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Pass It On

The Cape Atlantic Intergroup Newsletter March-April, 2013 – Issue 2

From Box 459 - published bi-monthly by General Services Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

What Does ‘Crosstalk’ Have to Do with Our Primary Purpose?

Just what is this thing called “crosstalk”? Why are concerned A.A.s writing to the General Service Office for clarification about it? And, bottom line, what does it have to do with our primary purpose: “to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”?

The word has been with us at least since 1887. Webster’s 10th Edition defines crosstalk as “unwanted signals in a communication channel caused by transference of energy from another circuit”-as when, for instance, two members sitting side by side at an A.A. meeting carry on a private, yet not so quiet, conversation or when one member interrupts another rudely or inappropriately. But this is not the kind of crosstalk that members are asking about; specifically, it is traceable to a list of guidelines for behavior at A.A. meetings --erroneously attributed to “World Service”- that appears in 1992 in a central office newsletter and has since been reprinted and circulated more widely.

The guidelines state, in part, that “Any comments, negative or positive, about another’s share, experience, life, program or remarks are crosstalk--that is interference.” ...”The only appropriate comment about anyone else’s share--a speaker’s or another member’s--is “Thank you for your share.” “A member may talk about his or her own experience as it relates directly or indirectly to another’s share, but should not refer to that person’s share. Even comments such as ‘When you talk about... it reminded me of my own experience...’ are possibly inappropriate.”

cont’d on page 2

Local Voices... from the heart

Tending the Garden

What is my goal in life? I like the idea that it is to maintain a state of inner peace. I am responsible for my inner being. I am the one who decides what is allowed into my hidden garden. My mind can quickly be turned into a festering open wound. Resentments, anger and rage qualities are that have no place in my secret garden. I allow no emotions that result in another taking over control of my state of mind. I am not perfect, but I try my best to do what is right. I can control no one other than me and my emotions. You are entitled to think or act as you see fit. Please don’t expect me to follow your negative actions. I allow you to remain in bondage and I thank you for teaching me where I don’t want to go.

Each of us experiences emotions. How we deal with those emotions defines the quality of our lives. Nothing outside of me can take away my peace of mind unless I decide to allow it to do just that. I certainly am not powerful enough to know what you need to dissolve the anger which seems to have you as its prisoner. I would offer perhaps a bit of insight. And, I might add it seems to always come down to this basic principle. My thoughts and actions are always guided by one of two ideas. Either I am following the principle of *cont’d on page 3*

Trivia Question...

What magazine broke the first big story about Alcoholics Anonymous?

Answer on page 2!

- A b s e c o n • A v a l o n
- A t l a n t i c C i t y • B a r n e g a t
- B a r n e g a t L i g h t • B e a c h H a v e n
- B r a n t B e a c h • B r i g a n t i n e
- C a p e M a y • C a p e M a y C . H .
- C a p e M a y P o i n t • D e n n i s v i l l e
- E g g H a r b o r C i t y
- E g g H a r b o r T w p
- G a l l o w a y • L i n w o o d
- L i t t l e E g g H a r b o r T w p
- M a n a h a w k i n • M a r g a t e
- M a r m o r a • M a y s L a n d i n g
- N e w G r e t n a • N o . W i l d w o o d
- N o r t h f i e l d • O c e a n C i t y
- P a l e r m o • P l e a s a n t v i l l e
- P o m o n a • R i o G r a n d e
- S e a I s l e C i t y • S h i p B o t t o m
- S o m e r s P o i n t • S t o n e H a r b o r
- S u r f C i t y • T o w n b a n k
- T u c k e r t o n • V e n t n o r
- V i l l a s • W a r e t o w n
- W e s t C a p e M a y • W e s t C r e e k
- W i l d w o o d • W o o d b i n e



On March 1, 1941, The Saturday Evening Post published an article titled “Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others” written by Jack Alexander. The article became a major turning point in Alcoholics Anonymous’ history.

Crosstalk *cont'd from page 1*

The so-called guidelines did not emanate from the General Service Office. What random investigation reveals is that they may have filtered into some A.A. groups through members who also attend other Twelve Step recovery groups. For example:

(1) In its literature, one fellowship includes a boxed item head, “Suggested Announcement Regarding Crosstalk & Feedback (adopted (1/13/87).” It reads: “In sharing during meetings, we proceed in an orderly, respectful manner. The chairperson (or speaker) will call on people to share. We do not interrupt one another or engage in discussion - this is called ‘crosstalk’. While we encourage expressions of identification with a speaker and appreciation for speakers, we also do not judge or comment on what people say or tell them what to do - this is called ‘feedback.’”

(2) Another anonymous organization, in its “Suggested Meeting Format,” asks attendees “to please not interrupt someone else’s sharing, not to make comments about other people’s statements... and to talk only about yourself.”

