

A.A. is our

MAINSTAY

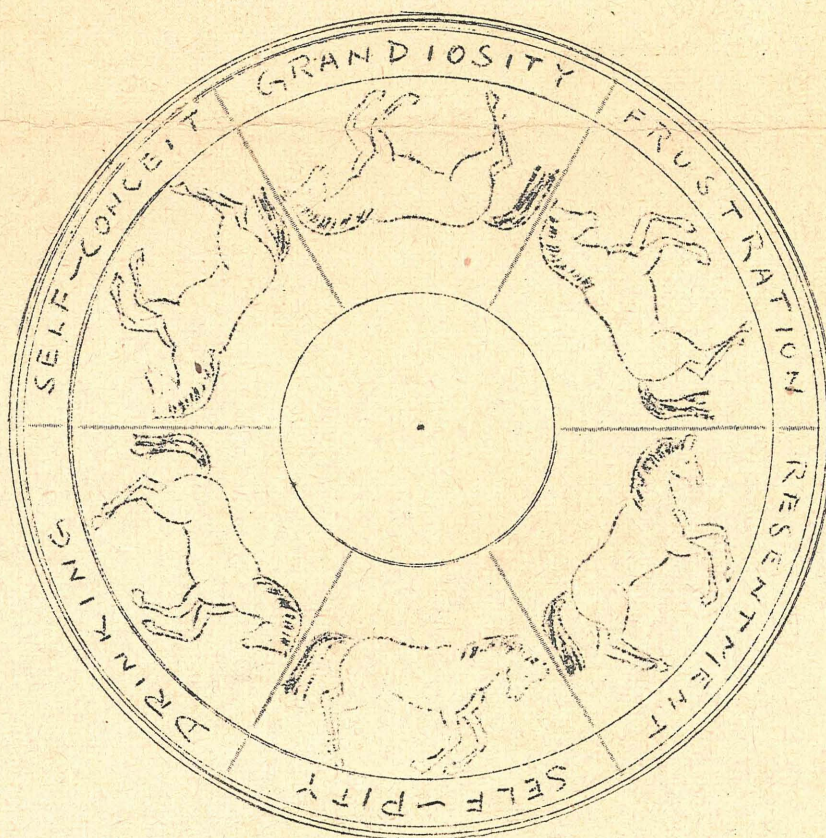
Stay with us

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THE MERRY-GO-ROUND OF STINKING THINKING & DRINKING



This is a merry-go-round ^{upon} which has on it five wooden horses of negative thinking and one of futile action, any one of which may be mounted by the Alcoholic. The curious thing about this hurdy-gurdy is that once the rider is firmly seated on his chosen horse the others rotate under him without any conscious movement on his part. Assuming he selects frustration, this leads to ^{self-pity} self-pity to drinking, drinking to self-conceit, self-conceit to grandiosity - which in turn leads to frustration - and so on round again. If on the other hand he just wants to drink because it's a fine day or because it's a wet one - it doesn't matter what excuse - he soon finds the horses shifting from drinking to self-conceit, to grandiosity, and away she goes again. The pace, however, quickens until the centrifugal forces of under-nourishment, jaded nerves and nebulous fears throw him at the stage of self-pity, too frightened to drink and too frightened to stay sober. The emotional attitudes which give rise to the Seven Deadly Sins of Pride, Lust, Anger, Gluttony (eating and drinking), Envy and Sloth can, with little contemplation, be associated

with the habits of thought which form our merry-go-round of stinking thinking. Fortunately, encouraged by the presence of the Higher Power, we can make our daily moral inventory with confidence in the Benign Healing Power that ever surrounds us, if we attempt to make our puny amends and ask not to be lead into thoughts of temptation and self-destruction.

Scotty, Central Group, Auckland.

First let me say hello and God bless you to the many friends I made during our short stay in your beautiful country. By the word 'friends', I mean a lot more than that because these were members of AA and that makes you friends that are extra special. You people in the Antipodes don't realise just how much you did for us when we were there. It just seems like yesterday that we were sitting on the floor at Ian's or driving down to Invercargill laughing at Mickey's stories or being in Lower Hutt with George and I was sitting on a chesterfield at that meeting with three beautiful ladies - why wouldn't a sailor's memories fly back. I liked your brand of A.A. down under - pure A.A. based on the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and a bond of human kindness. No clubs to distract from the real thing, no arguments over who is right, but basing your A.A. on what is right. Keep A.A. clean and simple and guided by the spiritual side of the programme and it grows like a weed. Living this way of life seems to and does become more interesting each and every day. I had a young man come into the office this morning. I thought he had come to join the Navy, but as it turned out he was a Loner from out on one of the farms hereabouts. On the prairies the nearest neighbour may be ten miles away. He was at a meeting last Friday where I was asked to speak on the spiritual side of the programme. It appears that I had upset him in some manner by what I had said. Thank God he came to me. This young man, not having had the help of other members to talk to, had taken his own interpretation of the spiritual side - and he could not be wrong for this - but he was terribly mixed up. He had not in his prayers defined first to himself the difference between needs and wants. He has gone back to the farm now knowing (I hope and pray) that if he has faith God will look after him and his needs, but God could not grant all his wants else he would be just another drunk again. I think from now on when goodness comes to him he will thank God and when things go wrong he will not blame God and others but blame himself and take Step 10 - Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. This is our step to show us our AA progress. To me it seems so many people have trouble because they are First and Twelfth steppers and don't wish to or want to live by the others, which is a form of fear. Alcohol is only mentioned in the first step. The twelfth is the summary, the second through the eleventh is the spiritual side. Without it we may just as well be drunk because we will only be a sober shell if we remain sober. Fear, frustration, envy, anger and resentment can only be overcome by working through the Higher Power. What kind of a man or woman would we be without temper? But control and proper use of temper is a spiritual guidance that comes to us only through sincerely taking Step Three. Keep on doing the good work and let's hear from a few of you. May God bless you each and every one.

