

CONSCIOUS CONTACT



INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION

VOL 25 NO 1

The Second Step—A Measure of Hope

IF THE FIRST STEP IS A MEASURE OF OUR DESPAIR, THE SECOND IS A MEASURE OF OUR HOPE. THE FIRST STEP IS THE ADMISSION AND ACCEPTANCE OF OUR DEFEAT—TOTAL, ABSOLUTE DEFEAT. WITH ALL OUR RESOURCES, WE CAN'T STAY SOBER; WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS AND WITH THE UTMOST DETERMINATION, WE STILL FIND OUR LIVES CRASHING DOWN AROUND OUR HEADS. INDEED, WE ARE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL, AND OUR LIVES ARE UNMANAGEABLE.

But if we are powerless over alcohol, then who or what will keep us sober? And if we cannot manage our own lives, then who or what will guide us, help us return to some sort of rational existence?

In answer to both questions, the Second Step says: a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

With that single, simple statement, the Second Step lays the spiritual cornerstone of A.A.: If we are to recover from the physical, mental, and spiritual illness called alcoholism, we must come to believe in and rely on a force outside ourselves.

This is not easy for most of us to do, and for many it takes time. Fortunately, the Step is very careful to use the wording "Came to believe." Some of us come to believe almost instantly; others take weeks or months; still, others take years. There is no set timetable, and there is no reason to feel guilt over inability to accept the Second Step immediately, with all its ramifications. On the other hand, though, if we do not work toward an acceptance of the Step, if we ignore it or kick it under the rug and hope it goes away, we cut the spiritual heart out of the program.

So, by hook or by crook, we come to believe. But believe in what?

In three things: the existence of a force outside— and greater than—ourselves; the fact of our own insanity; the ability of the greater power to take care of that insanity.

For reasons which someday someone may explain far better than I can, many or even most alcoholics seem to have trouble with the word "insanity," though the track record of any practicing alcoholic—even the part we remember—should be proof enough that we are at this stage somewhat different from the normal. To many, the word conjures up visions of men in white coats, or patients chasing butterflies across Happydale, or anyone of a dozen forms of psychotic behavior. But a word is only a word, and "insanity" can refer to any kind of behavior that is at variance with what is generally accepted as normal.

Our obsessive, compulsive behavior in relation to alcohol can hardly be termed normal. Nor can the things we do while drinking. Nor can many of the habit patterns, mental processes, or just plain hangups we have after we stop drinking.

Any discussion of the Second Step will show that the word "insanity" means, to different people, that we were insane while we drank, or before we started drinking, or at all three stages. These differences of opinion become unimportant in the light of this statement: If we were insane while we drank, the obsession to return to that life must be equally insane, and if there was or is some problem that adds fuel to the obsession, then the problem must be eliminated.

But the solution offered by that statement is not as easy as it looks. To put it crudely: A truly sick mind cannot repair itself; in fact, many times it can't even see what's wrong.

The human mind has a marvelous ability to protect itself from outside influences. Although the conscious portion of the mind may have a sincere desire to find out what's wrong and to fix it, the subconscious part will block any such effort by putting up a bewildering variety of misleading motivations, misinformation, and misdirection. The more important—the deeper—the particular hang-up is, the higher and thicker this wall will be. If the problem is big enough, the conscious, thinking mind will not even be aware of its existence, and the mind that does become aware will still be powerless to do much about it.

The knowledge of that helplessness in trying to cope with our own problems by ourselves is an integral part of the First and Second Steps. The Second Step states very clearly that our insanity can be taken care of, our sanity restored, by a power greater than ourselves. Once we have become aware of our own irrationality and our inability to cope with it singlehanded, it then becomes a question of searching out a solution that is outside—and greater than— ourselves.

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It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of this search for acceptance of power, a force, an influence that is outside ourselves. The Step refers to a power greater than ourselves. Obviously, if we are unable to solve our problems alone, the power must be greater than we are in order to bring about anything much worthwhile. However, babies have to creep before they can walk, and walk before they can run. It is tough merely to begin to look outside ourselves for any kind of force or power, let alone a greater power. In fact, it is hard for some of us to accept the idea that there is anything outside ourselves.

That last statement deserves some explanation. A rational, thinking, conscious mind has no trouble with the idea that each person, thing and force has a separate and distinct existence. We can say (and believe), "I am. You are. He is."

However, the subconscious or unconscious mind often rejects this idea. It says, "I am, but you exist only as I think about you." Extreme? Hardly. One of the most powerful tools in A.A. is the process by which one alcoholic identifies with another. First, this identification consists merely of recognizing that there are people who exist independently of our own minds. Then the process goes further: It identifies another alcoholic as a similar human being. But the basic identification is with another human being as a separate entity.

Once that log jam has been broken up, the rest of the process is relatively easy. Once we become aware that there are other people and things—and forces—outside ourselves, it becomes a matter of searching until a power that does some good is found. Eventually, through any one of a wide variety of spiritual experiences, the power is recognized as the basic driving force of the universe.

