

Monthly Reprieve

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RACINE AREA CENTRAL OFFICE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Store is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am—5:00 pm. Saturdays 9:00 am—2:00 pm; Closed Sundays

By: Jessica H.

The Fifth Step - a Door to Freedom

The truth is that I am a procrastinator. I am egotistical and selfish. At my very best, I am a little girl hiding from all of the fear in my life. I came to AA to have my paper signed and move forward with my life. My motto was "I got this." I figured that these steps were simply going to reaffirm what my parents and grandparents taught me as a child. I needed to get back on track. I always considered myself an intelligent person. Today I know the truth is that I don't have a thing.

I asked for a sponsor at my third meeting when I was told to 'shit or get off the pot' because there were other alcoholics dying that might need a solution. I was assigned to a little woman and we got down to business. I learned a lot from her. I also learned that their way was not the only way. It was, however, what I needed at that moment.

Throughout the last couple of years, I have worked the steps with another sponsor. Each time I work through the steps (or don't) I learn something new about myself and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Each time I discover words that weren't there before, emotions I hadn't experienced before. Each step takes on new meaning.

In Step Four, I uncover and discover the truths about myself. In Step Five,

"Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs," I open myself up to a deepened relationship, not only with a God of my understanding, but with another woman. For someone that didn't trust another woman as far as I could throw them, that is some super scary stuff. There is always a decision to make and an action to take in this program. Cross the scary bridge with the imaginary trolls underneath and pay the toll or continue to pretend that life according to the "I got this" mentality is stupendous.

It was not obvious to me why I needed to drag another person, much less a woman, into my messes. I failed to understand that my best thinking and interpretations got me all the way to Alcoholics Anonymous.

My misconceptions about how the world worked were askew. How could I see things in a new light with the same eyes I drank with. I needed to begin to trust another to see through my justifications and half-truths. Why a woman? In order to be ok with myself, I needed to have someone to know my secrets, to hold me accountable, to begin to develop an honest relationship. Having a woman as my sponsor and being completely honest is the start of overcoming those fears.

After dragging my feet as much as humanly possible, I scheduled some time to spend with my sponsor. All of the fear of judgment, blame, and rejection settled into my head.

As I began my Fifth Step, she shared with me her experiences. She asked me questions to help me understand where I may have been wrong. She shared her tears and laughter as I shared my own. It was probably one of the first honest lengthy conversations I shared with another woman. Afterwards, I left feeling as if 1000 stones had been removed from my soul. It was the best "Ahhhh" feeling I had in a very long time.

As a result of this process, we have a humble, honest relationship. It has truly become a "we" program for me. I am always a work in progress, but I am accountable to another woman that knows my faults and secrets. She understands the trials that I go experience. I am not afraid to share my thoughts, emotions and crazies with her. I have developed a relationship with a God of my own understanding. I can look back and use these tools to move forward into a new life.

Fifth Concept

"Throughout our world service structure, a "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, assuring that minority opinions will be heard and petitions addressing personal grievances be considered"



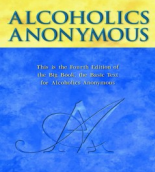
May Focus

Step Five

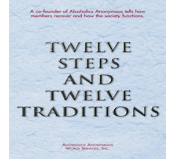
"Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs"

Fifth Tradition

"Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers"



Our Stories



Staying Sober by Sticking to the Steps and the Spirit

By: *Nicholas R.*

Three years ago, when I walked into my first AA meeting at the Grove Club, I hung my head and avoided other people's eyes.

I was ashamed of myself and my actions, and I was filled with fear that my life would crumble apart at any moment. Thoughts of suicide often passed through my mind.

Walking through the doors of AA was the only option I could see for saving my own life and keeping my marriage intact. I didn't know what to expect.

What I heard at that meeting was a message of hope. When the speaker (Katie M., for whom I'll always practice gratitude) talked about how she drank, I could relate.

I had no control over how much booze I put in my body once I took the first drink. The prospect of not drinking – EVER AGAIN!? NEVER? LIKE, NEVER-EVER? – scared the bejeezus outta me. I knew it wasn't possible. I knew that I would have to control my drinking.

