

SOBRIETY SENTINEL

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2023 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

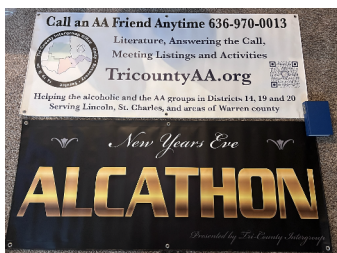
A New Year of Gratitude

On New Year's Eve, Tri-County Intergroup hosted its annual Alcathon at St. Joachim and Ann Care Center. The event was well attended and I hope everyone enjoyed their evening.

First, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped put on the event. Without their service, the evening would not have been possible. Several individuals went above and beyond, and without mentioning names, they have my deepest gratitude.



In addition, I would like to thank all of the groups, individuals, and The Campus Office for their service and support. Everyone's generosity towards the event including, but not limited to the following: basket donations, hall decorations and donations, and attendees contributions made this year's Alcathon a success. Everyone's generous contributions is the main reason this event was nearly self-supporting.



Consequently, dollars and cents are not the bottom line. It is important to offer free events so that people early in recovery have a chance to experience fun and fellowship without the worry of cost.

Also, a special shout-out to the young lady who won the 50/50 raffle and donated half of her winnings back to the Tri-County Intergroup. Your selflessness is greatly appreciated.

I have received some constructive criticism about the evening and I am asking that anyone who has any suggestions about how to make the event more enjoyable for everyone to please contact me.

We at Tri-County Intergroup are here to serve your needs, not just by putting on events, but we also engage in our own service work while offering service opportunities to others in the area as well.

I encourage all groups or individuals who either wish to serve, or just want to learn more about what Tri-County Intergroup provides for all AA groups in the area, to please come to one of our Intergroup meetings, which are at noon every third Sunday of the month at The Office on Campus Drive.

My sponsor has emphasized to me that the best way to show gratitude is not to just say thank you but to take action and be of service. We who have been shown the grace to know recovery, have a responsibility to be there for the alcoholic who still suffers...just like when someone was there for us. The beautiful part of Alcoholics Anonymous is that there are innumerable different ways to be of service.

Once again, I want to personally thank everyone who volunteered, attended, or helped support the Alcathon this year. The generosity of people in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous makes me all the more proud to be a member. I wish you all the best in 2023. May we all find peace, serenity, and grow nearer to the knowledge and will of our higher power.

Yours in service,

Tom B.

The Five Big Delusions of Alcoholism

I want to thank the leadership of Sobriety Sentinel for inviting me to submit an essay based on the experience one of their staff had after hearing me share my experience, strength, and hope in December of 2022. During my share, I summarized my talk by framing the conversation around "The Five Big Delusions of Alcoholism." This person reached out to me a few days after my share and asked if I would be willing to submit an essay on "The Five Big Delusions of Alcoholism."

Well, you never know unless you ask, they asked, so here we go.

Let me start by asking you a question, "are you a real alcoholic?" If your response is "I don't know," or you answered with an affirmative "yes," I hope this essay blesses you. If you said "no," I hope you have an apocalyptic experience after reading this essay. I must warn you that this is not an essay you read; it's an essay that reads you. Lastly, this essay is a synopsis of a larger body of work, so I hope this snippet makes a difference in your recovery. It's imperative to understand that this essay is not A.A.-approved literature nor endorsed by anyone in recovery rooms; it's simply one recovered alcoholic sharing their experience, strength, and hope with others who might identify and benefit from the conveyed material. In no way am I suggesting that there are only five delusions manifested from the illness of alcoholism; there are countless layers of delusion/illusion/deception that exist at a subconscious level in every human being, especially alcoholics. I aim to put them into a framework that anyone can comprehend and extract meaning and value for their recovery.

"The Delusion of Inequality" encompasses all of

the five big delusions. This issue will concentrate only on delusion one.

