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Osseo AA Newsletter

Suburban North Alano Vol. 2 Issue 1

www.OsseoAA.org

“One Day at a Time”

Dog Days of Summer

Hello to everyone.

Is everybody enjoying the warm weather?

Why not come to the annual picnic and enjoy the brotherhood and comradeship of AA? We look forward to seeing all there! It's on the 11th of August starting in the afternoon. We'll also have our annual AA member meeting that day.

Also it is that time of year again to entertain and vote on nominations for the Board Of Director's for the 2012-2013 year. Please nominate prospective members (must have at least 1 year sobriety) by squads so that we can have elections early in September.

I myself have found that being on the Board gives me insight and humbles me to be of service to our club.

I wish all of you a continued summer of sobriety!

Regards,

Bob W

Want to write an article or just want to voice an opinion? Please contact Bob G. or any board member. You can email: (BobGleason@gmail.com) to submit your article or thoughts

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Want to Contribute?

- Contact Bob G. or any Board Member with stories or suggestions
- Check the website often as it's constantly changing. It's also a good way to keep up with the news. If you have club news, please send it in.
- *We need an editor*

On Tradition Eight

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

Editorial by Bill W.

A.A. Grapevine, July, 1948

"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. "12th Step" work is never to be paid for."

Throughout the world A.A.s are "12th stepping" with thousands of new prospects a month. Between one and two thousand of these stick on our first presentation; past experience shows that most of the remainder will come back to us later on. Almost entirely unorganized, and completely non-professional, this mighty spiritual current is now flowing from alcoholics who are well to those who are sick. One alcoholic talking to another; that's all.

Could this vast and vital face-to-face effort ever be professionalized or even organized? Most emphatically, it could not. The few efforts to professionalize straight "12th Step" work have always failed quickly. Today, no A.A. will tolerate the idea of paid "A.A. Therapists" or "organizers". Nor does any A.A. like to be told just how he must handle that new prospect of his. No, this great life-giving stream can never be dammed up by paid do-gooders or professionals. Alcoholics Anonymous is never going to cut its own life lines. To a man, we are sure of that.

But what about those who serve us full time in other capacities -- are cooks, caretakers and paid Intergroup secretaries "A.A. professionals"?

Because our thinking about these people is still unclear, we often feel and act as though they were such. The impression of professionalism subtly attaches to them, so we frequently hear they are "making money out of A.A.", or that they are "professionalizing" A.A. Seemingly, if they do take our A.A. dollars they don't quite belong with us A.A.s any more. We sometimes go further; we underpay them on the theory they ought to be glad to "cook" for A.A. cheap.

Now isn't this carrying our fears of professionalism rather far? If these fears ever got too strong, none but a saint or an incompetent could work for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our supply of saints being quite small, we would certainly wind up with less competent workers than we need.

We are beginning to see that our few paid workers are performing only those service tasks that our volunteers cannot consistently handle. Primarily these folks are not doing 12th Step work. They are just making more and better 12th Step work possible. Secretaries at their desks are valuable points of contact, information and public relations. That is what they are paid for, and nothing else. They help carry the good news of A.A. to the outside world and bring our prospects face to face with us. That's not "A.A. therapy"; it's just a lot of very necessary but often thankless work.

So, where needed, let's revise our attitude toward those who labor at our special services. Let us treat them as A.A. associates, and not as hired help; let's recompense them fairly and, above all, let's absolve them from the label of professionalism.

Let us also distinguish clearly between "organizing the A.A. movement" and setting up, in a reasonably business-like manner, its few essential services of contact and propagation. Once we do that, all will be well. The million or so brother alcoholics who are still sick will then continue to get the break we 60,000 A.A.s have already had.

Let's give our "service desks" the hand they so well deserve.

Bill W

It took me a long time to realize that when I hate somebody it doesn't hurt them. Only me.

Call your sponsor before, not after, you take your first drink.

Nothing is so bad that relapse won't make it worse.

I can't handle it, God. You take over.

You cannot think your way into right actions.
You have to act your way into right thinking.

Step Eight

From the '12 Steps and 12 Traditions' book:

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all"

"Steps 8 and 9 are concerned with personal relations. First, we take a look backward and try to discover where we have been at fault; next we make a vigorous attempt to repair the damage we have done; and third, having thus cleaned away the debris of the past, we consider how, with our newfound knowledge of ourselves, we may develop the best possible relations with every human being we know.

"This is a very large order. It is a task which we may perform with increasing skill, but never really finish. Learning how to live in the greatest peace, partnership, and brotherhood with all men and women, of whatever description, is a moving and fascinating adventure... Now the time has come when he ought to redouble his efforts to see how many people s/he has hurt, and in what ways. This reopening of emotional wounds, some old, some perhaps forgotten, and some still painfully festering, will at first look like a purposeless and pointless piece of surgery. but if a willing start is made, then the great advantages of doing this will so quickly reveal themselves that the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away...