But then, she gently reminded the group that Sunday night about the mental obsession.

I had to concede that every time I had tried to control my drinking, one of two things happened. I either failed entirely and

wound up in a violent black-out, or I gritted teeth and clenched fists through the misery of "just two" until I couldn't take it any more.

There was a violent black-out behind door number two as well. It turns out I had lost the power of choice concerning alcohol.

In retrospect, everything about the decision – if it was my decision, I'm not sure – to walk through those doors that night was motivated by my selfishness. And it was so extremely short sighted.

I wanted nothing to do with cultivating a relationship with any sort of Higher Power that night: I just wanted to save my own ass and keep myself from losing things I was afraid to lose.

After three years of sticking to the basics of the Big Book, I have (to the best of my ability) directed my will toward working all twelve steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program of recovery with a sponsor.

I also meet regularly with a group of other trusted Alcoholics, who also seek a spiritual solution to the problem of selfishness and self-centeredness in our lives.

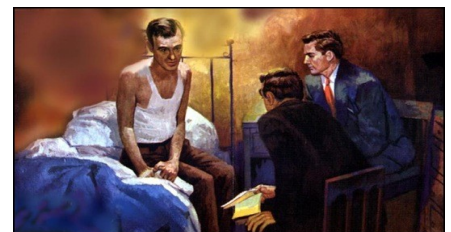
As a result of those efforts, I haven't had the urge to drink take over my mind. I'm safe from those thoughts, as long as I keep

my eyes on the prize.

That's not to say my life is – or ever will be – exactly the way I want it. Recent inventory suggested that the resentments I had continued to harbor over the past nine years of my life were – surprise! – the result of my own self-seeking, fear, dishonesty, and inconsiderateness.

And cleaning up the wreckage of a past like mine – and I guess any real alcoholic – is not a pleasant task at first blush. But my experience suggests that when I'm willing to at least consider that my life is the way that God wants it, then I experience the restlessness, irritability and discontent far less. I find myself directing my attention intuitively to how I can help other people. And when I focus on being helpful, loving, and kind to all, I think much less about myself.

Of course, I'm not always willing to do that. I get wrapped up in self an awful lot throughout the day. But even when I fail to practice patience, God somehow seems to find a way.



What an order, I CAN go through with it!

By: Bill D.

For many newcomers to sobriety, the steps look like a tall order. I remember, at a very young age, reading the "steps" where I went to church. Too young to understand their purpose, I remember thinking whoever practiced those steps must be pretty extreme. Even as an upcoming alcoholic and drug addict in grade school, I knew the steps sounded a little, well, cultish.

Even the Big Book addresses the neurotic newcomer exclaiming "What an order! I can't go through with it." Truth be told, the steps are extreme. Unfortunately addiction is, by its very nature, exceptionally extreme. And alcohol addiction is no exception. To arrest an extreme illness, a treatment that employs drastic measures must be taken.

A lot of sober newcomers bounce out of the program after the 3rd step. The ones that do make it through the 4th step hit snags on the 5th step because it demands rigorous honesty. That's rigorous, not partial honesty or mostly honest... rigorous honesty!

In his book *The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions*, Bill Wilson explains the benefits of thoroughly completing a 5th step. The fifth step of the 12 step recovery program states that we, "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." This vital exercise begins to provide emotional, mental and spiritual relief. By sharing wrong with a trusted confidant, guilt and shame start to melt away. Newcomers begin to realize their troubled past isn't as unique as once thought. Both painful and rewarding, the 5th step is essential to the fundamental change of personality required to overcome alcohol and drug

addiction. In its simplest form, the fifth step is simply a confession of personal wrong-doings. Confession is a long standing practice in the Judeo/Christian tradition, and alcoholics usually store a vast collection of closet skeletons.

By sharing the depths of their conscience with another person, alcoholics allow fresh air to enter their soul's closely-guarded closet of shameful skeletons.

