



MAINSTAY

New Zealand - Aotearoa

February - March 2015

Experience ~ Strength ~ Hope

The 12 Steps

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.*

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AA Preamble

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, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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Mainstay is the magazine of Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand. It communicates the experience, strength, and hope of AA in New Zealand reflecting a broad spectrum of current AA experience in recovery, unity, and service. Mainstay is a 'meeting in print' including the service and AA group fellowship aspects of AA life and AA meetings, and only publishes articles relating to AA and alcoholism. Mainstay aims to be self supporting and is not affiliated to any outside groups or interests and does not accept paid advertising. Submission of articles and letters (up to 600 words) are invited and should be sent to:

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PO Box 6458
Wellington 6141
Phone: (04) 472 4250
Email: mainstay@aa.org.nz

Publication of any article does not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or Mainstay. Personal opinions expressed in letters or articles should not be attributed to the Fellowship. There is no payment for contributions and they cannot be returned. The editor may edit material and cannot guarantee to publish every contribution.

Anonymity will be protected, but contributions and correspondents are asked to include their first name, locality and a contact telephone number or email/physical address (not for publication).

I am Responsible

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

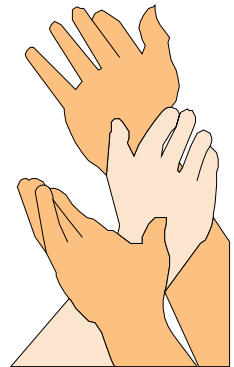


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Front and Back: June D.

Editorial

For most, each New Year brings with it a sense of renewed hope, confidence, and optimism, and provides those who are prepared to, an opportunity to stop and reflect on progress made at the close of the previous year.

Those in recovery are indeed fortunate, as more often than not when we stop and look back we can see our steps (however slow and pain staking) and actions have brought us to new discoveries about ourselves, our relationships, and our sense of place, often far removed from anything we might have imagined in our drinking careers.

For all of us, there are moments where we can look back at painful times and actually have no sense of steps taken. Were we in fact carried by power greater than ourselves, for which there is no evidence of ‘footprints in the sand’?

From my own experience I can say with much gratitude that there are many things, behaviours, and attitudes which I have previously held onto, that have seemingly vanished over time, and it is often not until later that I am aware that I am no longer doing those things, behaving that way, or I have had a complete change of attitude over time.

I liken this process as my higher power ‘tempering me’ like a piece of semi soft copper or other malleable metal - sometimes heat is required to shape and burnish the medium.

To quote the Greek philosopher Plato, “An unexamined life is not worth living”

Our programme requires that we examine our daily lives and seek to rectify and improve them daily, casting out all those things which do not serve us well, seeking spiritual progress as more is revealed to us as we go along.

Wishing everyone in the AA Fellowship at large, sobriety (in its’ 4 forms), serenity, acceptance, and ever growing gratitude that the promises are being fulfilled among us all as the New Year commences.

Mainstay Editor, and trusted servant

Randal P. Editor



Sharing...

Mainstay Editorial policy is to accept and publish letters up to 600 words. Any copy exceeding 600 words will be edited to comply. Sensitivity and discretion will be used to maintain the integrity of the original correspondence.

With Thanks

Careful consideration is given to all written submissions and letters of experience strength and hope sent to Mainstay for possible publication.

Preference is given to letters which outline What we were like, what the AA programme has done, or is doing for us, and what we are like now.

Topics , subjects and information deemed suitable for publication fall quite simply into the same criteria that is applied in meetings, and relevant to your own recovery. Is the information you want to share likely to help other alcoholics? Mainstay is "A meeting in print"

Any correspondence not published will have been considered not fitting into any of the above criteria.

We are frequently advised as part of our programme to exercise restraint of pen and tongue. Nowhere is this more important than in the pages of Mainstay. Once in print, Mainstay is an effective means of carrying the message of AA and the programme to the still suffering alcoholic, both inside and outside of AA.

Randal (Editor)

“God Doesn’t Want You to Live That Way.”

