

[Click here to return.](#) The second half of the 1939-40 Akron *Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Random Thoughts

NOW THAT YOU ARE SOBER, you naturally feel that you want to make restitution in every possible way for the trouble you have caused your family, your friends, others. You want to get back on the job -- if you still have a job -- earn money, pay your immediate debts and obligations of long standing and almost forgotten. Money -- you must have money, you think. And you also want to make restitution in action in many ways not financial. If you could wave a magic wand and do all these things you would do it, wouldn't you?

Well, don't be in a hurry. You can't do all these things overnight. But you can do them -- gradually, step by step. You may safely leave these matters to a Higher Power as you perhaps ponder them in your morning period of contemplation. If you are sincerely resolved to do your part, they will all be adjusted.

"Be still and know that I am God."

SOBRIETY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE, without exception. You may believe your job, or your home life, or one of many other things comes first. But consider, if you do not get sober and stay sober, chances are you won't have a job, a family, or even sanity or life. If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first you are only hurting your chances.

YOU AREN'T very important in this world. If you lose your job someone better will replace you. If you die your wife will mourn briefly, and then remarry. Your children will grow up and you will be but a memory. In the last analysis, you are the only one who benefits by your sobriety. Seek to cultivate humility. Remember that cockiness leads to a speedy fall.

IF YOU THINK you can cheat -- sneak a drink or two without anyone else knowing -- remember, you are only cheating yourself. You are the one who will be hurt by conscience. You are the one who will suffer a hangover. And you are the one who will return to a hospital bed.

Bear constantly in mind that you are only one drink away from trouble. Whether you have been sober a day, a month, a year or a decade, one single drink is a certain way to go off on a binge or a series of binges. It is the first drink -- not the second, fifth or twentieth -- that causes the trouble.

And remember, the more A.A. work you do, the harder you train, the less likely it is that you

will take that first drink.

It is something like two boxers. If they are of the same weight, the same strength and the same ability, and only one trains faithfully while the other spends his time in night clubs and bars, it is pretty sure that the man who trains will be the winner. So let attendance at meetings be your road work; helping newcomers your sparring and shadow boxing; your reading, meditation and clear thinking your gymnasium work; and you won't have to fear a knockout at the hands of John Barleycorn.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. -- Matthew VI, 34.

These words are taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Simply, they mean live in today only. Forget yesterday. Do not anticipate tomorrow. You can only live one day at a time, and if you do a good job of that, you will have little trouble. One of the easiest, most practical ways of keeping sober ever devised is the day by day plan, the 24-hour plan.

You know that it is possible to stay sober for 24 hours. You have done it many times. All right. Stay sober for one day at a time. When you get up in the morning make up your mind that you will not take a drink for the entire day. Ask the Greater Power for a little help in this. If anyone asks you to have a drink, take a rain check. Say you will have it tomorrow. Then when you go to bed at night, finding yourself sober, say a little word of thanks to the Greater Power for having helped you.

Repeat the performance the next day. And the next. Before you realize it you will have been sober a week, a month, a year. And yet you will have only been sober a day at a time.

If you set a time limit on your sobriety you will be looking forward to that day, and each day will be a burden to you. You will burn with impatience. But with no goal the whole thing clears itself, almost miraculously.

Try the day by day plan.

Medical men will tell you that alcoholics are all alike in at least one respect: they are emotionally immature.

In other words, alcoholics have not learned to think like adults.

The child, lying in bed at night, becomes frightened by a shadow on the wall, and hides his head under the covers.

The adult, seeing the same shadow, knows there is a logical reason for it. He sees the streetlight, then the bedpost, and he knows what causes the shadow. He has simply done what the child is incapable of doing -- **THOUGHT**. And through thinking he has avoided fear.

Learn to think things out. Take a thought and follow it through to its conclusion.

If you are tempted to take a drink, reason out for yourself what will happen. Because if you

give serious consideration to the consequences you will have the battle won.

SO YOU'RE DIFFERENT! So you think you are not an alcoholic!

As many Alcoholics Anonymous have gone off the deep end for that kind of thinking as almost all the other reasons combined.

If you have all the symptoms your sponsor will tell you about and that you hear about at meetings, rest assured you are an alcoholic and no different from the rest of the breed.

But don't make the mistake of finding it out the hard way -- by experimenting with liquor. You will find it a painful experience and will only learn that you are **NOT** different.

AT MEETINGS don't criticize the leader. He has his own problems and is doing his best to solve them. Help him along by standing up and saying a few words. He will appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness.

DON'T criticize the methods of others. Strangely enough, you may change your own ideas as you become older in sobriety. Remember there are a dozen roads from New York to Chicago, but they all land in Chicago.

