

# Hill Country A.A.®

## Intergroup Connection

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### Letter from an Alcoholic

I well remember when I first came to Alcoholics Anonymous. I was in my early twenties, a single parent with a 10-month-old baby, and very scared. I had been in AA before, but had relapsed. I managed to stay sober for a year, going to meetings, but that's all I did, because during that time I met a young man who was so charming, and handsome, and he wanted me to marry him. Looking back, I know now that I was scared of being alone, and that I felt time was passing me by. I really wanted to have a baby, too, and so I married this man, thinking having a home and a baby would fill that void inside of me. However, this kind of happiness, based on things outside of me, did not last. The marriage was not going well, I was overwhelmed with the responsibilities of being a new mother, eventually I turned back to the easier, softer way, and I relapsed. .

It didn't take long for me to realize that my plan for living was not working out, and I also realized that staying with the man I thought was going to fulfill my dreams, was turning into a nightmare instead. He was becoming abusive, drinking every day, and doing other illegal things as well. I knew that to stay sober, I had to make a difficult decision. I had to leave. I had nowhere to go, but I knew that I needed to stay close to AA.

I went to a meeting I always went to on Saturday mornings. It was a women's meeting. I felt safe there. There were lots of women with experience staying sober

and I needed their strength. I didn't know how I was going to tell them I relapsed. I was so ashamed that I with the one thing have been more than anything else raised my hand, name, and tried to words to come out. want to tell you all then I choked up, down, and shook



had failed that should important in my life. I said my get the I said, "I something." looked my head,

and mumbled; "No... I can't." Sitting beside me was an older, wiser soul with many years of recovery who was so kind and encouraging. She patted me on the hand and said, "Honey, Are you sure?" You can tell us!" She gave me the courage to admit I had relapsed, but wanted to try again. I picked up a desire chip and started over.

It was hard for a while, as took care of my son, looked for a job, and a permanent place to stay, but I continued to attend AA meetings. I committed to working the steps, using a sponsor, and doing everything I had omitted before. My sponsor listened to me talk about my fears for the future, helped me do inventory and look at my past relationships, and see where fear played a role in my decision-making. I learned how to pray when I was afraid, and to seek intimacy with God before trying to find intimacy in a relationship. I focused on service when I was troubled, "throwing myself harder into helping others." as it says in the Big Book. Through all of this, I developed a sense of dignity and integrity that I did not have before.

I was glad that AA didn't give me money, or a job, or place to live. They taught me how to live, how to earn respect and trust that enabled me to get a job and become self-supporting, and how to be successful on a spiritual level, rather than a material level. As my son grew up, so did I, in the rooms of AA. He is 34 years old now, and I am 34 years sober.

I had walked into AA with a broken marriage, a broken heart, unsuccessful in life, a mistake from anyone's viewpoint, but what is a failure by man's standards is a miracle in the making from God's viewpoint!! When I came to the fellowship, I had heard of God but I didn't know God I found Him in the kindness of your eyes, the expression on your faces, and in the goodness of your hearts as you made me feel welcome in your home, the last house on the block. Before I knew God, I listened to every other voice in

my head, telling me which way to go. However, none of these voices truly guided me, but God's voice did. It is the voice I hear in every AA story, in every AA meeting, and in every AA prayer. It is the voice that guides me now, as I find safe harbor from the storms of life.

*Norma A., Editor*

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## *A.A.'S "MAIN TAPROOT"*

**The principle that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat is the main taproot from which our whole Society has sprung and flowered.**

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— TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, pp. 21-22

Defeated, and knowing it, I arrived at the doors of A.A., alone and afraid of the unknown. A power outside of myself had picked me up off my bed, guided me to the phone book, then to the bus stop, and through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. Once inside A.A. I experienced a sense of being loved and accepted, something I had not felt since early childhood. May I never lose the sense of wonder I experienced on that first evening with A.A., the greatest event of my entire life.

From the book *Daily Reflections*  
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## **Tradition Ten by Tony R., District 3b/3C DCM**

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**Tradition Ten Long Form** - No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside

controversial issues— particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters, they can express no views whatever.

As part of AA's 3 Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, the Traditions are the spiritual principles whose objective is the promotion of unity within our Fellowship. It's important to emphasize the fact that the Traditions are not some legal code to use to point fingers at other members or to win an argument. It is not the intent of the Traditions to seek lock-step conformity - the intent of the Traditions is to seek spiritual unity.