Almost every A.A. talk starts with some version of attempting to describe the delusion of inequality; it sounds something like "I felt like a square peg trying to fit in a round hole" or "I felt like everyone else had the answers to the quiz but me," or the generic version "I never felt like I quite belonged anywhere." This delusion's cunning, baffling, and powerful nature produces the never ending sensation that "I am not enough." The way I look, where I live, what I wear, what I like, who I am around, how I talk, how I act, how I think, and on and on becomes the imposter narrative. The pain associated with this relentless self-talk is why the effect produced by alcohol is a spiritual experience in its own right. *What the world thinks of me paralyzes me.* Despite the revolution to this truth, the sad reality is that the delusion of inequality can still dominate my soul and influence my choices, many of which can be self-destructive, despite years of recovery.

Because of the constant inadequacy caused by this delusion, and the intense desire to belong, we become vulnerable to peer pressure. We are prone to engaging in risky, dangerous, and possibly even destructive behaviors in an attempt to be one among many. The jaywalker disposition has already surfaced, and we have yet to take a drink.

Delusion Number One (NOT ME): "I am not an alcoholic." The first delusion is the hub of the other four delusions because this delusion is fatal to the vast majority of people suffering from

alcoholism. We loosely use the term "denial" to

describe the alcoholic's relationship to alcohol; we say things like "I was in denial" or "they are in denial." The word "denial" is only mentioned twice in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, once on P.10 in Bill's story and the other reference in the "Spiritual Appendix." Both cases refer to denying a power greater than myself; the word denial is never used to describe alcoholism. Let's keep it real, denial is a part of the human experience, so therefore embedded at the root of alcoholism. But what's imperative to understand about the nature of alcoholism is that the early writers of the textbook "Alcoholics Anonymous" described alcoholism based on delusion and illusion, not denial. Denial says, "I know it's over there in the corner staring at me, but I am purposely going to ignore what it represents in my life." On the other hand, *delusion stares me down, eyeball to eyeball, and I cannot see it for what it truly is.* That, my friends, is why most alcoholics burn their life to the ground before ever achieving sobriety. The Big Book describes it this way, "I can't see myself for what I truly am, and I cannot differentiate the true from the false.

To overcome this delusion, we must concede to our innermost selves that we are alcoholics; this is Step One of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Step One is very personal, and nobody can do it for us. Unless we can see the delusion for what it is and surrender to it, there is little chance that we will achieve sobriety. The delusion we are like other people must be "SMASHED. Despite all the evidence that suggests otherwise, which everyone in our lives points to, including our families, employers, law enforcement, etc.,

continued on page 4

RESENTMENTS AND FORGIVING

Resentments are an all too common human emotion, especially for alcoholics. We become resentful when we feel we have been wronged in some way, sometimes by actual events but sometimes it is purely imagined.

Utilizing the tools given to us by AA, our literature, meetings, working the steps with our sponsor, and talking to others in the program, we slowly begin to identify our resentments. Once identified, Step Four and beyond teaches how to address the resentments and make amends where appropriate.

But what about those resentments we have towards individuals or institutions that may have harmed us when we were innocent and vulnerable? Do we have to forgive? How could we possibly owe an amends? When I did my fourth and fifth step, I got hung up on this. As a child, I was sexually abused by someone who I should have been able to trust. I was furious when considering the column "what was your part?" I had no part, I was a child!

Thankfully, I had a sponsor who was able to help me identify that my part wasn't about the abuse, I held no responsibility for that. My part, though, was how I had allowed it to affect the rest of my life. Processing that and recognizing the ways I had continued to victimize myself allowed me to begin healing.

Besides working with my sponsor, I sought help through

a counselor and was able to forgive myself for some of my actions that were coping mechanisms in disguise. Do we have to forgive? In order to stay sober, we most certainly have to forgive ourselves. When it comes to forgiving a perpetrator, one must keep in mind that forgiveness is for oneself.



Through my program and my higher power, I seek to forgive myself and those who have harmed me, so I can live a life that is happy, joyous, and free. So what does forgiveness look like considering such a grievous wrong? Forgiving doesn't mean forgetting. Forgiveness is a process that may take a great deal of time. To say that one day I did my steps and I had miraculously forgiven my abuser, would simply be untrue.