As I described my state of mind to my new AA sponsor, telling her about my chronic, crippling anxiety, she responded, “God doesn’t want you to live that way.” I’ve always lived life in some degree of fear: anxiety, insecurity, worry, dread, terror. My sponsor’s words suggested to me that perhaps there was a way out. Perhaps I could experience freedom from fear. Perhaps I didn’t have to stay miserable. I grew up in a cult in which powers greater than myself were harmful, even life-threatening. As an adult, I had difficulty imagining a Higher Power who wanted people to experience her love, rather than her power to destroy them. If anything pleasant happened to me, I could never trust that it wouldn’t end in calamity.

The effect of my sponsor saying “God doesn’t want you to live that way” was similar to hearing “You never have to drink again” at my first AA meeting. She introduced a radical, hopeful idea

into my beleaguered mind. I was stunned. I thought, “If my sponsor tells me nothing else useful, this is plenty.”

I don’t remember what the concern was, whether my health or perhaps a relationship with an employee, but a few weeks ago, I was feeling a lot of fear. I wrote in my journal, “God, dread is not how you want me to live, right?”

You want me to trust you and be happy. If outcomes are in your hands, then doom is not imminent.

Greatness is imminent. Blessings are imminent. Bliss and freedom are imminent.” Thus reminding myself about God’s gifts, I was able to relax about the future.

Over time, I’ve been able to progress more enthusiastically on the Twelve Steps,

and I continue to “outgrow fear.” I like myself more because I have a God who isn’t out to terrorize me. As I practice the spiritual principles, I think consciously about whose care it is I’ve entrusted my life to. If I’m scared, I check to see whom I’m worshipping: the terror-monger of my childhood or the loving God of

“If outcomes are in your hands, then doom is not imminent. Greatness is imminent. Blessings are imminent. Bliss and freedom are imminent.”

the Program. I'm soothed when I remember that this is a new life with a new God, one who removes fear and gives comfort. I am repeatedly thrilled, comforted, and uplifted when I remember that God doesn't want me to be afraid.

Anonymous

Richie learns the miracle of AA one day at a time

Well what a change two years can make for me. Ages 17 to 43 were a period of increased drinking and the sorrow and small amount of joy that it bought with it. Now I am no longer a SLAVE to my alcoholism.

I'm not yet perfect as I still smoke but the prison sentence of my drinking is up and this makes me cry with gratitude and relief. It hasn't been all smooth sailing. I had a bad depression coupled with a midlife crisis for 6 months where I thought about drinking, but knew it wasn't the answer.

Now is good and that is a miracle. Now is the best time and the best I have felt since I can remember. Maybe I felt better at some stage in my youth – hey, it may have been that I felt I had

it sorted with being happy when I started getting drunk, I didn't pursue it with passionate vigour for nothing!

25 years gone and for much of them I have no memory of 6 DICs and nothing of substance gained in those times - I think I got off lightly all things considered - maybe the smoking will get me - ha ha.

Life as an active drinker for me ground to a halt due to my life based on the purchase and drinking; the fridge was a companion high use, and it got very sad and distressed me when the supply was in decline.

Thank you to all of you who make a difference, and that's ALL of you who I see in meetings.

Richie. 45 and free. Nelson



AA works for Reon “on awakening” each day

Hello my name is Reon and I am an Alcoholic

Today I have not picked up a drink, or anything that would help me face life today. My mind is MAD, my head on a good day is racing at 100kmh and it's still hard to sleep at night because my mind keeps thinking about the next week, next year, last week, money and on a bad night, the person who I have my latest resentment at!

Looking back its crazy to think that I once thought that stopping drinking and drugs would 100% change me right then and there on the spot...Well It didn't happen like that...And thank GOD for my meetings and my sponsor for being there for me when I have been so close to drinking, or fighting some person, or so hurt over life and the things that

normal people deal with every day but I never could. Seeing people at meetings who talked so openly and said they could not even drink 1 or they would be back drinking again and nothing could stop them once they started. I can look back and see how this was a part of my life. Thank God I am still here.

Saying I couldn't drink 1 drink was the start and seeing I was crazy, life backed that right up! Step 1 was the start of all this for me and when I wake up I need to see and feel this before I get out of bed to get on my knees and hand my life over.

Every day I am free from the old life. Every time I pick up the phone saves me time and time again, every time I hand things over saves me!