Tradition Ten, above all others is expressed in some very strong, absolute, and even harsh terms. There is no ambiguity in this Tradition. It's also one of the few Traditions that wasn't hammered out on the anvil of our group experience. We had to borrow from the experience of another fellowship, the Washingtonians, who learned this lesson the hard way. We seemed to know it intuitively from our earliest days. As Bill W. wrote:

“NEVER since it began has Alcoholics Anonymous been divided by a major controversial issue. Nor has our Fellowship ever publicly taken sides on any question in an embattled world. This, however, has been no earned virtue. It could almost be said that we were born with it, for, as one old-timer recently declared, “Practically never have I heard a heated religious, political, or reform argument among A.A. members. So long as we don't argue these matters privately, it's a cinch we never shall publicly.”

Personally, I believe it's because those early members cherished their sobriety so much, and wanted there to be no impediment to recovery from, that we avoid such issues. The very first edition of the Big Book says, “We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted.”

And, as we all learned in our drinking days, nothing like a good old controversial issue, like politics or religion, to get people really riled up! It's hard to see unity in controversy. Remember, we are people who would not

normally mix. Our common problem and our common solution is about the only thing we COULD agree on! So, a Tradition like this one just made sense, and was part of what used to be called “the A.A. way.”

Most of us do not come running into the welcoming arms of A.A. As desperate for a solution as we are when we get here, it wouldn't take much to make us run for the hills. A careless word about politics, my religion, or any outside issue could be enough.

To newcomers, non-members, and the public at large, we are the voice of A.A. whether we are trying to be so or not. Once my membership in A.A. is known I become an example of the A.A. way of life, good or bad. Our personal anonymity is A.A.'s protection, if we have the humility to use it.

When this Tradition was written, most members had no public life, and as I said earlier, I didn't think I had one either. Today, many of us do have a public life. Can there be any doubt that social media qualifies as the “public level” in Tradition 11? If I talk about my recovery, or my sobriety it may not be too big a stretch for them to suspect membership in A.A. And if I were to express an opinion on any outside controversial issue, that could be enough to implicate A.A. Am I willing to take that chance? Personally, I care about A.A. too much to take that chance. Your mileage may vary, and we all have to make our own decisions with regard to our personal anonymity. Just remember, there is more at stake than one's right of free speech. It's not about me anymore.

Tony R.  
Oak Hill R.U.S.H. Hour Group





## The Last Laugh: Oldies but Goodies!!

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What is the difference between your therapist and your sponsor?  
The only time your sponsor says the word "closure", it is immediately followed by "your mouth".

How many sponsors does it take to change a light bulb?  
Only one, but the bulb has to really want to change.

What do two AAs bring on the second date? A U-Haul.

A drunk staggers into a Catholic Church, enters a confessional booth, sits down, but says nothing. The Priest coughs a few times to get his attention, but the drunk continues to sit there. Finally, the Priest pounds three times on the wall. The drunk mumbles, 'Ain't no use knockin, there's no paper on this side either.'

**A**n alcoholic, a coke addict, and a meth addict are in a car. Who's driving?

**Answer: The police.**



Rehab Humor

## Our Unity and Recovery

We live in a changing world and one can only wonder how much quicker it will change 50 years from now. We, as voting members, are here to take care of A.A. today and for those already here, but we are all the lucky ones – our more important mission is to make sure A.A. is here for the alcoholic not here yet and not even born yet. We have a sacred duty to make sure that the A.A. that was here to greet us is present for those not here yet, and we can only guarantee that if we embrace all Twelve Traditions at every level of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A.A. clearly has some challenges in front of it as we are barely into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using some modern language of our times, it is easy for one to get a few years and “go negative.” I speak from experience and no opinion here, and I can assure anyone that nothing productive comes from “going negative.” Our history is filled with stories around “fear,” fear of everyone and everything. Fear that different is bad; fear that change will end our very existence.

We are a Fellowship of paradoxes, starting with the first one: you have to admit you are powerless in order to get power. However, we have other paradoxes. We tell the membership we need more people involved in service, but then ask them when they accept our invitation to leave their good ideas at home? Do we get fearful of change? On the personal recovery side, we tell newcomers that they have a choice – “Change or Die” – and yet the slightest change proposed at a group, district, or assembly is often looked at as heresy, and always because of our great “Rule 63,” “We have always done it this way.” And I am not talking about change to our great 36 spiritual principles; I speak most of how people find us, and how we communicate to let them know where to find us.