WHAT'S YOUR HURRY? Perhaps you don't feel you are getting the hang of this program as rapidly as you should. Forget it. It probably took you years to get in this condition. You certainly cannot expect a complete cure overnight. You are not expected to grasp the entire program in one day. No one else has ever done that, so it certainly is not expected of you. Even the earliest members are learning something new about sober living nearly every day. There is an old saying, "Easy does it." It is a motto that any alcoholic could well ponder. A child learns to add and subtract in the lower grades. He is not expected to do problems in algebra until he is in high school. Sobriety is a thing that must be learned step by step. If anything puzzles you, ask your new friends about it, or forget it for the time being. The time is not so far away when you will have a good understanding of the entire program. Meantime, **EASY DOES IT!**

THE A.A. PROGRAM is not a "cure," in the accepted sense of the word. There is no known "cure" for alcoholism except complete abstinence. It has been definitely proved that an alcoholic can never again be a normal drinker. The disease, however, can be arrested. How soon you will be cured of a desire to drink is another matter. That depends entirely upon how quickly you can succeed in changing your fundamental outlook on life. For as your outlook changes for the better, desire will become less pronounced, until it disappears almost entirely. It may be weeks or it may

be months. Your sincerity and your capacity for working with others on the A.A. program will determine the length of time.

Earlier in this pamphlet it was advised to keep relatives away from the hospital. The reason was explained. But after the patient leaves the hospital, it would be [useful] to bring the wife, husband, or other close relative to [an A.A.] meeting. It will give them a clearer understanding of the program and enable them to cooperate more intelligently and more closely in the period of readjustment.

DIET AND REST play an important part in the rehabilitation of an alcoholic. For many, we bludgeoned ourselves physically, eating improper foods, sleeping with the aid of alcohol. In our drinking days we ate a bowl of chili or a hamburg sandwich because they were filling and cheap. We sacrificed good food so we would have more money for whiskey. We were the living counterparts of the old joke: "What, buying bread? And not a drop of whiskey in the house!" Our rest was the same. We slept when we passed out. We were the ones who turned out the streetlights and rolled up the sidewalks.

We now find that it is wise to eat balanced meals at regular hours, and get the proper amount of sleep without the unhealthy aid of liquor and sleeping pills. Vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride) or B complex will help steady our nerves and build up a vitamin deficiency. Fresh vegetables and fruits will help.

In fact, it is a wise move to consult a physician, possibly have a complete physical examination. Your doctor will then recommend a course in vitamins, a balanced diet, and advise you as to rest.

The reason for this advice is simple. If we are undernourished and lack rest we become irritable and nervous. In this condition our tempers get out of control, our feelings are easily wounded, and we get back to the old and dangerous thought processes -- "Oh, to hell with it. I'll get drunk and show 'em."

MANY MEMBERS OF A.A. find it helpful, even after a long period of sobriety, to add an extra ration of carbohydrates to their diet. Alcohol turns to sugar in the body, and when we deprive ourselves of alcohol our bodies cry for sugar. This often manifests itself in a form of nervousness.

Carry candy in your pocket. Keep it in your home. Eat desserts. Try an occasional ice cream soda or malted milk. You may find that it solves a problem by calming your nerves.

Meetings

IT HAS BEEN found advisable to hold meetings at least once a week at a specified time and

place. Meetings provide a means for an exchange of ideas, the renewing of friendships, opportunity to review the work being carried on, a sense of security, and an additional reminder that we are alcoholics and must be continuously on the alert against the temptation to slip backward into the old drunken way of life.

In larger communities where there are several groups it is recommended that the new member attend as many meetings as possible. He will find that the more he is exposed to A.A. the sooner he will absorb its principles, the easier it will become to remain sober, and the sooner problems will shrink and tend to disappear.

As a newcomer you will be somewhat bewildered by your first meeting. It is even possible that it will not make sense to you. Many have this experience. But if you don't find yourself enjoying your first meeting, pause to remember that you probably didn't care for the taste of your first drink of whiskey -- particularly if it was in bootleg days.

Again, you may feel like a "country cousin" at your first meeting. Your sponsor should see to it that this is not the case. But even if he neglects his duty, don't feel too badly. Don't be afraid to "horn in." If you are being neglected it is just an oversight, and you are entirely welcome. It is possible that you may not even be recognized because your appearance has changed for the better. In a week or two you will find yourself in the middle of things -- and very likely neglecting other newcomers.

So attend your first meeting with an open mind. Even if you aren't impressed try it again. Before long you will genuinely enjoy attending and a little later you will feel that the week has been incomplete if you have not attended at least one A.A. meeting. **Remember that attendance at meetings is one of the most important requisites of remaining sober.**

A.A. OF AKRON gets many inquiries about how to conduct a meeting. Methods differ in many parts of the country. There are discussion groups, study groups, meetings where a leader takes up the entire time himself, etc.

Here, briefly, is how meetings are conducted in the dozen or more Akron groups, a method that has been used since the founding of A.A.:

The speaker can be selected from the local group, someone from another group or another city, or on occasion, a guest from the ranks of clergymen, doctors, the judiciary, or anyone who may be of help. In the case of such an outsider, he is generally introduced by the secretary or some other member.

