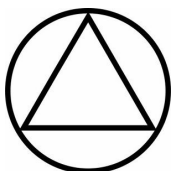


THE SOBER TIMES

A NEWSLETTER FOR TRIPLE CITIES INTERGROUP AND SURROUNDING AREAS



Mission Statement: To share and encourage unity amongst the Triple Cities Intergroup and surrounding AA fellowship, by providing access to upcoming events, activities and personal views that may be of interest to those who are affected by alcoholism. Nothing published herein should be construed as Statements of AA or Triple Cities Intergroup, Area 47, Al Anon, AlaTeen, District 10 or any Intergroup District, Group, or the Sober Times Committee members.

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The Ah Ha Moments

Life is a journey from the time of our first breath to our last. Life is also short no matter how long we live, its a drop in the bucket compared to God's creation. During our short time here we can have many impacts on the world, the environment, and

others. The Ah Ha Moments are the times that we realize how we impacted the world, the environment, or others. Once you have some time in sobriety and have done the work with others then you will be able to have many Ah Ha Moments. These moments are a joy and I am grateful when they happen. I hope you have had them as well.

As we work with others on our sober journey in life we sometimes feel like we are having no effect on others, Sponsy's don't call or want to meet, folks we see at meetings come once and then there gone never to be seen again, or folks who ask us to sponsor them end up going back out there for more suffering. Basically bringing us to the place where we can't see what all our sharing or work has accomplished. Its a tragic place indeed. However things are not always as bad as we think, we just need a reminder from outside of ourselves. A view from the real world, a sober view from others. This is when we are in a restaurant and a server says hello and knows your name but you don't recognize them at first till they remind you. These moments are the reward for all we do to stay sober and help others. The reason we don't recognize them is because the last time we saw them was at a treatment center where they were beat up by alcohol and drugs. We know, we were there one time or more ourselves. But the person we see now has been sober for four years or more and as we talk they smile when the talk about the time we visited the center and shared our story. That's when we think to ourselves Ah Ha, I do have an impact on others.

The fact is that we don't know how, when, or what we say is absorbed by this person just as a tiny mustard seed is planted and starts to grow. So this is where we need to be careful when we speak because we don't know when we can have an impact on others and we just want to make sure its a positive one.

I remember my sponsor saying to me that I'm the only one out of dozens that did the work and stayed sober. I hear folks say at meetings that reading the AA books doesn't do anything for you, that you can read the books till your blue in the face, what keeps us sober is the people at meetings and going to meetings. Well that may be true but when you're working with a sponsor, at least the way I did it was that I read the AA Big Book out loud to my sponsor and he would stop and explain things and ask me questions many of which I answered correctly. Sometimes I got the answer wrong, one time we had just read the page where it says we come to realize that we have a new employer, so he asked who do you work for?, and I quickly gave the name of an employer, followed by no who do you work for?, and again I named one of my part time employers, he said again, no who do you work for and then I got my first Ah Ha moment and said God. In AA I had said the prayers and humble asked God to take all of me the good and the bad, and release me from bondage of self so I may be of service to Him, my new employer. Ah Ha!

Another time we were reading the AA Big Book and I said hold on, this is not fair. I'm helping you more than you're helping me. By me reading the book out loud and talking about the readings I'm helping you stay sober. Right he said and thank you. That's another Ah Ha moment where I realized that by doing the work for myself I was actually helping someone else stay sober and that work keeps me sober. We need to have a sponsor that we help if we want to stay sober, that's the magic of the program. All a sponsor has to do, is be present so you can help them, if you don't help someone else its hard to stay sober. A sponsor is not a bank roll or lender, that usually doesn't work out well for either. A sponsor is not supposed to get you a job or a place to live. A sponsor can only make suggestions for these things if they really want to help. Bill W had many experiences with all this and it didn't work out well. It's best to make suggestions and when our suggestions are taken, maybe down the road we will see some success this will be another Ah Ha moment for us.

I have made suggestions to several Sponsy's over the last few years and have seen some good results, better results than when I loaned money out to someone. One of these suggestions was for a guy to change his job to a more



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stable situation, same job just a better more stable position at a different company. Now after four years sober he has an even better position working weekdays and has week-ends off so he can see the kids who live with his ex-wife. I won't go into all that but trust me he is doing well in his sober journey so far. Again its better to be there so they can help you rather than for you to focus on helping them. You're helping them by them helping you and that is good for both of you.