I want to close talking about Traditions 1 and Two. Our Unity as a Fellowship must take the first seat out of all twelve seats. Without Unity, our doors will not remain open, and our job as a service structure is to keep the doors open, the coffee warm, our literature available, and to make sure there is at least one cold seat open for the new woman or man

who enters our Fellowship. After that to make sure that the new person witnesses a meeting where members share A.A. in an A.A. meeting.

That's where Tradition 2 appears; only an informed group conscience allows us to decide what is good for A.A. and not good for A.A. *A.A. Comes of Age* made clear to me that the group always knows better than me, whether that is an A.A. group, a district, an assembly, the General Service Conference or the General Service Board, my job and duty is to carry out the group conscience. In a few rare circumstances, I might need to exercise my right to a minority opinion or appeal, but that is a rare circumstance. The spiritual growth that my life depends on comes with me accepting that the group always knows better than me.

**Bill N., Trustee**

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Where to find it: A.A.® News!!

**Intergroup: [austinaa.org](http://austinaa.org)**

For news, conferences, workshops about local groups, meeting information, and more!

**Deaf Access Committee: [austindac.org](http://austindac.org)**

For the current calendar of interpreted AA meetings, and info on the Deaf Access Committee, and contact info.

**District 3b/3c: [district3b3c.org](http://district3b3c.org)**

For information on District meetings, District Committees, and other things going on and

**Southwest Texas Area: [aa-swta.org](http://aa-swta.org)**

For news about Southwest Texas Area Assemblies, Area sponsored events, and what SWTA is all about!!

**Can't find what you're looking for?**

For even more links to A.A. websites, go to the Resources tab on the HCIA website!!

# 2020 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous



July 2-5, 2020 Detroit, Michigan

The 2020 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous will be held July 2–5, 2020 in Detroit, Michigan with the theme “Love and Tolerance is our Code.” A.A. members and guests from around the world will celebrate A.A.’s 85th year at this event with big meetings held Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday morning in the Ford Field Stadium. Other meetings, scheduled or informal, will take place throughout the weekend in the COBO Center in downtown Detroit.

We know many are excited about the International Convention and eager for detailed information. As the time gets closer, additional information about the Convention and Detroit, our host city, will be provided.

This website will be updated as more information becomes available. Also watch for articles in Box 4-5-9 that is mailed to the general service

representative of every group in the U.S. and Canada listed with G.S.O. and is also posted on the website.

Information about Convention registration and housing reservations will be available in fall 2019. All necessary information will be included in the registration packet, which will also be available in the fall of 2019. This packet will list numbers to call for answers to specific questions about housing, the program, etc. The information will be mailed to A.A. groups, offices and contacts around the world and posted on the website.

We look forward to seeing you in



Detroit!

# The Twelve Rewards of AA

- 1.) Hope instead of desperation
- 2.) Faith instead of despair
- 3.) Courage instead of fear
- 4.) Peace of mind instead of confusion
- 5.) Self-respect instead of self-contempt
- 6.) Self-confidence instead of helplessness
- 7.) Respect of others instead of pity and contempt
- 8.) Clean conscience instead of guilt
- 9.) Real friendship instead of loneliness
- 10.) Clean pattern of life instead of purposeless existence
- 11.) Love and understanding of our families instead of their doubts and fears
- 12.) Freedom of a happy life instead of the bondage of an obsession

# AA Historical Facts for February

**1908** – Bill W. made boomerang.

**1916** – Bill W. & sophomore class at Norwich University was suspended for hazing.

**1938** – Rockefeller gave \$5,000 to AA.

**1939** – Dr. Harry Tiebout endorsed AA, the first psychiatrist to do so.

**1940** – First organization meeting of Philadelphia AA is held at McCready H.'s room at 2209 Delaney Street.

**1940** – 1st AA clubhouse opened at 334-1/2 West 24th Street, NYC.

**1943** – San Francisco Bulletin reporter Marsh Masline interviewed Ricardo, a San Quentin Prison AA group member.

**1946** – Baton Rouge, La., AA's hold their first anniversary meeting.

**1946** – The AA Grapevine reported the New York Seaman's Group issued a pamphlet for seamen "on one page the 12 Steps have been streamlined into 5."

**1946** – Des Moines Committee for Education on Alcoholism aired its first show on KRNT.

**1946** – Pueblo, Colorado had a second group, composed of alcoholic State Hospital patients.

**1951** – Fortune magazine article about AA was published in pamphlet form.

**1959** – AA granted "Recording for the Blind" permission to tape the Big Book.

**1963** – Harpers carried article critical of AA.

**1981** – 1st issue of "Markings," AA Archives Newsletter, was published, "To give the Fellowship a sense of its own past and the opportunity to study it."