However, doing the step work and sharing my experience with my sponsor took a great deal of power out of the secret I had held for so long. Through work with my counselor, I was able to process the emotions

surrounding the abuse.

Through my program, I found the answers for how I wanted to live my life.

Holding on to that resentment wasn't going to allow me to be happy, joyous, and free.

Forgiveness is for yourself, not the abuser. Forgiveness looks like whatever you need it to in order to be able to move forward in recovery and life.

In this particular situation, forgiveness for me looks like:

- No longer wishing to cause harm to my abuser
- Recognizing and acknowledging that my abuser may have been a victim of abuse as well
- Sharing my experience with other women in the program hoping someone hears what they need to hear
- Being available to speak one on one with other women seeking help
- Speaking up for child abuse prevention causes
- Providing my children with a safe home and a sober mother who is available to protect them

As it turns out, forgiving is more of an action rather than a feeling. As I stay true to the actions listed above, little by little, the power my resentment holds over me begins to dissipate.

Written By: Anonymous

THE SPIRITUAL AXIOM

The word "spiritual" can be defined as a means of relating to people's thoughts and beliefs, rather than to their bodies and physical surroundings. The word "axiom" can be defined as a statement or proposition which is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true.

Step 10 of AA's 12 & 12 explains that "it is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." My first exposure to Alcoholics Anonymous was at my mixed, closed home group which used AA's 12 & 12. We did Step Ten four times every year. Each time we did Step 10, I would argue that the spiritual axiom statement was not true. My coined statement was, "I am not always wrong." After several years of this argument, the spiritual axiom statement finally rang loud and true to me. I'm not sure how I suddenly made this stark realization, but the following is how I apply it now.

If I am aggravated or upset, one of the following two things is happening in my life: (1) somebody is doing something that I think is wrong; or (2) somebody is doing something and they aren't doing it the way I think it should be done. Today, I can fit those two statements into every aspect of my life, i.e. spouse, kids, work, meetings, politics, etc. It is that simple to me now. My acceptance of other people's actions is a must. I can only change one thing, my attitude. I have to forget about changing other people or situations, and turn those things over to my Higher Power, the God of my Understanding. Only when I accept Life on Life's Terms, can I have true serenity. My definition of the word Serenity is the absence of inner conflict.

Written By: The AA Sage

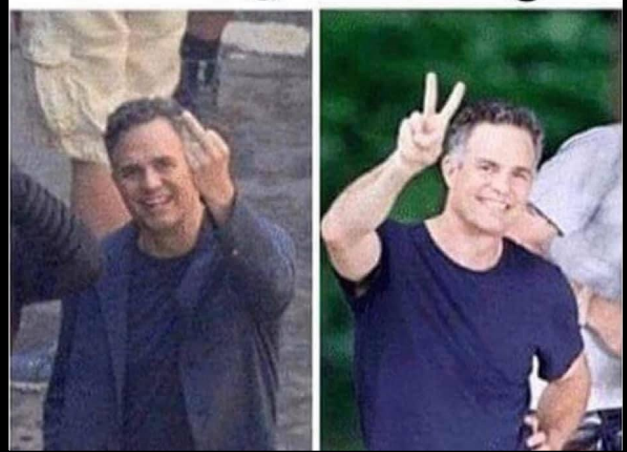
WHAT GOOD IS GRATITUDE?