When ever we lend a hand it is helping us stay sober. By reading the Big Book out loud I was learning the principles of AA. Just reading it on our own doesn't have the same effect on us. Reading it out loud to another person who is actively listening and then talking about it brings a new light on the material. Before my sponsor and I start each session we would say a short prayer that always included something like "God grant us a new experience." More often than not, we did have a new experience. Like when we read the story Titled "Shoemaker stick to your last" and my sponsor didn't know what a last was. Since I had some experience at an old shoe factory I knew what a last was. So I said its a wooden mold that a shoe is made around so the shoes are made the same. It changed how he understood the story differently after that. So we had prayed for a new experience and then immediately we had a new experience so we stuck to our last and added "God grant us a new experience" to our prayer before our meetings. Did I say it works yet?

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Promises

While it's important to do the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous in order, let's focus on Step 9.



Step 9 is a pivotal step in the journey toward recovery from alcohol addiction. It states: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." This step requires individuals to take responsibility for their past actions and make sincere efforts to rectify the harm caused to others during their struggles with alcoholism.

The Essence

The core principle of Step 9 is to make amends, both direct and indirect, to those who have been wronged. Direct amends involve facing the individuals harmed and offering a heartfelt apology, acknowledging the specific wrongs committed, and expressing a willingness to make restitution. Indirect amends are undertaken when direct amends are not possible or advisable, such as volunteering or engaging in acts of service to make amends to society as a whole.

The Importance

Step 9 is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it fosters accountability and personal responsibility, essential for long-term sobriety. By acknowledging and addressing past misdeeds, individuals break free from the chains of guilt, shame, and remorse that often fuel addictive behaviors. Secondly, making amends helps repair damaged relationships and rebuild trust, paving the way for healthier connections and support systems. Lastly, Step 9 promotes humility, empathy, and a shift from self-centeredness to consideration for others.

The Process

Making amends requires planning and careful execution. Preparation involves reflecting on the specific wrongs committed and crafting sincere apologies without assigning blame or making excuses. Patience and understanding are also essential, as the responses from those receiving amends may vary, ranging from acceptance to rejection.

The Rewards

While challenging, Step 9 is a transformative step that requires courage, humility, and a genuine desire for personal growth and healing. It offers a sense of freedom from the burdens of the past, allowing individuals to move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and clarity, and paves the way for the Promises of the Ninth Step, including newfound serenity, peace, and true happiness.

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So keep your eyes open for when God places someone in your path. They could be a new guy, or someone we had talked to at a meeting in a facility or at an AA meeting, or on the street somewhere. I always carry a little pocket AA Big Book with me to read or to reference at a meeting and many times I find someone who needs it. Then I say Ah Ha out loud and give thanks to my higher power.

In service,
Kurt N

This Obsession Business

I woke up this morning feeling restless and bored and that is a very uncomfortable feeling for me. When I was drinking it was one of those times that I would just sit and try to drink past those feelings and I find myself in a situation where, like not being able to drink, I can't indulge myself in the thing I want to do because it is not a responsible thing, even though it is a good thing and a thousandfold more productive than sitting behind a quickly emptying glass of vodka.

When I got into sobriety, I found myself in the sense that I was able to focus on what I truly love – baking. It started by baking for meetings and as I received compliment after compliment and lots of encouragement from those closest to me, I decided to start a small bakery. So, I bake and I love to bake, which, in and of itself, is a good thing. But there is a problem. It is starting to become my new obsession, and, much like my drinking, I am at a stage where I feel the need to do it almost compulsively in order to have that feeling of satisfaction that is so great when I do have a project for which intense baking is required. But I am in a low period for baking, having just completed a town fair and preparing to go on a short vacation, and only baking for the local farmer's market and a small store in town, which is a much smaller order

So, I am feeling, in a way, a sort of uncomfortable withdrawal because I am having to actively not bake, which is hard when it is something that fills me with joy. It is one of those things where I can easily say I don't have to bake; I get to bake. But I am not there today because nothing has to be made until tomorrow and I have little to do today that I enjoy and that is hard. I find that addictive, alcoholic behavior has infiltrated even the thing I love and is starting to use it as a weapon against me and forcing me to look at my behavior even in this area. I am having to set new boundaries for myself in an area where, in the right circumstances, I have nearly limitless energy and motivation. **And today I have to say no.**