Thanks for listening, my friends and see you soon!

Reon

Every day I am free from the old life. Every time I pick up the phone saves me time and time again, every time I hand things over saves me!

Hugh's life is turned around through AA

Hi my name is Hugh and I'm an alcoholic.

I grew up in a family of six children four boys and two girls. Mum never drank but Dad did. All of us drank from a young age. I was a hypo runt of a kid. Mum fed me well and Dad gave me stout from age 12 to help build me up. I loved it.

I started work as a shearer at age 16 and drunk every day for the next 35 years. I had the odd day off but not many. I got my first of five DICs at the age of 18. I had a bad head on crash when I was 21 then got sentenced to 12 months prison of which I did 8 months inside. Whilst in prison, I learned a lot in there about life and people. But sure as hell I never wanted to go back; it was only luck that it didn't happen. When I got out I was very angry, fighting all the time and I drank more than ever. I moved from the country into town when I was 28

because I was barred from my local pub for life for fighting.

As a country boy in a big town it was a whole new world to me. I found drugs and had a ball for a while. I fathered six kids to five different women, and used and abused everyone I met along the way. I've done a lot of things

I am not proud of. I ended up a sad and lonely man. People just avoided me. I was full of hate blaming everything and everybody, and drinking to oblivion every night.

I was in and out of hospital and each time I got out I would head straight for the booze. I was on all sorts of pills from my doctor just to get me through the day. In the end he sent me to a Psychiatrist who asked me if I had a drinking problem.

I said, "I might have, I do drink a lot." He told me to try AA, so I did. I made a phone call and went to a meeting. That was almost three years ago.

The people there all looked happy and positive about life. I wanted what they had, so I

...I wanted what they had...

“You don’t have to cry here. This is a good place. They took my Daddy and made him better.”

listened to them and did what they suggested to me. I got a sponsor and went through the steps. I have made amends to the people I have harmed along the way, something I thought I would never be able to do.

Today I sleep well at night and look forward to every new day. I go back to the prison meeting every Wednesday night to pass on what I have learnt in AA to the guys in there. If you knew me 3 years ago you wouldn’t have given me any hope of recovery. I was sick.

I have a great life today. I don’t take that first drink and I live “one

day at a time”. My friends and family love being around me now - I have two teenage girls who love having a sober Dad.

I never thought life would be any good without the booze, but my life today is beyond anything I could ever have thought possible. I don’t have to hide away any more. My health took a hammering but I’m getting better as time goes on. I keep a diary now and it’s a long time since I’ve had a bad day. When I was drinking I can’t remember having a good day. I am grateful to AA and my higher power who I never thought I would call God but today I do. The journey has been a great one for me and the rewards of sobriety just keep getting better. I was always an angry person, and today I have no anger in me. I like that.

This - the last paragraph of pg. 431 AA big book - reflects how I feel about Alcoholics Anonymous:

I once knew a woman who was crying before a meeting. She was approached by a five year old girl who told her, “You don’t have to cry here. This is a good place. They took my Daddy and made him better.” That is exactly what AA did for me; it took me and it made me better. For that I am eternally grateful.

Hugh S., Invercargill

Happy joyous and free

Happy joyous and free, how those words deluded me for many years and that was while I was in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. I am writing this in case there is someone out there like me.

My drinking story is like everyone else's, I found out that was the case when I finally dragged myself into an AA meeting and someone said, "listen for the similarities".

My journey of recovery was not to be a smooth one, but by God's hand, I met the woman that would become my sponsor and she introduced me to the Steps. She knew me so well I thought she must be a private detective. When I one day asked her about this she laughed and said "I have done all the things you have, you know!"

But later, my years in AA were not happy for me. It took some time to realise that I was still a very sick member of the fellowship despite having strung a few years of sobriety together. Life was up and down and I was still plagued by that old nameless fear. Some of you may know what I mean. I now think it was because I no longer had a sponsor and did things my own way.

By what I believe was the hand of God (again) I was put in touch with another woman who became my sponsor. After many years of fighting my ego, I started to try doing what she suggested. Revolutionary! Namely attending regular meetings, ringing her on a regular basis and using the 12 Steps and Traditions in my daily living. Not an easy feat for a member of the fellowship who had gone feral!