"These obstacles, however, are very real. The first, and one of the most difficult, has to do with forgiveness. The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs we have done another, we resentfully focus on the wrong he has done us. This is especially true if he has, in fact, behaved badly at all. Triumphantly we seize upon his misbehavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own...

"It is usually a fact that our behavior when drinking has aggravated the defects of others. We've repeatedly strained the patience of our best friends to a snapping point, and have brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with. In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we have increased. If we are now about to ask forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?

"When listing people we have harmed, most of us hit another solid obstacle. We got a pretty severe shock when we realized that we were preparing to make a face-to-face admission of our wretched conduct to those we had hurt. It had been embarrassing enough when in confidence we had admitted these things to God, to ourselves, and to another human being. But the prospect of actually visiting or even writing the people concerned now overwhelmed us...

"Some of us, though, tripped over a very different snag. We clung to the claim that when drinking we never hurt anybody but ourselves...

"This attitude, of course, is the end result of purposeful forgetting. It is an attitude which can only be changed by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions...

"In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging

emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse...

"Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight...

"We might next ask ourselves what we mean when we say that we have 'harmed' other people. What kinds of 'harm' do people do one another anyway? To define the word 'harm' in a practical way, we might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people. If our tempers are consistently bad, we arouse anger in others. If we lie or cheat, we deprive others not only of their worldly goods, but of their emotional security and peace of mind. We really issue them an invitation to become contemptuous and vengeful...

"Suppose that in our family lives we happen to be miserly, irresponsible, callous, or cold. Suppose that we are irritable, critical, impatient, and humorless. Suppose we lavish attention upon one member of the family and neglect the others. What happens when we try to dominate the whole family...? What happens when we wallow in depression, self-pity oozing from every pore, and inflict that upon those about us? Such a roster of harms done others - the kind that make daily living with us as practicing alcoholics difficult and often unbearable - could be extended almost indefinitely. When we take such personality traits as these into shop, office, and the society of our fellows, they can do damage almost as extensive as that we have caused at home...

"We should avoid extreme judgments, both of ourselves and of others involved. We must not exaggerate our defects or theirs. A quiet, objective view will be our steadfast aim...

"Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what AA experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God."

Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone; it has to be made, like bread, re-made all the time, made new.

--Ursula K. Le Guin

In the first phases of a relationship, everything is new and exciting. It seems as though nothing could ever go wrong.

Yet as we move out of this "honeymoon" phase of the relationship, problems begin. Suddenly we notice things about the other person that bother us. We seem to have more disagreements and more difficulties that take longer to solve. We may even silently choose corners, put up walls, and back away from each other.

It's easy at this stage to want to end the relationship. But now is when the outcome of the relationship is most critical. If we run away from renewing our love and rebuilding the foundations of trust and faith in each other, we will deprive our love of its nourishment for growth. Love takes constant work and needs plenty of patience. Each day can reveal a new layer of love; each stage in a relationship moves us to a new plateau. But only if we are willing.

Step Eight from “Tools For Fools”

by: William M.

This was one of the first steps my sponsors had me work on. I wasn't sure why at the time, but as I look back, I think they wanted to make me feel more like a decent human being. They didn't rush step 9 at me, but they certainly encouraged me to make this list. I've been making it ever since.

All these years, since I came in the program, I have been adding new names, and as my brain gradually comes out of hock, I am remembering old ones I had forgotten, (or was too ashamed of to put down).

In my drinking days, I had often made lists of this general sort. The trouble with my lists, was that they involved a good bit of score-keeping. So I started out on the list. Every person that I even thought I might have harmed. If there was any doubt, I put them down. No matter how great or small the harm.

I thought at the time, that this must be one of the hardest jobs in the world, and for me, at that time, it was. But, it was nothing compared to the second part of the step. That part is still tough; became willing to make amends to them all!

Here they hit me again - you cannot judge! Much like the 6th step, I must try to develop an attitude where I am willing to make amends to everyone I have harmed, no matter how much harm I think they may have done to me. We are not talking about sin or guilt. We are talking about my responsibility as a human being.

Let me give an example of how this reads to me. I'll use a husband and wife relationship, but it applies to any relationship of any two people. In this husband and wife relationship, let us say that we were capable of rating who was to blame for each problem that had come up between them over the years. And to be ridiculous, let us say we found out that 90% of the blame was the husbands, and 10% the wife's. Now, I contend, that if the wife is going to try to be emotionally mature, she can't even look at the husbands 90%, until she does something about her 10%. And if she thinks she can hurry and straighten up her 10%, so she can yak at him, she's crazy. For by the time she clears up her 10% she will have done another 10 or 20 or 50 or 90% herself.