This is where I find that I have to turn to that portion of the Twelfth Step that says "practice these principles in all our affairs," particularly examining why I feel the need to bake when the very practical fact of things today is that whatever effort I made in that area today would be a waste because I can't safely store it until the weekend when I need it and it would sit on my kitchen counter waiting for the mold to set in, or barely make it to my sales table on Saturday and go bad quickly after being purchased, disappointing my customers and threatening my business. As a result, I look at my motivations for wanting to bake today and I question them. I have to turn over the impracticality of pursuing my craft today and I do have to ask my higher power to give me guidance and help me find ways to pursue what I love without hurting my fledgling business or to help me be okay with not working in that area of my life today. I have to realize that even something I love, even a positive, energizing thing like pursuing my passion can be taken to an unhealthy extreme.

While I absolutely do not feel like drinking, it is startling to me that the behavior associated with drinking, the obsession, the compulsion, comes up in so many aspects of my life. I have to maintain a constant vigilance in order to make sure that even the very positive things in my life do not turn against me through those obsessions and compulsions. I have to stay mindful of keeping every aspect of my life in balance. And that seems so unfortunate when I am talking about my baking to have to think in terms of addiction, but it is the truth of my life. I enjoy the act of baking, the feeling of successfully creating something that I can give to another person to enjoy and enhance their life and I am struggling with limiting that because, though I will enjoy it in the moment, I can see that it will become a fruitless, useless effort that could lead to depression, failure and a deeper struggle. There is danger in not being mindful of the practical side of what I do, and there is danger in focusing so much on the part of my work that I love because I will forget the other side of what has to be done in order to make me successful in running a business.

Today, I have to be mindful of not creating for the sake of my own indulgence. I have to focus on areas that are less fun, but more practical and ultimately very necessary if I am to see my dreams turned into a reality. In doing that, I have to face my fear of rejection because I am going to approach several stores in an attempt to get them to carry my products so that I can advance my success in business. Today I have to dig into the practical side of making sure I am charging sufficiently for my products that I can continue to afford to produce, which forces me to confront my fears as well, because it feels like I am putting a price on my self-worth and what if the world doesn't agree with the value I place on myself.

I am, as I reach the end of these musings, very grateful that I have, through AA and through my therapy, developed the ability to recognize that all of my behaviors have to be looked at through a lens of practical reality. I know that balance is what is needed to accomplish every goal for which I strive. I am grateful for that perspective. I am grateful for the ability to evaluate myself critically but compassionately and set realistic boundaries to achieve my goals.

Susan S



Brotherly Love

I was just six months into early recovery. I had been to rehab and gone to as many AA meetings as I could attend. Being from an alcoholic family of 10, some of my siblings and I had become estranged over the years.

One afternoon, I got a phone call from Florida. It was one of my brothers who was calling to inform me that my other brother had been in an accident. A truck smashed head-on into his motorcycle and he has been in the hospital unresponsive and listed as a John Doe for the last week!

A flood of memories and emotions flew through my head. Years of drinking, partying, fighting, weddings, births, and funerals all ran together. This was a wild bunch of alcoholics and now one of us was going to die? Over the next few days, starts the phone chain amongst the siblings, who are supposed to come together and communicate without fighting or drinking and go on while our brother is laying 1,500 miles away in a hospital bed with only a pupillary response. The next few days passed in a fog. Now In retrospect, being the youngest of eight siblings, we should all have been long into adulthood. Years of abuse and alcoholism wasn’t exactly training for how to act in an emergency, or how to be there for another person.

My head was clear of drugs and alcohol but the painful thoughts about my brother dying, and years of drinking and arguing with my brothers. So I rented a car and headed to Florida with my oldest son riding shotgun with me. The next 17 hours were a long trip, not knowing what I would find there. How would he look? How would my other brothers be? How much would they be drinking, or how they would be treating me or each other?

We arrived at Orlando Florida hospital, which I had decided on the way I wouldn’t even look for my siblings, instead I would just go find my brother and pay my respects. If I ran into my other brothers it would be okay. If I didn’t that would also be okay, since I didn’t know how it would go.

Well I went to the hospital not even sure if it was the right building, that’s when they informed me they cannot confirm or deny if he is even there or not, due to privacy rules I would have to talk to the “contact-person.” The day before the family had arrived and started an information phone chain, this consisted of a list of 6 people that were allowed to visit with one person being the contact. Since only six people could be visitors, I didn’t make the list. I begged to be able to see him, even if it was only five minutes to say goodbye. The last thing my brother/contact-person had heard, I was on drugs, so he wasn’t going to let me in. I asked him to come downstairs so we could discuss it although I was really just planning on knocking him out. He also denied that as well.

