

Briggsmore Beach Group

Suggested Meeting Format

Good Morning, this is the regular meeting of the Briggsmore Beach Group of Alcoholics Anonymous (BBAA). My name is _____ and I'm your alcoholic secretary. Let's open the meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer. [**Serenity Prayer**]

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The ONLY requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.

I've asked a member to read one of the opening readings: [*How it Works, More About Alcoholism, Bill W on Tradition 3, The First Meetings, or What does a sponsor do?*]

I've asked another member to read another of the opening readings: [*How it Works, More About Alcoholism, Bill W on Tradition 3, The First Meetings, or What does a sponsor do?*]

This is an open meeting, so we ask that you respect each other's anonymity. Remember: WHOM YOU SEE HERE, WHAT YOU HEAR HERE, WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE, LET IT STAY HERE. We encourage visitors and members of other recovery programs to share with us; however, voting at business meetings is restricted to those identifying themselves as alcoholics.

This is a speaker's choice literature discussion meeting. A member signs up on the group's clipboard to share a short reading and how the reading has affected them. By group conscience, the speaker can now share any reading that has helped them with sobriety and/or serenity.

Are there any recovery related announcements? [**Announcements**]

I'll now turn the meeting over to the Chairperson for fifteen to twenty minutes for the reading and a short share. [**Reading and Chairperson's share**]

There are no dues or fees for AA membership, but we are self-supporting through our own contributions. We pass the hat to help cover some of our expenses. [**Pass the hat; return meeting to Chair**]

We would like to remind you that the things said at this meeting are confidential and only reflect the opinions of those sharing. Take what you want and leave the rest.

Could I have a member read one of the blue closing readings? [*A Vision For You, The Promises, Finding Your Own Way, or The Al-Anon Promises*]

Will all who care to, join me in the "we" version of the Serenity Prayer? [**Serenity Prayer**]

How It Works

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 58-60. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked, we thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol - cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

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.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventure before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

More About Alcoholism

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 30-31. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals - usually brief - were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums - we could increase the list ad infinitum.

Bill W On Tradition 3

(Language of the Heart, pp 32-33. © The AA Grapevine, Inc. Printed with permission.)

Yet Point Three in our AA Tradition looks like a wide-open invitation to anarchy. Seemingly, it contradicts point one. It reads, "Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence, *we may refuse none* who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership *ever depend on money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics* gathered together for sobriety *may call themselves an AA group.*" This clearly implies that an alcoholic is a member if *he* says so; that we can't deny him membership; that we can't demand from him a cent; that we can't force our beliefs or practices on him; that he may flout everything we stand for and still be a member. In fact, our Tradition carries the principle of independence to such a fantastic length that, so long as there is the slightest interest in sobriety, the most unmoral, the most antisocial, the most critical alcoholic may gather about him a few kindred spirits and announce to us that a new Alcoholics Anonymous group has been formed. Anti-God, anti-medicine, anti-our recovery program, even anti-each other – these rampant individuals are still an AA group if *they think so!*

The First Meetings

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 159-160. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

A year and six months later these three had succeeded with seven more. Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their release, and constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer. In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life. Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object was to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems.

What does a sponsor do?

(Reprinted with permission from *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*, p 10.
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A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of personal experience and knowledge, to help the newcomer get sober and stay sober through the A.A. program:

- Shows by present example and drinking history what A.A. has meant in the sponsor's life.
- Encourages and helps the newcomer to attend a variety of A.A. meetings - to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the A.A. program.
- Suggests keeping an open mind about A.A. if the newcomer isn't sure at first whether he or she is an alcoholic.
- Never takes the newcomer's inventory except when asked.
- Introduces the newcomer to other members, particularly to those who may share the new person's occupational or social interests.
- Sees that the newcomer is aware of A.A. literature, in particular the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and Grapevine, *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober*, and suitable pamphlets.
- Is available to the newcomer when the latter has special problems.
- Goes over the meaning of the Twelve Steps, and emphasizes their importance.
- Never tries to impose personal views on the newcomer. A good sponsor who is an atheist does not try to persuade a religious newcomer to abandon faith, nor does a religious sponsor argue theological matters with an agnostic newcomer.
- Urges the newcomer to join in group activities as soon as possible.
- Impresses upon the newcomer the importance of all our Traditions.
- Does not pretend to know all the answers, and does not keep up a pretence of being right all the time.
- Tries to give the newcomer some picture of the scope of A.A., beyond the group, and directs attention to A.A. literature about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of A.A. - wherever the newcomer may go.
- Explains the program to relatives of the alcoholic, if this appears to be useful, and tells them about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen.
- Does not hesitate to help the newcomer obtain professional help (such as medical, legal, vocational) if assistance outside the scope of A.A. is needed.
- Quickly admits, "I don't know" when that is the case, and helps the newcomer find a good source of information.
- Finally, the sponsor encourages the newcomer to work with other alcoholics as soon as possible, and sometimes begins by taking the newcomer along on Twelfth Step calls.

A Vision For You

(Alcoholics Anonymous, p 164. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you - until then.

The Promises

(Alcoholics Anonymous, pp 58-60. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Finding Your Own Way

(Living Sober, pp 85-86. © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

As you stay sober, you are sure to think of new ideas not [mentioned] here. We hope so. We also hope that when you do come up with fresh ideas on this subject, you will pass them on. Please do share. (You'll recall that the act of sharing can itself be helpful to you.) The more experience we can all pool, the more problem drinkers can be helped.

Some of us go back to drinking a time or so before we get a real foothold on sobriety. If that happens to you, don't despair. Many of us have done this and have finally come through to successful sobriety. Try to remember that alcoholism is an extremely serious human condition, and that relapses are as possible in this ailment as in others. Recovery can still follow.

Even after setbacks, if you continue to want to get well, and remain willing to try new approaches, our experience convinces us that you have embarked with hundreds of thousands of companions on the path of happy, healthy destiny. We hope we see you among us in person.

But whatever track you travel, along with us or on your own, you go with our strongest good wishes.

The Al-Anon Promises

(From Survival to Recovery, p 269. © Al-Anon Family Groups World Services, Inc. Printed with permission.)

If we willingly surrender ourselves to the spiritual discipline of the Twelve Steps, our lives will be transformed. We will become mature, responsible individuals with a great capacity for joy, fulfillment, and wonder.

Though we may never be perfect, continued spiritual progress will reveal to us our enormous potential. We will discover that we are both worthy of love and loving. We will love others without losing ourselves, and will learn to accept love in return.

Our sight, once clouded and confused, will clear and we will be able to perceive reality and recognize truth.

Courage and fellowship will replace fear.

We will be able to risk failure to develop new, hidden talents.

Our lives, no matter how battered and degraded, will yield hope to share with others.

We will begin to feel and will come to know the vastness of our emotions, but we will not be slaves to them.

Our secrets will no longer bind us in shame.

As we gain the ability to forgive ourselves, our families, and the world, our choices will expand.

With dignity we will stand for ourselves, but not against our fellows.

Serenity and peace will have meaning for us as we allow our lives and the lives of those we love to flow day by day with God's ease, balance, and grace.

No longer terrified, we will discover we are free to delight in life's paradox, mystery, and awe.

We will laugh more.

Fear will be replaced by faith, and gratitude will come naturally as we realize that our Higher Power is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Can we really grow to such proportions? Only if we accept life as a continuing process of maturation and evolution toward wholeness.

Then we suddenly begin to notice these gifts appearing. We see them in those who walk beside us.

Sometimes slowly or haltingly, occasionally in great bursts of brilliance, those who work the Steps change and grow toward light, toward health, and toward their Higher Power. Watching others, we realize this is also possible for us.

Will we ever arrive? Feel joyful all the time? Have no cruelty, tragedy, or injustice to face? Probably not, but we will acquire growing acceptance of our human fallibility, as well as greater love and tolerance for each other.

Self-pity, resentment, martyrdom, rage, and depression will fade into memory.

Community rather than loneliness will define our lives. We will know that we belong, we are welcome, we have something to contribute—and that is enough.