It has been what seems like a long journey, marked with pot holes and glorious moments. I have experience the loss of my father and brother within a short period of each other, got married to a wonderful man who has always known me sober, resigned from my job to work in our own business, travelled to Iceland and attended AA meetings there, all things I would not dreamed of handling before I got sober, by the grace of God.

Today the old nameless fear is gone, I am happy, joyous and free at last, not every minute of every day but as much as is humanly possible and due to me.

What's more I am reminded at every meeting I attend, that the AA programme is essential to me but it is also indispensable.

Rose, Renwick Sunday Night.

The Magnificent Obsession

Sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception.

You may believe that your job or your home life or some other things come first but consider: if you do not get sober and stay sober, the 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 just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober.

If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances.

A completely illusionary pedestal

“That you seemed disillusioned with me personally may be a new and painful experience for you but many members have had that experience with me. Most of their pain has been caused not only by my several shortcomings but by their own insistence on placing me, a drunk, trying to get along with other folks, upon a completely illusionary pedestal; a station which no fallible person could possible occupy.”

“I’m sure that you will understand that I have never held myself out to anybody as either a saint or a superman. I have repeatedly and truthfully said that A.A. is full of people who have made more spiritual progress than I ever, or can make. That in some areas of living I have made some decided gains but in others I seem to have stood still. And in still other ways I may have gone backwards. I am sorry that you are disillusioned with me but I am happy that even I have found a life here.”

Bill Wilson

1960

A letter from a group in Chicago was mailed to Bill W. in 1960, taking his inventory. This was Bill’s response. Bill was 26 years sober at the time.

AA meetings on air

You can hear all the meetings so far at
<http://www.aamembers.org.nz/meetings/meetings-on-air>



Or listen on **104.6 FM** between **10:45 to 11:15** every **Sunday**





Area Assemblies

Northern

14 March 2015

141st

All Saints Anglican Church, Cnr Cook Street and Selwyn Road, Howick

Central

TBA

Southern

20-22 March 2015

202nd

Roncalli College, 19 Wellington St, Timaru

AA Events

Events for promotion in Mainstay must be received by GSO (events@aa.org.nz) by 28th March to ensure inclusion in the next issue of Mainstay.

27 February - 1 March 2015

AA Women's Retreat

There is a Solution (Chapter Two)

Hamilton Women's Action Group invites Women in Recovery to join us for a weekend of fun and fellowship

Narrows Park, 442 Airport Road, Hamilton Ph: 07 8436862

\$80.00 covers 2 days & nights' accommodation, meals, and resources (Saturday fee \$35.00 includes lunch and dinner).

Janette 027 3081291 Nadine on 027 6999442

19 - 21 June 2015

Rotorua Mid-Winter Xmas AA Camp

We believe there is no middle-of-the road solution (Pg 25, Big Book)

Keswick Camp, 5 Cooper Avenue, Holdens Bay, Rotorua 3010

\$90 per person (shared accommodation)

Bookings & Information: rotorua.aacamp@gmail.com

Steve 021 997 378, Jenny 021 534 455, Craig 021 284 8484

If you want to drink, that's your business.....

If you want to stop, that's ours.

There is a solution.....

Phone AA WORKS (0800 229 6757)

Subscriptions

# Ordered	Type of subscription	Price (inc GST & PP)
	Individual subscription for 12 months	\$30.00
	Group subscription for 12 months	\$30.00
	Sponsored subscription for 12 months	\$24.00
	Sponsored subscription for 6 months	\$12.00
	Overseas subscription for 12 months	\$40.00

Subscriber and renewal details

Name of person placing order	
Post Mainstay to (name and address)	
Send invoice to (name and address)	
Group's name (if order is for a group)	
Contact Phone number and/or email address	

Post completed order and payment to:

Mainstay at GSO, Po Box 6458, Wellington 6141
or email your details to: nzgso@aa.org.nz



The 12 Traditions

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.*
2. *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*
3. *The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*
4. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.*
5. *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*
6. *An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
7. *Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
8. *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
9. *A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
10. *Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
11. *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.*
12. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*



God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.