



THE MESSAGE

JULY/AUGUST 2022

Service Work in Sobriety

AA IS SO MUCH MORE THAN NOT DRINKING! A New Perspective on life.

I did not walk into the rooms of AA because I thought I was an alcoholic or had any desire to stop drinking. I came because I wanted to know what you were telling my 16 year old son who came home one night and declared that he was an alcoholic and drug addict and that he had joined Alcoholics Anonymous! "If you won't stop drinking for you, will you quit for me because I can't live here and watch you killing yourself! I will have to go live with dad." I was furious! How ridiculous at 16 years old. This began our usual screaming match until he finally went off to his room, slamming the door and I retreated to my den to drink myself into oblivion.

AA was not unfamiliar to me; I had been going to 12 Step meetings for years. I started in Adult Children of Alcoholics, moved on to Co-Dependence Anonymous and then on to Al-Anon. So I knew all about the twelve steps and sponsorship, but I had never done anything with them, besides, these programs let me continue to drink!

Back then, Step 1 started after the dash- "our lives had become unmanageable!". "If you had my life, you would drink too." It wasn't until sometime later when I read those powerful words about acceptance on page 449 in the Big Book (page 417 in the current version). At the bottom of that same page Dr. Paul O. writes "For years I was sure the worst thing that could happen to a nice guy like me would be that I would turn out to be an alcoholic. Today I find it is the best thing that ever happened." I needed to take another look at my life!

I always said that my hometown was so small and had so many bars we didn't really have a town drunk, we just had people who took turns, and my dad was taking his turn when I was growing up. At a young age I would go into town with him on weekends and we would make the rounds at all of the local bars to see his friends and play a little pool. The routine usually ended with him drunk and me sneaking his drinks to get him to go home. This game continued until I was 10 years old. That year my mother had her 4th child in May and in July my father ran off with the babysitter, who was also the daughter of a family friend; she was 20 and my father was 40. Life as I knew it was over. Our family was devastated and by the time I was 16, I was in the troughs of this disease. This was surely, the worst thing that could have happened to me!

**"If you had my life,
you would drink
too."**

It wasn't until many years later, after I had worked the steps in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous that I realized, that my father's leaving changed my life in positive ways as well. We no longer lived in turmoil and my mother was a powerful example of strength and humor that got us through many difficult times. I was angry at my father for many years and

it wasn't until I heard the men in this program share their experience, strength and hope that I realized that my father didn't leave because he stopped loving us. He left because he had the disease of alcoholism that made him make choices he would not otherwise have made. I am so grateful that I was able to go home and make my amends to him before he passed away.

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**Service Rep
Does Your
Group
Have One?**

Service Rep's are welcome at the Intergroup5 monthly meeting - 1st Wednesday every month. Check intergroup5.org website for meeting details.



Step 7

By now we are able to see ourselves as we truly are, both the good and the bad

Many of our shortcomings are tied to our addition therefore we are powerless to overcome them on our own

We comprehend the enormity of our Higher Power's ability to transform our lives

At 20, I reconnected with my high school boyfriend, we resumed drinking like the good old days. I got pregnant, we were married and our son was born. Several days later we were called into the hospital to take our son home and we were told that he was born with Down's Syndrome. My only thought was "this is the worst thing that could happen to me." I had spent my earliest years going to church with my grandmother, where I heard the preacher shout every week, that if we did "un-Godly" things like smoke and drink, dance and go to movies, "God was going to punish us, we were going to Hell!" On that day in that hospital, in my heart I was sure that this was God's punishment for the way I had been living my life.

Time in AA has shown me that my son was one of the best things that could happen to me. He has been my teacher in so many ways, he taught me everything I know about unconditional love, forgiveness and finding the good in everyone. And the program of AA has helped me to be the kind of mother I always wanted to be to both of my children.