1. GRATITUDE ALLOWS CELEBRATION OF THE PRESENT
2. GRATITUDE BLOCKS TOXIC EMOTIONS (ENVY, RESENTMENT, REGRET, DEPRESSION)
3. GRATEFUL PEOPLE ARE MORE STRESS-RESILIENT
4. GRATITUDE STRENGTHENS SOCIAL TIES AND SELF-WORTH

SENTINEL SARCASM

Check out *The Sobriety Sentinel* Facebook page for Friday Funnies

Me before a meeting Me after a meeting



When it's been one heck of a week but it's only Tuesday



My Dr. suggested I install a bar in my shower due to my age



All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole. To give feedback or report Tri-County AA news or events, please email sentinel@tricountyaa.org

PRODUCED FOR ST. CHARLES COUNTY, LINCOLN COUNTY AND WARREN COUNTY IN EASTERN MISSOURI

TRADITIONS

Recovery, Relationships, and Life

Like the 12 Steps guide us in recovery, the 12 Traditions guide the AA Groups and our larger AA Fellowship itself. They outline how A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world about it, the way it lives and grows." They are the glue that holds our organization together and the compass that guides us in the right direction.

I've been an admirer of the Traditions since my early days of recovery when my sponsor urged me to attend a Traditions meeting each month. Over the future months this column will briefly describe each of our traditions, where possible, associate it with one or more of the Steps and describe how it can be used in our relationships beyond Alcoholics Anonymous, i.e., in all our affairs.

Short Form: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."

Long Form: Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward."

Principle: We before me – Unity

Tradition - Step Connection: The connection between the First Step and the First Tradition is that I am powerless over alcohol and have

an unmanageable life, so I am dependent upon uniting myself with A.A. for my personal recovery. What do I do about my powerlessness and unmanageability? I join A.A. and place our common welfare first, since my personal recovery depends upon doing this.

Using Tradition One in our Relationships – Beyond A.A.: Unity means that the two (or more) of us make one whole. Ask yourself: Do I think of my partner and myself as a unit? Our book says that selfishness and self-centeredness are, we think, the root of our problem. Are you selfish or self-centered with respect to your relationship? Do you think in terms of our house, our cars, our bank account, our dogs, our furniture? Or do you think in terms of my car, my money, my phone, my stuff? If you are thinking mostly about yourself, you are not likely to have a relationship with another person that will bring you joy and happiness.

Unity begins with each individual. Having a solid relationship with a Higher Power within is vital to expressing unity in a relationship. If you are following the guidance and will of your Higher Power, you are more able to participate in a healthy loving relationship. Why? Because a working relationship with God provides faith and faith removes fear. Unity requires harmonious cooperation. Unity demands a willingness to listen to the ideas, feelings, and opinions of the other with an open mind. Unity means sharing views and not insisting on promoting our own way as the only way.

Checklist for Tradition One in Relationships

- What am I willing to sacrifice for our relationship?
- What affect do my actions have on

our relationship?

- Am I a giver or a taker?
- Am I a unifier? Or am I quick to criticize? Slow to praise?
- Do I use silence as a refuge or punishment while expecting my partner to read my mind?
- Do I listen when my partner has something to say?
- Do I admire and approve of my partner? Does he/she know that?
- Am I a healing, mending, integrating force in our relationship or am I divisive?
- Am I a peacemaker? Or, because of my own insecurity, is it critical to my ego that I be right?
- Can I be flexible? Flexibility is taught by nature. You will see the trees bend in the wind. You will see that tree branches are flexible. To be rigid is to break.

Written By: Greg K.



The First Tradition
Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Our individual sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us. We soon learn that unless we curb our individual desires and ambitions, we can damage the group...

Our brother the noisy drunk affords the simplest illustration of this Tradition. If he insists on disrupting the meeting, we "invite" him to leave, and we bring him back when he's in better shape to hear the message. We are putting the "common welfare" first. But it is in *his* welfare, too; if he's ever going to get sober, the group must go on functioning, ready for him.

Yet he is only one rare aspect of the problem. When we do get sober in A.A., we shed a few small bits of the Big Ego. We admit, "I can't handle alcohol, and I can't stay away from it on my own." Fine so far! Then we find there is plenty of that Ego still with us. It may lead us to take other members' inventories and to gossip about their supposed shortcomings. It may lure us into hogging the floor at every discussion meeting.