Disposing of the whole concept of acquiring a greater power in one or two sentences may seem abrupt, but is anything else worth saying? Those who have had a spiritual experience already know all about it, while for those who have not yet had one, an outpouring of words would have no real meaning.

The search for higher power and the nature of that power, when found, are

very personal matters. Many of us have no trouble in accepting God as our Higher Power; many others shy away from the word "God," but have no trouble accepting the presence of some sort of universal force; still others look upon our A.A. group or all of A.A.s as a power greater than ourselves.

In all these cases, though, we have acquired a belief in some force that is external, more powerful than we are, and capable of helping us return to sanity. This implies that the external, more powerful force is a force for good, an orderly force capable of making sense out of the chaos of reality, and bringing order to our own chaotic lives.

The final stage of a full acceptance of the Second Step is to come to believe that this greater power—a good and orderly greater power—will indeed actually help us. We have already accepted the idea that this force can do the job. Now we must become convinced, completely convinced, that the power will do it.

Once again, words are hardly an adequate method of trying to express belief. Those who have thrown themselves on the mercy of the court, so to speak, know that the higher power will do exactly as the Step says. But that statement is no help at all to those who haven't.

What may help is a very brief description of one member's struggles with the Second Step.

I came into A.A. as an agnostic—or, rather, I didn't believe in anything much, but I wanted to. Although I couldn't begin to accept the concept of God, I certainly liked the serenity and obvious peace of mind I saw in those who did believe.

As my time in the program grew, this desire grew. Also increasing day by day was my pain—pure, unrelieved pain—not physical pain, but a longing inside my brain and my heart for something above and, most important, beyond me.

My group and the whole A.A. program helped, and as time went by I began to perceive some sort of order where there had been only confusion, some sense of guidance where there had been only a labyrinth of blind alleys.

Then one day (on the Garden State Parkway, as unlikely as that sounds) all the pieces fell into place. Whatever barrier had blinded my vision, preventing me from seeing the true nature of things, was gone. For the first time in my life, I became aware of the all-pervading presence of incomprehensibly vast power.

Then, too, I became aware that I was only one infinitely small—but vitally important—part of the universe. Infinitely small because I was one tiny soul on one planet going around one sun in one galaxy of countless billions, but vitally important because the entire, immense universe would be very, very, very slightly different without me, as it would be different without any of us.

The vision, if I may call it that, was momentarily staggering, but only momentarily. The essential rightness of my vision sustained me, and still sustains me. If I am a part of the whole—even a tiny part—I belong here.

And if I belong here, all I have to do is find out exactly what I am supposed to be and do. For me as an alcoholic, part of this answer is obvious. The universe has the ability—in fact, it makes it a rule—to eliminate the bad and the sick, and since the alcoholic is indeed a sick person, the universe—or society—will eliminate him. Therefore, to drink is for me to deny my higher power.

But that is only part of the problem, although perhaps the most important part. I personally conceive of the universe as a very orderly place; to achieve a serene and happy existence, all that is required of me is to be aware of this order and fit myself into it. This is a lot easier said than done, of course. So, in A.A., after the Second Step, there are ten more designed to help accomplish this.

But once we have accepted, as ineluctable fact, our powerlessness over alcohol, and once we have come to believe that a greater power will give us all the help we need, we have made two giant steps along the road to recovery.

Events

MARCH 28-30TH

ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (ISCYPAA) XLII - KEYS TO THE KINGDOM
 WYNDHAM CITY CENTRE
 700 E. ADAMS STREET, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62701



Pre-Registration
 Conference Only
 \$26

Pre-Registration
 Includes Scholarship
 \$31



MARCH 29TH

41ST ANNUAL TRI-COUNTY CONFERENCE - THE POWER OF FELLOWSHIP
 LAKELAND CHURCH
 440 NORTH HUNT CLUB ROAD, GURNEE, IL 60031

- Registration. 8:00 a.m.
- Kick-off/Speaker Dave N. (Racine). 9:00 a.m.
- Al-anon speaker 9:30 a.m.
- Panels 10:30 a.m.
- Chili lunch (\$2.00). 12:00 p.m.
- Recovery skits 4:00 p.m.
- Banquet 6:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5TH

LADIES ANNUAL SERENI-TEA
PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE:
 CHAIN OF LAKES COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
 43 WEST GRASS LAKE ROAD, ANTIOCH, IL



Friends sharing fun, sweets, tea, and fellowship!

HATS ARE ENCOURAGED & DOOR PRIZES WILL BE GIVEN AWAY!