After my second son was born, my husband decided we needed to make a "geographic change" to get away from our parents, so he found a job and we moved to Richmond. On that July 4th, I was home alone with my boys and discovered a dead body in my back yard. We knew about a series of unsolved, gruesome murders in Richmond but those things happen to other people! For a full year, we didn't know who did it, why, or if they would come back. We finally found out it was the infamous "Briley Brothers," two drug dealers who randomly killed 13 people over 2 years. They were finally caught and executed. But for me, this began years of fear, sleepless nights and a return to drinking alcoholically. Our twenty year marriage began to deteriorate, we placed our disabled son in a residential job training program and eventually my husband and I got a divorce. I became suicidal. How does someone get over all of that?

As it turns out, once again, my Higher Power had something better in mind for me. I went back to school and got my degree (which my husband had not been in favor of) and got a great job working with families of children with disabilities. I found that "new freedom and new happiness" our Big Book promises. My husband had been very controlling and managed everything about our life. (I know today, that I gave him that power. I thought that was "love".) I learned to enjoy being single with the ability to take care of myself. Because of my son, I joined AA and the women in this program taught me to respect myself and be the best mother that I could be. As a result of this program life began to change almost immediately. I met this really nice guy! We started out as friends and after 2 years we were married. We grew up in AA together and they were the happiest years of my life. I believe, today, that it was God's way of finally showing me how a woman could be treated by a man, and what true love and respect could be. Our life was filled with fun and fellowship.

At 16 years of sobriety we had come complacent with AA, we had moved to a new small town and they "didn't do AA right" so we cut back on our meetings. Then one day I felt a lump and was diagnosed with

cancer. Dr. Paul's words came floating back, "How could this happen to a nice guy like me" Not again! So, we started back to meeting and that is when the magic happened. The people in AA that we barely knew surrounded us with their love, and support; sharing their own personal stories of their family recovery. When I came out of my surgery, my husband and two members of AA were standing there. They sat with him until I came out of recovery. When it was time to start Chemo, my AA hairdresser came to my house for a party and cut off my hair, and then my husband sat and she shaved his head. We were the "Cone Heads" for about a year! My sponsor was with me for every chemo treatment. I decided that, I had cancer but it didn't have me! We used the steps and principals of this program to get us through that difficult year. "Acceptance" took on a new meaning in my life.

We then moved to Arizona for the warmer weather and once again we were enjoying everything about our new home, retirement, the surrounding, and our new AA friends. After only five years my husband too was diagnosed with cancer. Once again we were surrounded by our AA friends. But within 3 months he had suffered enough and the disease took him. I recall sitting with him in those last hours, he was in a coma, so I read AA books to him, and prayed; in anger I asked God "how will I be able to go on without him? And I heard those words from our Big Book, "the answers will come, if your own house is in order" and I knew, that after 20+ years together our house was in order, we had and shared everything we were supposed to and he was going to be all right and so was I.

I remained in Arizona until I felt safe enough to leave my AA family there. I made the decision that it was time to move closer to my own family, so I packed myself up with my two dogs and drove to Ocala Florida. My mother was 94, and all of my siblings were, by now, also living in Florida. This was the first time in over 50 years that we all lived in the same State at the same time --- that is what alcoholism does to a family!

Over those next 3 years we were able to spend time together, get reacquainted, make amends and celebrate our family. Within those 3 short years, I lost my brother and my mother a month apart. At first I was so angry. Why is this happening again! Now! We were just beginning to heal? But my Higher Power saw fit to show me my truth! If my husband had not passed, I never would have had that special time with my mother, to see the legacy this brave woman had given to us and that my childhood had not been as bad as my alcoholic brain had convinced me it was.

I then moved to Tallahassee to be close to that younger sister who was born when I was 10. My boys live too far away but they are living their best lives, and to finish with Dr. Paul's quote on page 418, [this proves] "if I don't know what's good for me, then I don't know what is good or bad for you or for anyone...and just accept life on life's terms, as it is today." I just know, that AA gave me a happy childhood, a wonderful life, and that I like me best when I'm with you!

