouraging people to read, contribute to and subscribe to our "meeting in print." There is a suggestion to have 6mo of sobriety before standing for this position.

HOTLINE

The Hotline coordinator is responsible for attending monthly business meetings, maintaining and updating the phone list and connecting with CSO to share information. This will include reaching out to meetings and AA's in our District to get contact information so that we can continue to be actively involved in supporting those AA's in need who turn to the hotline for support. More information available on district six's website and at the business meeting.

MEETING LIST

This position is a two-year commitment to maintain a list of all meetings, times and locations the District **CNT PG 5**

Twelfth-Stepping the Alcoholic to a Spiritual Recovery

How important is twelfth-stepping to the still sick and suffering alcoholic? Dr. Bob found out when he met Bill Wilson in 1935. In their drinking careers, they saw themselves as doomed. As low bottom drunks, they didn't believe there was a cure. They would either die, or live out their lives in an insane asylum. That's where their alcoholism had taken them, to the lowest bottom imaginable. They had that in common. Then the unexpected happened.

Bill W. started talking to Dr. Bob about his drinking. He shared his story, and then Dr. Bob did the same. After both men shared, they found that their desire to drink lifted. They lifted their sense of doom. They knew then how to stay away from a drink - they had to help other alcoholics by sharing their drinking stories and the fact that they no longer had a desire to drink. A foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous had begun.

After two years, Bill W. and Dr. Bob helped 20 alcoholics stay sober. After four years, they helped 100. This momentum continued from 1935 to present day, where worldwide numbers rose to 2-plus million. In the beginning, the co-founders showed through the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous that twelfth-step work had the best results when those members had a *spiritual awakening*. They could then pass along their message of new freedom.

Alcoholics cannot listen when they are told to do something. No alcoholic wants to be told what to do. If told, they will bolt in the opposite direction. That's why Alcoholics Anonymous is a program of attraction. However, in order to share that attraction to a suffering alcoholic, the twelfth stepper needs to have worked the twelve steps and have experienced a spiritual awakening.

Deepak Chopra says this about spiritual awakening. ***"...when you are no longer living in a dream world where you filter everything through your ego and focus [only] on the future and the past."*** He focuses on everyday people who are less than perfect - people who continually work toward a spiritual awakening, in search of self-awareness and all things around them. Chopra sees people who model this awareness. Alcoholic Anonymous takes on this view as well - from step one to step twelve, the recovering alcoholic moves toward his or her spiritual awakening and the service that can help a suffering alcoholic.

Hence, the new freedom really means that the alcoholic has a psychic change. The change happens as they complete the steps. This work brings about a spiritual awakening. Some alcoholics can see it as an immediate experience whereby others see it happening slowly. The co-founders developed A. A.'s Twelve Steps in a specific order, ***from honesty (Step One), to courage (Step Four), to brotherly/sisterly love (Step Eight), to service (Step Twelve)***. Once they could model their experience, strength and hope through working the twelve steps, then they give others the view of freedom they themselves possess.

What works best for those who do twelve-step work is to realize that success happens, not because one twelve stepper does his and/or her work better, but because the suffering alcoholics are ready to stop drinking. Many alcoholics are not ready to stop, and if that's realized, then it's still important to be available for the person's family. Let the family know about the program and how it works through telling your experience, strength, and hope. That way the family can help, too, for it is a family disease.

What follows when a drunk is sick and tired of being sick and tired and begins the journey is a sense of wellbeing for the twelve-steppers who helped. Those people who helped grow within themselves. They had the privilege ***"to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship group up about you, to have a host of friends."*** (BB p.89 written with permission from AA World Services INC.) Just being present for this is reward enough because helping another alcoholic recover from a fatal disease is what Alcoholics Anonymous is about.

In 1935, when Bill W. and Dr. Bob joined forces, they saw the miracle of the program. Their vision and their dedication to realizing the spiritual connection not only opened the door to alcoholics who hit rock bottom but also to those who barely started their drinking career. They showed the way early on, which saved many alcoholics from adding additional drinking years that the old timers experienced. Twelfth Stepping works!

Shirley S



The Emmet Fox Corner
With Michael J

WHO IS This GOD

When I was new in the program, I would dutifully repeat the Serenity Prayer at the beginning of each meeting, asking God to grant me the serenity to accept. Although I had no idea of who or what this God was, I eventually decided to turn over my life and my will to Him. I was comfortable doing this because I was told that the notion of God could be anything I wanted it to be. Being a naturally lazy person, I left things where they were and didn't bother to think about God anymore. I just kept using the word willy-nilly.

Somewhere along the line, I began to realize that it would be impossible for me to maintain my spiritual condition (and be given my daily reprieve) without coming to some personal understanding of what my higher power meant to me.

FINANCIAL

APPROVED Budget - 2021

Group Contributions	\$4,651.00
Functions	<u>\$750.00</u>
Total Income	\$5,401.00

Officer Expenses

Chair	\$400.00
DCM 1	\$350.00
DCM 2	\$350.00
DCM 3	\$350.00
Treasurer	\$225.00
PO Box	\$88.00
Secretary	<u>\$25.00</u>
Subtotal	\$1,788.00

Committees

Archives	\$50.00
BTG/Corrections	\$670.00
CSO Liason	\$55.00
Functions	\$750.00
Grapevine	\$228.00
Hotline & Literature	\$50.00
Love & Service	\$525.00
Meeting Lists	\$75.00
Newsletter	\$225.00
PI/CPC	<u>\$225.00</u>
Subtotal	\$2,853.00

Operating Expenses

Use of Space	\$120.00
Insurance	\$500.00
Website	\$50.00
Zoom	<u>\$90.00</u>
Subtotal	\$760.00

Total Expnses \$5,401.00

Surplus/(Shortfall) \$0.00

with a larger committee. Current Chairs seeking committee members include The Website, The Grapevine and The Newsletter. If interested in pursuing more work in service at the district level this might be an excellent way to dive in without the commitment of a chair position. Please seek more information at the District Business Meeting .