The leader opens the meeting with a prayer, or asks someone else to pray. The prayer can be original, or it can be taken from a prayer book, or from some publication such as *The Upper Room*.

The topic is entirely up to the leader. He can tell of his drinking experiences, or what he has done to keep sober, or he can advance his own theories on A.A. His talk lasts from 20 to 40 minutes, at which time he asks for comment or testimony from the floor.

Just before the meeting closes -- one hour in Akron -- the leader asks for announcements or reports (such as next week's leader, social affairs, new members to be called on, etc.). In closing

the entire group stands and repeats the Lord's Prayer. It is courteous to give the speaker enough advance notice so that he may prepare his talk if he so desires.

The physical set-up of groups varies in many cities. Those who are about to start new groups may be interested in the method used by Akron Group No. 1. It is merely a suggestion, however.

When there are but very few members it is customary to hold the meetings in private homes of the members, on the same night of each week. When the group becomes larger, however, it is desirable to hold the meeting in a regular place. A school room, a room in a Y.M.C.A. or lodge, or hotel will do.

It has been the experience throughout the country that the more fluid the structure of the group the more successful the operation.

Akron Group No. 1 has a very simple set-up. There is a permanent secretary, who makes announcements, keeps a list of the membership, and takes care of correspondence. There is also a permanent treasurer, who takes care of the money and pays bills. Then there is a rotating committee of three members to take care of current affairs. Each member serves for three months, but a new one is added and one dropped every month. This committee takes care of providing leaders, supplying refreshments, arranging parties, greeting newcomers, etc.

As the group grows older certain qualifications, in terms of length of sobriety, can be made. Akron Group No. 1 requires a full year of continuous sobriety as qualification to hold an office or serve.

There are no dues. There is a free-will offering at each meeting to take care of expenses.

There is probably an older group in some community within easy traveling distance of yours. Someone from that group will doubtless be happy to help you get started.

The Twelve Steps

Alcoholics Anonymous is based on a set of laws known as the Twelve Steps. Years of experience have definitely proved that those who live up to these rules remain sober. Those who gloss over or ignore any one rule are in constant danger of returning to a life of drunkenness. Thousands of words could be written on each rule. Lack of space prevents, so they are merely listed here. It is suggested that they be explained by the sponsor. If he cannot explain them he should provide someone who can.

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps are more fully explained in another pamphlet published in Akron and available through writing to Post Office Box 932. It is called *A Guide to the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*. The price is 12 cents per copy, 9 cents in lots of 25 to 499, and 7 1/2 cents in lots of 500 or more. Checks or money orders can be made out to A.A. of Akron.

[**Edit.** This guide is no longer being published by Akron A.A., but we are trying to obtain a copy of it to make available for printout at this website.]

SUGGESTED READING

The following literature has helped many members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Alcoholics Anonymous (Works Publishing Company).

The Holy Bible.

The Greatest Thing in the World, Henry Drummond.

The Unchanging Friend, a series (Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee).

As a Man Thinketh, James Allen.

The Sermon on the Mount, Emmet Fox (Harper Bros.).

The Self You Have to Live With, Winfred Rhoades.

Psychology of Christian Personality, Ernest M. Ligon (Macmillan Co.).

Abundant Living, E. Stanley Jones.

The Man Nobody Knows, Bruce Barron.

Edit. Akron A.A. in the 1930's and 1940's was obtaining a 75% success rate in teaching alcoholics to get sober and stay sober. The techniques, strategies, and principles set out in this manual must be taken very seriously by modern A.A.'s, particularly if your own success rate with newcomers is nowhere near that high.

This edition of *A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Akron Manual) was formatted for web by Glenn C. in January 2002, and is available for printout at <http://hindsfoot.org> in the section on A.A. Historical Materials. This valuable little pamphlet was rescued from oblivion by Barefoot Bob (Post Falls, Idaho), webpage http://www.barefootsworld.net/abc_pg60.html, e-mail bobhard@nidlink.com. I think it appropriate here to quote a few of the lines Bob put at the end of his webpage version of this manual:

"It is my hope that by getting back to the basics of A.A., and the sharing of this data, that the transition from the life of a drunk to a *sober life* in the program of A.A. will be eased for newcomers. This pamphlet was written and being distributed within one year of the publication of the Big Book, and the longest sobriety of the 'old timers' (Bill W.) was only a little over five years. A.A. was only four and a half years from . . . the day of Dr. Bob's last drink." But it actually worked, and rapidly started spreading across the entire earth. "Untold millions have found, lived and are living a sober life in the sixty-two and a half years since Ebby first carried a message of hope to Bill W., a desperate, incomprehensibly demoralized drunk. We can see in our own lives what the efforts of a few relative newcomers has done for us and the world, to remind us to not stint in our efforts so that greater things will come to pass. To those 'newcomers' we owe so much. With love and peace and gratitude for those early 'newcomers' and all newcomers since. Barefoot, May 15, 1997"