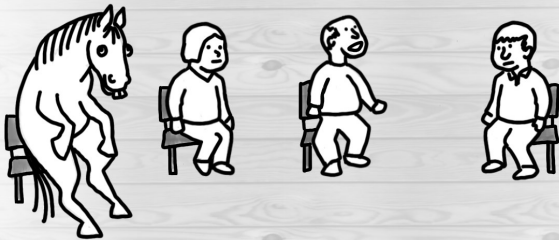
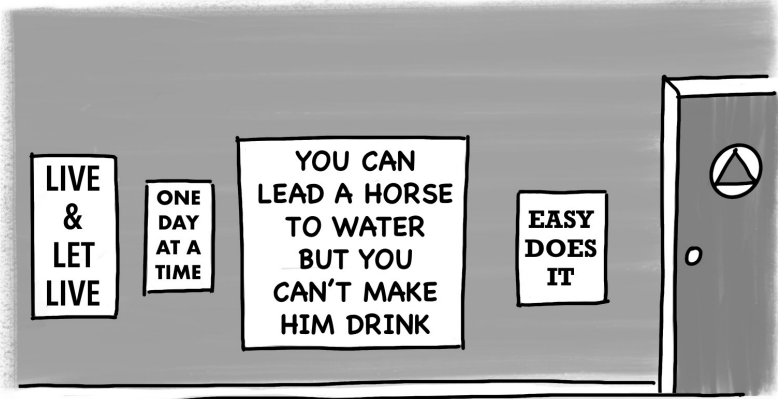
Now that I had driven 1,500 miles long to see my brother one last time and say my goodbyes, I couldn’t even see him. Needless to say I was pissed. I took off down the street and found the closest mini-mart. I pulled in and started the walk I had taken a million times, across the gas station parking lot, reading the beer selections. Right next to the front, I saw a man just sitting there. He was disheveled, unshaven and looked like he could use a hot shower. I reached in my pocket and pulled out a 10 dollar bill. I handed it to him and said “here brother, grab yourself a burger or whatever. I hope you have a better day than I’m having.”

The man looked up and thanked me and followed up with “brother do you mind if I ask what happened today?” I explained my brother was in an accident and we had driven 1,500 miles and my a**hole brothers refused to let me even see him. He proceeded to tell me a story about 10 years earlier, his mother had gotten cancer and died quite suddenly. He didn’t know how to deal with it so he picked up a bottle and before he knew it, that bottle took over his life. He spent the next several years drinking. He was not able to quit and he went to AA. When he did, he realized it didn’t fix anything, all his problems were still there and he still had to deal with his mothers death. I couldn’t believe it, right there in front of my face, higher power, destiny, fate, not sure what to call it, but it was a sign. I turned right around and didn’t buy any alcohol. We shook hands and he said “I love you brother,” so I returned back to the car, and told my son it was time to go home.

The ride home was even longer and quiet as hours and miles passed by. I was thinking about how disgusted I felt about my brother acting that way. Meanwhile my son was watching the result of all these years of alcoholism take its toll on his father and uncles. I am proud to say he is doing a great job at breaking this generational cycle.

The day after we arrived home, my brother passed. On our 3,000 mile journey I had lost my brother, my son learned a life lesson, and I received brotherly advice from a fellow AA brother.

Michael B



“Hey. Who hung up the slogans?”

SOBRIETY’S DAWN

The haze lifts, slowly unveiling
A world reborn, vibrant colors
Sounds sharper, tastes richer
Each breath an awakening

The chains loosen their grip
As my feet find steady ground
No longer stumbling blindly
But striding with purpose, unbound

The path winds, obstacles appear
Yet clarity's light guides my steps
Embracing life's poignant beauty
Savoring each hard-won moment

Sobriety's dawn, a second chance
To author a story redefined
Pen in hand, the future awaits
A sober soul's resilient rebirth

Triple Cities Intergroup Service

Part 3 of 3

Recovery, Unity, and Service. AA members have found involvement in each of these is necessary for happy, permanent sobriety. The Triple Cities Intergroup (TCI) is an important element of service to groups in Binghamton, Endicott, Johnson City, Vestal, and beyond! TCI provides key services directly supporting these groups. I have found that TCI offers AA members a way to get involved in service to directly help their home group and other meetings they regularly attend.