Repentance, similar to confession (and equally painful), is also espoused in the Buddhist verse found in *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* (chapter 40):

*"For all the evil deeds I have done in the past,
Created by my body,
speech and mind,
From beginning less greed,
hatred and delusion,
I now know shame and
repent them all."*

The original architects of the 12 steps wove the powerful, spiritual tradition of confession for a reason. It is effective. It is healing. It is one of the most valuable tools to alleviate past burdens. As Bill Wilson notes:

"If we have swept the search light of Step Four back and forth over our careers, and it has revealed in stark relief those experiences we'd rather not remember, if we have come to know how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them." (12x12, pg.55).

This is precisely what the 5th Step of the 12 step process re-

quires of those who genuinely desire sobriety - a candid discussion in light of a 4th step inventory. Although the word "required" repels many an alcoholics or drug addicts, Bill Wilson further warns that "without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could not stay sober." (12x12, pgs. 56&57). Obviously, staying sober is a prerequisite for meaningful, fulfilling recovery.

The Fifth Step is More Than Just Relief

But personal admission of one's checkered past offers more than mere relief. The Big Book states that the fifth step, if conducted fearlessly and thoroughly, produces unhealthy patterns of behavior. Destructive behaviors reflect underlying character defects, the engine that drives off-the-wall actions. Before freshly sober members can begin to address these core issues, they must undertake an identification process to understand their precise nature.

Of course, personal admission of a rag-tag past is sobering in and of itself. As Wilson points out, however, meaningful insights offer the potential to initiate a purging of core issues that drive alcoholics to drink. Incredible emotional and mental relief, coupled with profound personal insight, makes the fifth step a valuable exercise for anyone. Successful completion marks a return to sanity, or a clear recognition of who and what we are.

For most with a truly self-addicted mind, the 12 step recovery process provides an invaluable method to rid oneself of self pity, emotional entanglements, delusions of grandeur and 'playing the victim.' Step Five initiates the change. But remember, there are seven to go!



Events and Service Notes

District 17 Corrections

For those looking to jumpstart their involvement in service work, District 17 is in need of help in carrying the message to those in the Corrections system. There are many positions that fall under the heading of Corrections service work—Corrections Correspondence Service, Pre-release Contact Program, and AA meetings on the inside, to name a few. For those interested in getting involved—please contact Steve N. (Area 75 District 17 Corrections Committee Chair) at (262) 939-9676 or nova221sgn@wi.rr.com.

RACO Steering Committee Meetings

The Racine Area Central Office's 'Steering Committee' meets on the first Saturday of every month at RACO. The steering committee invites anyone who may be interested in Area 75 and District 17 events and happenings.

The Steering Committee also currently has a few open positions available (which can be seen on Page 6 of the this edition of The

Reprive). Check it out!
 If you or someone you know might be interested in sitting-in on a Committee meeting or possibly filling an open position, please join us for a monthly meeting or email raconewsletter@gmail.com for information on available positions and position requirements.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Committee meeting!

Detox Help Needed

Volunteers are needed for detox meetings throughout the area. Detox meetings are a great way to carry your message to the newcomer, who often needs to hear a message of hope.

Requirements to become a volunteer are six months to attend with others and one year to attend solo.

Meetings are held Sunday-Friday at 8pm and Saturday & Sunday mornings at 9:30am.

Detox meetings are held at St. Lukes on Wisconsin Ave. and 14th St. For further information, please contact Roxann D.

Upcoming Events & Activities

Fridays in May
 Young at Heart
 "New Young Peoples Meeting"
 The Benjamin House
 6:00pm

Saturday, May 2nd
 Game night
 The Grove Club, Racine, WI
 8:00pm

Saturday, May 9th
 Grove Picnic Planning Mtg
 The Grove Club, Racine, WI
 11:15 am

Grove Membership Meeting
 The Grove Club, Racine, WI
 12:00 pm

Cinco de Mayo dinner/dance
 The Grove Club
 Starts at 6pm/Speakers 8pm
 Dance to follow