In my approach to this, I am learning a little better to operate on a 24 hour basis. I cannot include in this anything I may have done to help these people on my harmed list. I am responsible for everything I think or say or do.

I have heard people say that the only people they harmed were their family. That was not true with me. I got everybody I could. If I thought there was a chance, I turned around and got them again. I not only cost them money, but also their trust, love and affection. I also enabled them to more easily lose faith in the rest of their fellowmen.

About half of my drinking time, I worked for someone else. The other half, I had people working for me. I cheated them all.

When I worked for someone else they were entitled to the best job I was able to perform. They rarely received this. Certainly, I functioned reasonably well a great deal of the time; but they never got all of me, and that was what I had hired out to them. When people worked for me,

they deserved to have their boss operate at the peak of his ability. This seldom happened.

I think this would be an example. Say I had been a surgeon, and performed a difficult life-saving operation on a patient while I was under the effects of a hangover. Even though the operation had been successful, I believe I would have cheated the patient by not respecting him and human life enough to be in the best possible condition.

I am not God, and I hope I never again regress to the point of trying to think I am.

One of the important features of this step, to me, is that it doesn't expect me to immediately be willing to make amends to everyone. It says, "became willing." This denotes a passage of time giving me opportunity for some growth.

So, I "became willing" to make amends to some people -made a few of them - and became willing to make some other amends that I was not willing to do at first.

As I said before, I found out none of these actions had anything to do with my alcoholism. They did help me to become aware that I had a right to be a responsible human being; and with that awareness, came the renewed realization, that my having this illness, and admitting it, didn't make me less of a person.

Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others.

--Fyodor Dostoevsky

The primary requirement for our recovery is honesty. In order to grow in honesty we first needed to see how we had lied to others and to ourselves. This was not as easy as it first appeared. Our lies to ourselves kept us so fully in the dark that we did not know we were lying. We sometimes told "sincere" lies because we honestly did not distinguish the truth within ourselves. For so long we had preferred dishonest rationalizations, and we had come to believe them.

The spiritual life of this program is based upon experience. What we feel, what we see and hear, is what we know. When we simplify our lives and base the truth upon our experiences, we slowly cleanse ourselves of the lies we told ourselves. With this kind of honesty comes an inner peace with ourselves in which we can say, "I know myself."

Today, I will accept my experience as a simple message of truth.

Step Eight:

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Every time I've read this Step it seems like this requires more work than any other Step. It states "all persons we had harmed" and at my age that list seems like it would be really long. As a child could I be pardoned for being "naïve"? This would alleviate at least a dozen years. How about my teen years? Could I chalk up those times to hormone changes? That means I'm now looking at the same amount of years my child is. I know that maybe it sounded flippant and I don't want it to. Sometimes for me, I have to wrap my head around it because it is such a different way to live. So now as an adult my life has to be reexamined and that is more realistic.

In *Discovering Choices* on page 268, I felt a connection to Step Eight:

In coming to terms with my own strengths and weaknesses, I was able to look at how my ignorance of myself had led me to harm others, either directly or indirectly (Step Eight). This Step, in turn, helped me to recognize that I did not have all the answers where others were concerned, and that it was not up to me to solve anyone else's problems (Tradition Eight). Furthermore, I realized that I could give up responsibility for solving the whole world's problems and allow those elected to get on with the job without spending my time criticizing them (Concept Eight).

Sometimes the "ignorance of myself" is my own attitude during the times when I am around people or talking to people. However, there are many different ways to make a direct amends. It's not just what I say it can also be how I say it. Even my body language can be an indicator of good intentions or not. I have to check my own gauge of compassion and respect of myself toward other people and that means knowing what my outlook is each and every time. I've also find that it's better to allow a relationship to heal and redevelop over time. Then as I am working on a new way of thinking, find ways to redevelop slowly the relationship again. I'm not surprised that it's not the same as before, however to show the growth that I've made in myself might be the key to a better relationship. I've found that when I am involved with having a deeper relationship with my Higher Power and by letting go of things that are none of my business amazing things happen.

The book of *Courage to Change*, page 101, best describes the relationships we have with others:

Today's Reminder

Certainly I make choices that harm others and call for making amends. But sometimes a choice that is right for me may be uncomfortable or even unacceptable to others. Other people's expectations are not my responsibility unless I helped to create them. I can remind myself that conflict is part of life. "With this Step we sort out our part, taking responsibility for our actions but also releasing ourselves...from the burden of falsely-held responsibilities." ...In All Our Affairs

In *One Day at a Time*, page 174, it sums the Eighth Step up in one nice sentence:

"The Eighth Step places us on the threshold of freedom from self-hate; it opens the door to new peace of mind which, once enjoyed, we will never want to lose."