# **Thank You, Austin AA**

For your 7th Tradition Contributions!!

Thank you Office and Hotline Volunteers!!



The Deaf Access Committee thanks you for your help in providing interpreters for Deaf AA members!! We are growing in numbers, continually, and more and more requests for meetings are coming in!! If you would like to know more about the Deaf Access Committee and how you can help serve our fellowship through this special service, please contact us!!

# What Constitutes a Good Sponsor, as Minneapolis Sees It?

(Many groups have used to good advantage the sponsor system, one of which is outlined below.)

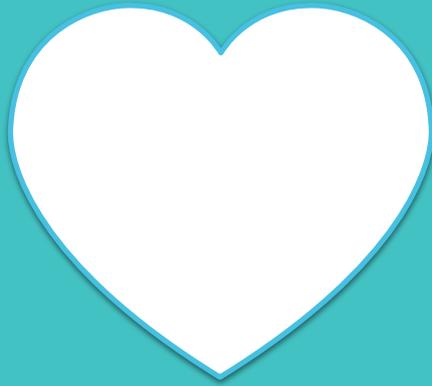
1. Sincerity in A.A. and dry for certain length of time.
2. Must have friendly attitude toward new member. If that is not possible, do not accept the sponsorship.
3. Work on only one member at a time.
4. Come to *all* the classes with the new member.
5. Keep in close touch by telephone.
6. See that the new member comes to all the meetings and be there also.
7. See that he meets people.
8. Have older members talk to him.
9. Don't sell the club to new members.
10. Don't quote the big names in the group.
11. Uphold other members to the new member.
12. Do not encourage discussion of personalities.
13. Do not make things too easy, such as lending money, etc.
14. Help straighten out new members financial and domestic problems by pointing out what experience has shown to be the best way.
15. When drunk goes to another sponsor with tales of persecution, if the second sponsor doesn't talk it over with the first sponsor, the issue becomes one of personalities, and the second sponsor will find that the slipper has outsmarted him.
16. Don't listen to a lot of gossip by slippers.
17. Second sponsor of same member should get in touch with the first sponsor and find out what has been done--what were the reactions of the slipper--so that he can't pull the same stuff on the second sponsor.
18. If a new member alibis about coming to classes and the Tuesday night meetings and the group meetings, after a short while, the sponsor should impress on him the importance of attendance at these meetings by both the husband and the wife. If you can't get him to come, then he has put you in a position where you cannot help him, as he will not let you. So drop him. The seed has been planted; redirect your energies elsewhere. Somewhere along the line he will be back when he *wants* A.A.
19. A good sponsor will not have more than two neophytes a year. However, he will do a thorough job on those two.

# Gratitude

The unhappiest person in the world is the alcoholic who has an insistent yearning to enjoy life as he once knew it, but cannot picture life without alcohol. He has a heart-breaking obsession that by some miracle of control he will be able to do so. 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 come first. Nevertheless, consider if you do not get sober and stay sober, chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity, or even life. If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first you are only hurting your chances.

- (1) Cultivate continued acceptance of the fact that your choice is between unhappy, drunken drinking and doing without just one small drink.
- (2) Cultivate gratitude you have had the good fortune of finding out what was wrong with you before it was too late.
- (3) Expect as being natural and inevitable, that for a period of time, (and it may be a long one) you will recurrently experience the craving, not for a drink as such, but for the soothing glow and warmth a drink or two once gave you.
- (4) Don't permit yourself to think a drink or two would make some bad situation better, or at least easier to live with. Substitute the thought: "One drink will make it worse; - one drink will mean a drunk."
- (5) Cultivate the enjoyment of sobriety. How good it feels to be free of shame, mortification and self-condemnation. How good it is to be free of fear of the consequences of a drunk just ended, or a coming drunk you have never before been able to prevent.

# Attitude of



# Gratitude

(6) Cultivate gratitude. Gratitude that so much can be yours for so small a price. Gratitude that you don't have to drink. Gratitude that A.A. exists and you found out about it in time. Gratitude that you are only a victim of a disease called Alcoholism, that you aren't a degenerate, immoral weakling, or the self-elected victim of a vice or a person of doubtful sanity.

(7) Seek ways to help other alcoholics and remember the first way to help others is to stay sober yourself.

(8) And don't forget that when the heart is heavy and resistance is low, there is much comfort in a true and understanding friend standing by you. You have that friend in A.A.

Anonymous