CURRENT FINACES

Beginning Balance: \$2,793.00

Deposits:

Sunrise Serenity: \$159.50
 The Bath Group: \$75.00
 We Group: 60.00
 Haven't Got A Clue Group: \$150.00
 Total: \$444.50

Expenses:

PO Box: \$114.00
 CSO: \$564.33
 GSO: \$564.33
 Area 28: \$564.33
 Total: \$1,806.99
 Ending Balance: \$1,430.51
 Prudent Reserve: \$350.00
 Prudent Reserve (functions): \$750.00
 Surplus: \$330.51



At-A-Glance



CNT FR PG 3

this position also updates this information with CSO. Further Information can be found at the business meeting and on the district six website.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Many of these positions are held with the intention of working

My experience in AA shows that, if we are persistent, the program will always deliver exactly what we need. One day, someone gave me a CD by Sandy Beach called "Drop the Rock." I laughed and listened to that CD many times. This led me to other CDs by Sandy Beach. In one of them, I heard mention of the name Emmett Fox and his book "The Sermon on the Mount." In that book, Dr. Fox describes how God's idea that is commonly associated with the Old Testament came into existence.

"Glimpsing one tiny corner of the universe, and that with only half-opened eyes, and working from an exclusively anthropocentric and geocentric point of view, men built up absurd, and very horrible fables about a limited and man-like God who conducted his universe very much as a rather ignorant and barbarous prince might conduct the affairs of a small Oriental kingdom. All sorts of human weaknesses, such as vanity, fickleness, and spite, were attributed to this being." (The Sermon on the Mount)

This was not the kind of God to whom I could turn over my will and my life. I needed a different type of God. My problem was that I had been looking for the kind of God that I could see, or at least see in my mind's eye. Emmet Fox writes that, although the Bible states that we may see God, this is not possible with our physical eyes. God is Spirit, and spiritual things have to be spiritually discerned. Therefore, to see God means—as far as our restricted and crippled human speech can express the thing at all—to recognize our connection with certain fundamental truths about God. Fox calls these "The Seven Main Aspects of God" and states that they are avenues through which humanity can approach God. Our work is to get as clear an understanding and as strong a realization of these as possible. This can be done by thinking about them a good deal and identifying them in everyday life experiences. The seven aspects are Life, Truth, Love, Intelligence, Soul, Spirit, and Principal. Considering each one of these aspects helps you develop a greater appreciation of the way God works in your life:

God is Life. God is not just living, nor does God give life -- God is life. Where God is, there life is. God is your life. When I was drinking, I was only partly alive. To be truly alive means to be well and young and full of interest in the day's work.

God is Truth. God is truth itself, and wherever there is truth, there is God. I was as sick as my secrets.

And the truth was that I was powerless over alcohol.

God is Love. Because God is Love, God never punishes or threatens anyone -- God's only action is to heal and comfort and inspire. There is no condition that enough love will not heal. When you love God more than you love alcohol, you will be healed.

God is Intelligence. God is not merely intelligent, but God is Intelligence itself. Sometimes, when people move away from the idea that God is just a magnified man, they go to the opposite extreme and think of God as merely a blind force, like

gravity or electricity. God, as intelligence, gives us a sense of the love and fatherhood of God. God has all of the positive aspects of personality without any of the negative.

God is Soul. The thing called your soul is God individualizing Himself as you. This does not, of course, mean that you are an absurd little personal God. It means that you are one with God and whatever task you are called upon to perform becomes "our business". As Bill W. so aptly put it, we are in partnership with God.

God is Spirit. Spirit is that which cannot be destroyed or damaged or hurt or degraded in any way. Spirit cannot deteriorate. It cannot grow old and tired. It cannot know sin, or condemnation, or resentment, or disappointment. You are Spirit. Spirit cannot die and was never born.

God is a Principle. This aspect of God is probably the one that is least understood. God is the principle of perfect harmony, and God does not change, so ideal balance is the nature of his creation. Prayer is answered because God is principle, and when we pray rightly, we bring ourselves into harmony with God's thought system.

I no longer think of God as just an abstract idea up in the sky, having no meaning in my everyday life. Now, my sense of God is that of a present, dynamic, real power for harmony, healing, and freedom. I have found that, for me, the only way to approach God is by thinking about Him. I am thinking about God in prayer.

FROM THE FORWARD OF THE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS:

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a worldwide fellowship of more than one hundred thousand alcoholic men and women who are banded together to solve their common problems and to help fellow sufferers in recovery from that age old, baffling malady, alcoholism.

A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.

A.A.'s Twelve Traditions apply to the life of the Fellowship itself. They outline the means by which A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows. (12 and 12 PG 15)

The Foreword to the Twelve and Twelve concludes with this look to the future of the fellowship and another purpose for this book:

As A.A. now enters maturity, it has begun to reach into forty foreign lands. In the view of its friends, this is but the beginning of its unique and valuable service. It is hoped that this volume will afford all who read it a close-up view of the principles and forces which have made Alcoholics Anonymous what it is. (12 and 12 PG 18)



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