May 15th-17th
 64th Annual Area 75 Conference
 Fond du Lac, WI
 Holiday Inn

*Know of any upcoming events?
 Email raconewsletter@gmail.com*



Racine Area Central Office FINANCIALS

Donation Detail	Feb	Mar	Apr
Anonymous donations	20.50	19.45	
Alano 7am Daily Reflections(Racine)			75.00
Alano Mon 6 pm Coffee Hour		247.00	
Benjamin House - No Meeting Specified	3.90		
Benjamin House - People, Places & Things		5.25	10.00
Benjamin House, 8AM Sunday AA/Alanon		21.00	
Benjamin House, 10:00 a.m. Sun. Dwnstrs		12.00	13.25
Benjamin House, 6PM Monday, 12x12	15.00	15.00	25.00
Benjamin House Wednesday 6PM ISM'S	14.00	13.00	
Benjamin House (no specific mtg)	5.00		9.00
Benjamin House Thursday 6PM Big Book	3.00	10.00	4.50
Benjamin House Thursday1 PM AA/Alanon	15.00		
Benjamin House Friday 6:00pm Young At Heart		9.50	
Benjamin House Saturday 7AM Cellar Dwellers		10.00	15.00
Benjamin House Saturday 7 AM Up		22.00	
Benjamin House Saturday 10AM Big Book	49.00	18.00	10.00
Birthday Club			26.00
Fox River Group - Waterford		50.00	
Grove Thursday 10:00 a.m.		40.00	
Grove Saturday 7:00pm			50.00
Kenosha Aurora Hosp-Men's Courage to Change			125.00
Paddock Lake, 12 Step, Mon. 7PM		72.00	
Racine Transitional Care	50.00	50.00	50.00
RACO, Sunday 12:15		25.00	
RACO, Weds. 7:00 BB			50.00
Visting Vets Grp 75 Union Grove	50.00		50.00
Total Donations	225.40	639.20	512.75



Help is Everywhere

District/Club Information

District 17		Racine, Wisconsin
Racine Alano Club 1140 Douglas Ave. Racine, WI 53404 (262) 634-9902	The Grove Club 1037 Grove Ave. Racine, WI 53405 (262) 634-9656	Benjamin House 4848 Highway H Franksville, WI 53126 (262) 886-9611
Benjamin House Website: http://www.benjaminhouseracine.org/		
District 7		Kenosha, Wisconsin
Kenosha Alano Club 630 56 th St. Kenosha, WI 53140 (262) 654-8246	Outcasts 1310 63 rd St. Kenosha, WI 53144	Club Breakaway 8017 Sheridan Rd. Kenosha, WI 53143 (262) 653-9800
Kenosha Alano Club Website: http://kenoshaalanoclub.org		
District 36		Burlington 12 x 12 Club 724 N. Pine St. Burlington, WI
West Racine/Kenosha County		
District 6		Walworth County Alano Club 611 E. Walworth St. Delavan, WI 53115 (262) 740-1888
Eastern Walworth County		
District 12		Eastern Lake County, Illinois
Alano Club of Waukegan 2419 Washington St. Waukegan, IL 60085 (847) 662-9640	Zion-Benton Alano Club 228 Sheridan Rd. Winthrop Harbor, IL 60096 (847) 746-9842	
Alano Club of Waukegan Website: http://alanoclubwaukegan.com/		
Waukegan Hotline: (847) 623-9660		
District 10		Antioch Recovery Club 311 E Depot St.; Suite C Antioch, IL 60002 (847) 838-1882
Western Lake County		
Antioch Recovery Club: http://www.antiochrecoveryclub.org/		
Antioch Hotline: (847) 395-5988		

Alcoholics Anonymous is not affiliated with any club or other outside enterprise

Racine Area Central Office

Officers/Steering Committee

Chairperson	Roxann D.
Co-Chairperson	VACANT
Secretary	Courtney K.
Co-Secretary	VACANT
Treasurer	Pam L.
Co-Treasurer	Jessica H.
Staffing Coordinator	John B.
Co-Staffing Coordinator	Bruce P.
Newsletter	Kevin B.
Co-Newsletter	Steve H.
Hotline Chairperson	Mark S.
Co-Hotline Chairperson	Jon K.
Literature Chairperson	Rachel S.
Co-Literature Chair	Deb K.
Procurement	Steve K.
Webmaster	Courtney L.
Co-Webmaster	Brian K.
Advisor	Darrel S.
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