Jim W., Saskatoon, Canada.

CAN YOU FACE IT?

WHEN YOU CONSIDER TAKING THAT FIRST DRINK:

Remember the mornings after. Think of the headache, the nausea, the wild apprehension over what you might have done or said but did not remember; the trembling hands and shaking knees; that craving for more of the same.

CAN YOU FACE IT?

Remember the disgust you felt for both liquor and yourself; the desire to quit and the knowledge that you could not; the constant gnawing, unreasonable fear, the frantic hope for a miracle to happen.

CAN YOU FACE IT?

Remember the pity and revulsion on the faces of your relations and friends; their avoiding you and your resentful avoidance of them; your constant pursual of another hateful but thought headening drink; your alarming lack of memory.

CAN YOU FACE IT?

Remember the loss of your job, your home, your liberty; your mounting fear of insanity and death; the protests of a liquor weary body; the dirty way you thought a dirty world was treating you; the utter hopelessness of it all.

REMEMBER YOU ARE ONLY ONE DRINK AWAY!

(From Bob.H. in the U.S.A.)

How often, as pure virtue should,

Consciences in white are clad -

Not because we have been good,

But because our memory's bad.

(Isabelle Bryans Longfellow in the Saturday Evening Post)

The Third Step. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

The first time I really sat down and seriously began to contemplate the Third Step I ended up by saying to myself 'I give it up', but fortunately the Third Step didn't give me up. It kept on haunting me in its mystic and complicated simplicity. At first I tried to fight all it stood for with all that was in me - I used reason, logic and commonsensical observations and then tried to seal my conscience against the shattering results they produced regarding morals, behaviour etc. - all to no avail. Drunk or sober, I could never get away from the nagging pain of uncertainty - wherever I found myself, I eventually stopped and pondered: God - who are You? I never received a direct answer, but found myself answering: There must be a Power beyond our ken... I don't think I ever 'made a decision' to turn my will and life over, but now I clearly understand that The Power gradually enveloped me - subconsciously I began to resort to that Power without in any way trying to analyse what It might be or consist of. Today The Power to me is synonymous with Eternal Life - Absolute Intelligence - and the never failing assurance of the existence of a life here-after. Hence to me as an alcoholic, who can't afford to plan much further than twentyfour hours at a time, the Third Step takes on a position something like a 'nerve centre', a control-tower, or the chart-room of a ship at sea. It doesn't seem fitting to use the term 'important' as regards the Third Step. It goes beyond that. We all agree that all the Steps are important, but I often wonder if the Third Step isn't a Centre-Plateau from which we build permanent roads and bridges leading to the others. It is the Plateau upon which our Spiritual Dynamos are situated. And those dynamos run and function according to the strength we are able and willing to infuse into them, all relative to how completely we surrender to the Realisation of the existence of a Power greater than ourselves. To understand God is of course impossible. How can we understand what we can't define? When I first began to grapple with the idea of God, Religion and the Spiritual Side, I became so utterly confused that my searching nearly drove me back to drink. I eventually arrived at the conclusion that I had never had any Religion. I searched back as far as I could remember, and discovered that at no time had Religion meant anything to me. Technically speaking I am a Christian by Baptism (Lutheran), but that is the only claim I can lay to being considered a member of the Christian Faith, or to one section of it. Reading the 'Big Book' (our AA Bible), articles etc., it struck me forcibly that all religions are included in AA. AA envelopes all creeds and races, and it isn't only empty talk - it is a grand Universal Idea put into practise and it works successfully. That - The Idea - was something I could understand. It was something which had practical operational value. It seemed a revelation to me, something I had been subconsciously looking for. I quickly realised, however, that the 'Force' behind it all was A Power beyond my comprehension, and I had sense enough to accept that fact. Nevertheless, I needed some concrete contact with that Power, and the only contacts I could rationalise were human manifestations - people who were a harmonising influence in my life, my Sponsor, non-alcoholics who had helped me and were willing to believe in me, my fellow alcoholics in AA, and decent people in general. And strange as it may seem not one single individual of these appeared to be particularly 'Christian' but I do believe they are as nearly the idea of God's children as possible. To sum it all up, I don't think the average alcoholic need bother too much with Religion - the dogmas, ceremonies etc. are apt to be too confusing, the controversies too many. The definition of religion in the dictionary is: A system of Faith and Worship. Within that scope is the Philosophy of A.A. That is my Religion, and at last I'm beginning to realise that happiness is within my reach.

Bill from Wellington, N.S.W.

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THE TWELVE STEPS IN REVERSE.

1. I stated that I could hold my liquor and was master of my life.
2. Believed that I was sane and rational in every respect.
3. I decided to run my own life and be successful in all my undertakings.
4. I made a searching and fearless moral inventory of my fellow men and found them lacking.
5. I admitted to no-one, including God and myself, that there was anything wrong with me.
6. I sought through alcohol to remove my responsibilities and to escape from the realities of life.
7. I got drunk to remove my shortcomings.
8. I made a list of all persons who had harmed me, whether real or imaginary, and swore to get even.
9. Got drunk whenever possible except when to do so might injure me.
10. Continued to find fault with the world and the people in it, and when I was right promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through lying, cheating, and stealing to improve myself materially at the expense of my fellow men, asking only the means to get drunk and stay drunk.
12. After a complete moral, physical and financial breakdown as a result of this kind of living, I tried to drag those who were near to me down to my level and practiced these reasonings in all my affairs.

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 an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization 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.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in

The Twelve Steps

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Eleven: 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.

Step Twelve: 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.

THE A.A. PRAYER . . .

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