- OPEN Speaker meeting; all are welcome.
- Social Hour 1:00 p.m.
- Speaker/Kris M, Waukegan 2:00 p.m.
- Tickets \$10/person
- Deb H. 847-567-1791
- Jeanne E. 847-830-5424

Meeting Spotlights

**ANTIOCH RECOVERY CLUB
 OPEN SPEAKER MEETINGS**

466 W. IL RTE 173, ANTIOCH, IL 60002

- Doors. 5:30 p.m.
- Speaker 6:00 p.m.
- February 8th.** Kevin A.
- February 22nd.** Eric S.
+dinner at 7:00 p.m. – bring a dessert to pass
- March 8th.** Cecilia McCormick
- March 22nd.** Rebecca H.
+potluck at 7:00 p.m.
- April 12th** Clint K.

Treatment Meetings

GATEWAY – LAKE VILLA – FRIDAYS

Men @ 7:00-8:00 p.m. Women @ 7:00-8:30 p.m.

ATP – WAUKEGAN – CO-ED

Mondays & Fridays @ 7:30-8:30 p.m.
 Saturdays @ 10:00 a.m.

WRS – VERNON HILLS – WOMEN

Thursdays @ 7:30-8:30 p.m.

TREATMENT MONTHLY WORKSHOP

3RD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH. 7:00 P.M.
 Meeting ID 994 296 7947
 Password redbook (all lowercase)
 Contact Area 20 Treatment Chair,
 Kevin A. bbkevin8@gmail.com, 224-201-8978

District 10 Updates

D10 COMMITTEE ELECTIONS WERE HELD ON 10/18. There are thirteen (13) open positions that need to be filled. If you are interested in learning more about a position, **PLEASE JOIN US** at the next D10 meeting.

D10 CONTRIBUTIONS from 10/26/24-12/7/24 (excluding Fall breakfast & reimbursements): **\$544.55**

D10 ARCHIVES had a well-received display at **MCHENRY COUNTY SOBERFEST – THANK YOU, ARCHIVES COMMITTEE!**

BRIDGING THE GAP is looking for **VOLUNTEERS ALONG THE NORTH SHORE.** Please reach out to BTG Chair, Gordon R. for more information.

NEWCOMER PACKETS can be purchased for \$2. Please reach out to Literature Chair, Lance L.

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2025 A.A. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION IS OPEN!

LOOKING FOR DISTRICT 10 MEETING MINUTES?
 Visit <https://district10nia.org/minutes/>

LOOKING FOR DELEGATE AND/OR AREA 20 COMMITTEE REPORTS, UPDATES AND AGENDAS?
 Visit aa-nia.org/delegate/ and aa-nia.org/agendas/

CORRECTIONS MEETINGS ARE HAPPENING AT LAKE COUNTY JAIL. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
 Currently have six (6) volunteers between D10 & D12. Monday & Thursday 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. Documents are downloadable via the link at: <https://district10nia.org/committees/corrections-committee/>

BridgeThe Gap

I GET DRUNK, WE GET SOBER.

The Bridge The Gap program is here to help people getting out of rehab and those in halfway houses attend meetings, as well as introduce them to others at the meetings. None of us can do this alone!

Please reach out. There are men and women who want to be there for you, just as someone was there for them!

Gordon R. . . . 815-382-6958

Alphonso F. . . . 773-814-1469

Annette B . . . 224-504-4566

STEP 2: CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

TRADITION 2: FOR OUR GROUP PURPOSE THERE IS BUT ONE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY — A LOVING GOD AS HE MAY EXPRESS HIMSELF IN OUR GROUP CONSCIENCE. OUR LEADERS ARE BUT TRUSTED SERVANTS; THEY DO NOT GOVERN.

CONCEPT II: THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE OF A.A. HAS BECOME, FOR NEARLY EVERY PRACTICAL PURPOSE, THE ACTIVE VOICE AND THE EFFECTIVE CONSCIENCE OF OUR WHOLE SOCIETY IN ITS WORLD AFFAIRS.

The Glum Lot



NEXT DISTRICT MEETING
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD
 ST. GILBERT CATHOLIC CHURCH GRAYSLAKE, IL
 5:30 P.M. TRADITIONS MTG 6:00 P.M. HYBRID MTG

CONTENT DEADLINE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14.

Any A.A. may contribute. 1. Go to district10nia.org. 2. Click "District Services and Committees", then "Newsletter". 3. Provide name, email or phone, in case of questions. 4. Type/Paste your content. Click "Select". That's it! **WEBSITES** www.district10nia.org www.aa-nia.org www.aa.org www.aagrapevine.org
DISTRICT 10 P.O. Box 854, Libertyville, IL 60048 **NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA 20** P.O. Box 808, Streamwood, IL 60107
GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE James A. Farley Station, P.O. Box 2407 New York, NY 10163 aa.org/aa-contributions-self-support
 Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of A.A., NIA, District 10 or Conscious Contact volunteers.

877-893-1212

**DISTRICT 10
ANSWERING SERVICE**

Be an Answering Service volunteer - contact listed to the left!

**LOOKING FOR
LIGHT YET
MEANINGFUL
SERVICE WORK?**

I AM RESPONSIBLE, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that:
I AM RESPONSIBLE.