In the final part of this series, I will focus on how the TCI offers opportunities for local AA members to participate in recovery, unity, and service vital to permanent sobriety.

Workshop

Workshops offer a unique and focused way to carry the AA message. TCI Workshop committee coordinates workshops that are available to local groups and members. This benefits each members in the Triple Cities by providing workshops on topics expanding many areas of the AA program. Topics in the past have included traditions workshops, service workshops, and big-book workshops to cover the unity, service, and recovery AA offers to maintain sobriety. Those who enjoy planning and teaching may find a good fit within the workshop committee. Others can offer service to the workshop committee by participating as speakers and panel participants. Workshops bring together local members including old-timers and newcomers from the Triple Cities to learn and grow together in these forums.

Early in my sobriety I found myself sitting in meetings, often confused and bored asking myself “Is this all that AA is?” As I struggled with the restless, irritable, and discontent of untreated alcoholism early in my sobriety I found myself asking this question many times. It was through hearing a more in-depth message through workshops a helped show me that the answer is: Yes! There is more to AA and sobriety than just showing up at meetings. I started to hear a message that AA is really three parts, recovery, unity, and service. Once I heard this message, I was inspired to pick up these tools and found that if I keep involved in each of these three parts my life and sobriety are full and much more satisfying than I would have imagined.

Events

“We are not a glum lot!” Alcoholics have become free from the bondage of alcohol so are free to do anything. This includes having a little fun in our sobriety! The TCI Events committee supports several events each year that are focused on enhancing unity of the local groups. These events always have an element of an AA meeting such as a panel or a speaker to align with the primary purpose of unity to carry the message to any alcoholic who still suffers. In addition, these events add a little fun and enjoyment for the members who participate. For example, the TCI hosts an annual New Year’s eve event. The New Year’s eve event offers a speaker, panel, and marathon meetings while offering food and a DJ to celebrate a new year sober! Other events vary throughout the year. So, if you enjoy event planning the Events committee needs your help!

“What am I supposed to do when I’m no longer drinking?” I have asked myself this in sobriety. Before I got sober my entire life revolved around drinking. Every decision and activity had to include drinking; all of my relationships revolved around drinking. I felt when I put down the drink, I would no longer have fun or relationships. So now that I am sober, how am I supposed to enjoy life? With participation at a few of the local Events sponsored by TCI I found that it is possible to have fun and create great relationships without drinking!

Other Service Committees (Treatment, Corrections, Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC), and Accessibilities)

The AA message should not be available only to those that attend AA meetings. These committees support carrying the message of AA beyond

TCI MEETING SCHEDULE

listings can be found at

aabinghamton.org

Virtual meetings are listed on the Virtual Clubhouse page.

In-person meetings are listed on the Meetings page.

Groups, please advise TCI once you know of a meeting status change. It is the only way we can keep the listings current – a critical tool, especially for newcomers. Contact:

schedule@aabinghamton.org

the meeting rooms. Often to do this requires a collaboration among members beyond individual groups to ensure continuous communication and consistent support with external organizations. This may start with the CPC committee that works closely with Public Information to communicate and educate professionals who come into contact with alcoholics about the AA program. The Treatment committee works with local Treatment centers to bring the message of AA to those centers in the form of literature or taking regular meetings to the clients. Corrections works with local corrections facilities to ensure inmates have literature and have the opportunity to hold meetings with local AA members carrying the message into corrections facilities with regular meetings. TCI offers an Accessibility Committee to assist local AA groups and members who have a variety of challenges in accessing the message, meetings, and service. Each of these committees is created to ensure the AA message of recovery and hope is available to those that do not have easy and direct access to meetings.

In this article I hoped to share how the Triple Cities Intergroup provides committees that help to enhance recovery, unity, and service of the local AA members. I encourage AA members to get involved in these important service committees to continue to carry the message to other alcoholics in the area.

I hope you will join us at the next TCI monthly meeting!

Yours in Service,

Nick B

Triple Cities Intergroup (TCI) Public Information

Triple Cities Intergroup

AA Binghamton, NY Region

Hotline

(607) 722-5983

TCI MONTHLY MEETING

Triple Cities Intergroup meetings are held the last Sunday of each month

at 12:30 PM

East Side Congregational Church, 284 Robinson Street, Binghamton, NY

AA members are invited to submit content for this publication.

sobertimes@aabinghamton.org

