

A.A. IS OUR

MAINSTAY

STAY WITH US

July 1, 1955

P. O. Box 398, Palmerston North.

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Congratulations Palmerston!!

on your fine effort in producing the first A. A. newsheet in New Zealand. Personally I welcome its appearance and know that it will fill a very important place in helping to "carry the message to those who still don't know".

Everywhere A.A. has become established, sooner or later a newsheet has appeared. Many of us have been fortunate to receive one or more of these from various parts of the world. On the average I think it has been the good fortune of those who have a good deal of AA literature already available to them. Many AA's correspond regularly and thus pass on the news that is of interest to all. But, I have felt for some time that some of our doings are not known to many who would most benefit from this information. I am thinking in particular of the "loners"; and having been one myself for some time, I know how much news from other AA's is appreciated.

AA in New Zealand now extends from Kaitaia to Invercargill. New groups are springing up almost monthly. All groups go through "growing up pains" and have difficulty in deciding what form their meetings will take. Now it will be possible to let them all have the experiences of the older groups.

We already have permission to reprint articles of interest from two of the well-known AA newsheets - "Chit-Chat" and "The Road Back". But more important, I feel, will be the experiences and practices of our own groups.

Yes, you in Palmerston North have launched an important venture for AA in New Zealand and you deserve our support in the form of articles and names to whom the newsheet can be sent.

Ian.

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi - his lifetime guiding principle.

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace,
 Where there is hatred let me sow love;
 Where there is injury, pardon;
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is despair, hope;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
 to be consoled as to console; to be understood as
 to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is
 in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that
 we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are
 born to eternal life.

Bill W., Co-Founder of Alcoholics Anonymous wrote this article on

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY.

I think that we oldsters who have put the A.A. booze cure to such severe tests, yet still find we lack emotional sobriety, are probably the spearhead for the next major development in A.A. - the development of something like real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows and with God. Those adolescent urges for top approval, perfect security and the perfect romance, urges quite appropriate to age 17, prove to be an impossible way of life at 47 or 57.

Since A.A. began, I've taken immense wallops in all these departments because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep insisting on the impossible, and how painful to discover that we have the cart before the horse. Then comes the final agony of seeing how damned wrong we are, but still finding ourselves unable, seemingly, to get off the merry-go-round.

How to translate right intellectual conviction into right emotional results and so into easy, happy, active and good living - well, that's not only the neurotic's problem, it's the problem of life itself for all who have got to the point of willingness to hew to right principles. Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy still elude us. That's the place so many of us A.A. oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall the

unconscious - from which our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream - be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want; how to convince our dumb, raging and hidden 'Mr. Hyde', becomes the final task.

I've recently come to believe this can be done. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones, folk like you and me, commencing to get results.

Last Autumn, depression, having no really rational cause at all, took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another five year chronic spell. Considering the grief I've had with depression, it wasn't a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself "Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release Depression?" By the hour, I stared at the Francis prayer ... 'It's better to understand than to be understood...It's better to love than to be loved...It's better to comfort than to be comforted...' Here was the formula alright. But why didn't it work?

Suddenly, I realised what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence - absolute dependence - on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security and romance. Failing to get these, according to my still childish dreams and specifications, I had fought for these things. And when defeat came, so did depression. There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and really absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had undergone a little spiritual development, the ABSOLUTE quality of these frightful liabilities had never before been so starkly revealed. Therefore, reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I must exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these emotional dependencies upon people, upon A.A., indeed upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. Then, only then, would I be free to love as Francis could. Emotional or instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love and expressing love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God's Love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimised by my dependencies. For dependency meant demand; demand for possession and control of people and conditions.

While the words "absolute dependency" may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that triggered my release into my present stability and quietness of mind which I am now trying to consolidate by having love and offering love, regardless of the return.

This is the primary healing circuit; our outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by which we avail ourselves of His love for us. But the real current can't flow until our dependencies are broken - broken at depth. Only then can we have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

Spiritual calculus, you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any AA of six months working on a new 12th. step case. If the case says "to hell with you", the 12th. stepper smiles and turns to another case. He doesn't feel frustrated or rejected. If his case responds and starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, but returns none to the sponsor, then the sponsor is happy anyway. He still doesn't feel rejected. And when his case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance), then the sponsor is joyful. But his happiness and joy were by-products, and no more. The really stabilising thing was the having and offering of love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In my first six months of sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not one responded, but that kept me sober. It wasn't a question of their giving me anything. Stability came out of giving, not of receiving.