Oh well, it's a selfish program, isn't it? After all the miseries of active alcoholism, why shouldn't we indulge ourselves a little? We all know one good reason why we shouldn't: Self-indulgence of this kind is an immediate personal danger; it threatens the individual's own sobriety. More than that, it threatens the very basis of our sobriety—the unity of the A.A. group. For a self-righteous gossip *can* damage the mutual trust that is vital to every group. And a compulsive talker *can* ruin the effectiveness of a discussion meeting—"I've stopped going to that group. Nobody but Joe can get a word in edgewise."

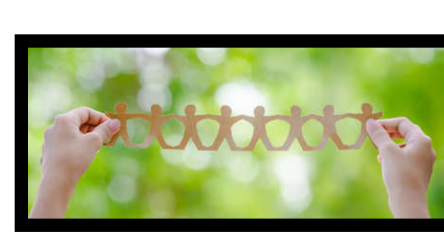
When A.A. was very young, the first members clearly saw the preservation of its unity as a life-or-death matter for themselves and for the alcoholics still unrecovered. The First Tradition states this aim, and it is the common aim of all Twelve Traditions. When A.A. reached the age of 35, the aim was restated in the theme of the 1970 International Convention:

This we owe to AA's future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our Fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

Each of the other eleven Traditions explains one specific way to protect the unity of the Fellowship and the A.A. group. Those early members quickly recognized power-drivers as potential group-wreckers. And they're still around—the members who are always sure that they're always right—the members who are happily ready to assume all the burdens of leadership and grudgingly unwilling to share them, let alone give them up. But a group does need officers. How can we cope with this dilemma? Tradition Two provides the answer. ...



RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.



DECLARATION OF UNITY
This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.

The Five Big Delusions cont.

we must accept that we can't drink like other people. We will never regain the ability to do so if we even had it; many of us never did. I am not judging; just saying. If you are truly an alcoholic, I hope you can overcome this delusion because your life depends on it.

The unfortunate reality is that even if you overcome delusion number one, there are four more you will have to conquer to achieve permanent and healthy sobriety. We will take a look at delusion number two in the Sobriety Sentinel's next issue.

Written By Harold L.

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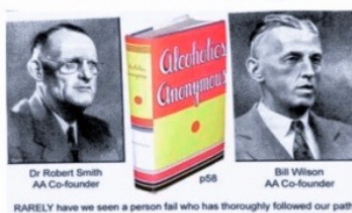


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Walking Through Sorrow to Serenity

It is said if you are going to write it should be about something you know. So this is it.

I am a wife, mom of 4, grandma of 11, and great grandma of 6. So I have known extreme joy and really hard times. I have accepted life on life's terms, the good and the bad, so I thought.

In addition to being a mother, wife and grandmother, I am also an alcoholic. I have been in recovery for over 30 years. I have a sponsor. I am a sponsor. And I have a home group. I reach out and rely on my higher power, whom I choose to call God. Although asking my God for help is a MUST, I must ALSO ask others for help. I don't have to face anything alone. While working with others and trusting my God, I have learned invaluable lessons about acceptance and powerlessness.

The very worst sorrow of my life happened in August of 2021. My beautiful granddaughter overdosed and died. Family could not reach her mother, my daughter to tell her the news, so my husband and I went

to my daughter's condo to tell her the most awful news a parent could ever receive. We woke her up and told her that her daughter, Taylor had died. It was the most painful moment of my life. A memory that refuses to be forgotten.

The days that followed are a blur. During that blurry time, I do remember that our family was loved and hugged, prayed for and fed by friends in Alcoholics Anonymous. What a gift! Our friends showed up, loved us unconditionally, and were of service to our family physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

My youngest daughter is also in recovery. Her AA support group and mine saved us. I went to meetings and reached out for help and the love came back exponentially. With a lot of help, I came to accept, the unacceptable, and found peace and PEACE IS SERENITY.

WRITTEN BY: A GRATEFUL MEMBER OF
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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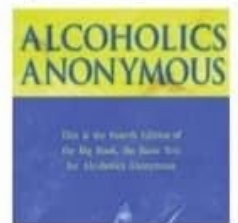
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