~ Linda C, Tallahassee

Dear Addiction...

You sit in my home and make yourself welcome,
You watch as me I shower,
And you giggle as I eat.

You're a silent lover in the right times.

You grab me by the waste and kiss me softly,
Your breath smells like liquor.

You whisper in my ear,
Teasing me seductively,
You invite me in for just one drink.

We talk,
You and I talk all the time.

As we sip on that first drink,
You congratulate me for how hard I've worked.

You remind me that I've done well for not letting you control me,
But you only remind me of that,
As I stare at the alcohol that I haven't even bothered to pour into a glass.

You're the definition of a best friend,
You're always there when I need you,
You tell me why its okay to be so sad.

You comfort me like no other,
So well,
That I barely remember.

You make me giggle as I pour another drink,
I start opening up,
Telling all my truths.

I cry for help in a room where nobody is listening besides you.

Sometimes I run away from you for a while,
I run far enough where I can see you fading in the distance.

I run towards a healthier me,
I run towards peace.

You live in my home,
You walk in the streets,
I know you're always there...

But on days like today,
I will take control and I will talk to you.
I will watch you taunt me and I will deal with my enemies.

My enemies live within me,
And I will find peace,
Not just for me,
But for everyone around me.

I know you're not a loyal friend,
Because I see you seduce my friends and family,
You're desperate to control yet another mind.

In prayer and in self-love,
I will ask the universe to gift me strength,
I will prepare for battle on days I feel strong,
And I will rest when I feel like I am losing.

Practice makes progress,
Today is a chance to make a difference.

Dear addiction,
I know you're always there...

~Travelling_Niki

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written permission of Nikita Bothma © Written on May 18, 2021*



2 CRUCIAL WORDS

POWERLESS

That we have no control over alcohol

UNMANAGEABLE

That our drinking has had a negative effect on our lives

Step 8

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

Recognizing the damage you've done to the people around while in midst of your alcoholism is a good start. However, in order to progress in your recovery you must make a complete, honest list of names



Get Your Own Personal "Where & When"

Download the Meeting Guide App! Intergroup5 has integrated our information with the Meeting Guide App. You can find a link for both Google Play and The Apple Store on the meetings page of Intergroup5.org (<https://intergroup5.org/meetings>). The Meeting Guide can help you find meetings for many areas, including online meeting info.



Intergroup5.org

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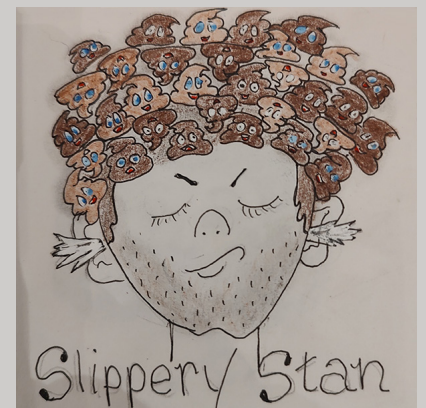
SERVING DISTRICT 5, NORTH FLORIDA AREA OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

The "Primary Purpose" of Intergroup 5 is to assist AA groups in District 5 to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. These functions are: (1) Providing a 24 hour "Hotline" service; (2) Making available [free pamphlets \(to individuals and groups\) and AA literature for purchase](#); (3) Maintaining a website that provides information on meetings, events, etc. related to AA; and (4) Publishing a newsletter for groups in the AA community. Please submit an article for this newsletter at intergroup5.org - Editor: message@intergroup5.org

When we join a 12 step program, where no one has a last name. We're often given a "handle" that becomes our claim to fame. So meet some of our new fellows, with "tongue in cheek" good fun. Because when we can laugh with each other, Recovery has begun!



Everyone in the rooms calls Julian, "4th of July Julian" because he loves sharing that July 4th was when he took his last drink and began his independence and freedom from the bondage from booze.



Stan is a perpetual slipper. He has a hard time with remembering "stinking thinking will get him drinking." But, he is always welcomed back.