Thus I think it will work out with emotional sobriety. If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we can find at the root of it some sort of unhealthy dependency and consequent demand. Let us hack away at these chains, begging God's help. Then we shall be set free to live and to love. We shall then be able to 12th. Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

I haven't offered you a single new idea - just a gimmick that has started to unhook my several 'hexes' at depth. My brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

Bill.

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Members from Palmerston North paid a visit to Lower Hutt on the 15th. when they enjoyed joining that group at a well attended meeting. Ian was in the chair and his kindly manner in opening the meeting was most impressive and new to us. He began by quoting the little paragraph "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship...", and then asked that we stand in acknowledgement of the Higher Power and repeat the serenity prayer.

Ian gave us some of the highlights of the wonderful meeting held in Hamilton on Queen's Birthday week-end, which made us who had been unable to go not a little envious. George gave us an account of what must surely constitute a record for Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand, in that the Hutt meeting was the third he had attended in twentyfour hours. The first in Timaru, the second in Nelson and the third in his home port. The Timaru meeting on the fourteenth would apparently be one worth reporting too, as I gathered there was a group from Oamaru and some from Dunedin there as well. George brought out a nice point in his talk that truly stung quite a few of us into a realisation of our previous blindness in not noticing the beauties of our own country. On the visit to sunny Nelson, George suggested to a Nelson member that rather than sit and talk AA inside why not have a walk and talk meeting in the open and at the same time let George see something of the sights of that beautiful city. George was no stranger to Nelson, mind you, as he had been there several times in his pre AA days, and as we could well imagine saw nothing but the colourful top-shelf and the "here it is" sign. How true we all know that to be. Most of us didn't know the beauties of the town we lived in for years. Yes, George scored a point alright. The Lower Hutt lads and lasses put on a good supper and when the tea cups began to rattle, which seems to be the signal at all AA meetings that the main business is ended, everyone began a private meeting with his next to elbow member and Ken P. endorsed George's earlier remarks and told us all he knew about San Francisco - they tied up at Pier 31. Thanks for an enjoyable evening and we only wish we could make the trip more often.

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This AA. What do I get out of it? I go to group meetings regularly, but all I hear is the same old yap-yap about the various quantities of grog people used to put away and the trouble they got into. It certainly has no interest for me. Haven't I got enough troubles of my own without listening to their moans and groans? How often have you said or heard this? I have said it myself, a long time ago, until I got to thinking that maybe (just maybe) there was something wrong with me. Then after quite a bit of brain-bashing I discovered something.

This AA. What had I put into it? Nothing. Here I was, reaping the benefits from the only thing that can keep me sober and teach me how to lead a decent, happy and contented life and not doing my share. No one can keep drawing from a bank without depositing at least the amount that keeps him on the right side of the ledger. I had forgotten the twelfth step. Instead of sharing what others had given me, I had become, to myself, the only one that mattered. Now I endeavour to do as much as possible. The only way I can assure my continued sobriety is to live by that twelfth step and put the weight of the other eleven right behind it. Practice these twelve steps and you will never ever say 'What am I getting out of this?' Your only interest will be who can I help and where can I do some good.

Wellington Group Member.

One for the Road.

A doctor in a northern town still hasn't got over his indignation. In a burst of frankness, he told a patient, "To be candid with you, I'm having a great deal of difficulty in diagnosing your ailment. Maybe it's too much liquor."

"That's alright, Doc", said the man. "You can have another crack at it tomorrow when you're sober".

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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 achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Programme of Recovery is incorporated in The TWELVE STEPS:-

- Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol.. that our lives had become unmanageable;
- Step 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity;
- Step 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him;
- Step 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves;
- Step 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs;
- Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character;
- Step 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings;
- Step 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all;
- Step 9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others;
- Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it;
- Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscientious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out;
- Step 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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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.

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