Although many self-help groups emulate A.A.’s Twelve Steps *cont'd on page 4*

Special Note:

The material in this newsletter does not necessarily represent Cape-Atlantic Intergroup. Much of it has been contributed by individual members with the intention of passing the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

AA Grapevine, May, 1945

The History of How The Article Came To Be

Jack Alexander of Saturday Evening Post Fame Thought A.A.s Were Pulling His Leg

Ordinarily, diabetes isn’t rated as one of the hazards of reporting, but the Alcoholics Anonymous article in the Saturday Evening Post came close to costing me my liver, and maybe A.A. neophytes ought to be told this when they are handed copies of the article to read. It might impress them. In the course of my fact gathering, I drank enough Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, ginger ale, Moxie and Sweetie to float the Saratoga. Then there was the thickly frosted cake so beloved of A.A. gatherings, and the heavily sweetened coffee, and the candy. Nobody can tell me that alcoholism isn’t due solely to an abnormal craving for sugar, not even a learned psychiatrist. Otherwise the A.A. assignment was a pleasure.

It began when the Post asked me to look into A.A. as a possible article subject. All I knew of alcoholism at the time was that, like most other non-alcoholics, I had had my hand bitten (and my nose punched) on numerous occasions by alcoholic pals to whom I had extended a hand--unwisely, it always seemed afterward. Anyway, I had an understandable skepticism about the whole business.

My first contact with actual A.A.s came when a group of four of them called at my apartment one afternoon. This session was pleasant, but it didn’t help my skepticism any. Each one introduced himself as an alcoholic who had gone “dry,” as the official expression has it. They were good-looking and well-dressed and, as we sat around drinking Coca-Cola (which was all they would take), they spun yarns about their horrendous drinking misadventures. The stories sounded spurious, and after the visitors had left, I had a strong suspicion that my leg was being pulled. They had behaved like a bunch of actors sent out by some Broadway casting agency.



Next morning I took the subway to the headquarters of Alcoholics Anonymous in downtown Manhattan, where I met Bill W.

This Bill W. is a very disarming guy and an expert at indoctrinating the stranger into the psychology, psychiatry, physiology, pharmacology and folklore of alcoholism. He spent the good part of a couple of days telling me what it was all about. It was an interesting experience, but at the end of it my fingers were still crossed. He knew it, of course, without my saying it, and in the days that followed he took me to the homes of some of the A.A.s, where I got a chance to talk to the wives, too. My skepticism suffered a few minor scratches, but not enough to hurt. Then Bill shepherded me to a few A.A. meetings at a clubhouse somewhere in the West Twenties. Here were all manner of alcoholics, many of them, the nibblers at the fringe of the movement, still fragrant of liquor and needing a shave. Now I knew I was among a few genuine alcoholics anyway. The bearded, fume-breathing lads were A.A. skeptics, too, and now I had some company.

The week spent with Bill W. was a success from one standpoint. I knew I had the makings of a readable report but, unfortunately, I didn’t quite believe in it and told Bill so. He asked why I didn’t look in on the A.A.s in other cities and see what went on there. I agreed to do this, and we mapped out an itinerary. I went to Philadelphia first, and some of the local A.A.s took me to the psychopathic ward of Philadelphia General Hospital and showed me how they work on the alcoholic inmates. In that gloomy place, it was an impressive thing to see men who had bounced in and out of the ward themselves patiently jawing a man who was still haggard and shaking from a binge that wound up in the gutter.

Akron was the next stop. Bill met me there and promptly introduced me to Doc S., who is another hard man to disbelieve. There were more hospital visits, an A.A. meeting, and interviews with people who a year or two before were undergoing varying forms of the blind staggers. Now they seemed calm, well-spoken, steady-handed and prosperous, at least mildly prosperous.

cont'd on page 4

Meet My Home Group



Name	AC Young People's Group
Meeting Location	2125 N. Riverside Drive, Venice Park (Atlantic City)
Meeting Day/Time	Seven days, 18 meetings a week
Format	Varying formats
Years in existence	40
What's so great about it?	ACYP shared a room on the boardwalk with Room 41 in 1973, until Florida Avenue was secured in 1974. Presently, our room has a view of the bay.... Beautiful at Best; not only is it Beautiful, the sobriety is unlike anything you ever experienced. We are "The World Famous Atlantic Young People's!"
Introduce us to your home group! Send picture (no people, of course) and information to: newsletter@caigrp.org	

Tending... cont'd from page 1

Love or Fear. At any given moment no matter what I'm doing I am either acting out of Love or Fear. And, as always it is my choice. Should I admit to acting childish then I justify my insanity by pointing out that my adolescent hormones are out of control. Wait here again what I've said is another way of saying Fear. Anger is always another expression of Fear.

My view this morning is one of fog and rain. Simply beautiful, thank You God. If anger was to have hold of me this morning I don't think I would be able to see what I see this morning. Another revelation, just love that word... my vision is affected by my state of mind. Anger would introduce dark cloudy conditions.

Love allows the sun to be always shining from within. A wonderful beautiful morning greets me at this the beginning of another fabulous day. Thank you God for bringing A.A. and others into my life that taught me how to maintain weed control in my garden.

Anonymous

Mr. SponsorPants

an AA sponsor blog

Letter to Mr. SponsorPants



Dear Mr. SponsorPants,

There is an old timer in my Home Group who is so "out there" that they are really a problem, and I am afraid that they are turning Newcomers off from AA. Have you ever had someone like that in your "The Rooms" for you and what did you do?

V. W.

Dear V. W.,

Are you kidding? I meet someone like that every morning in my bathroom! It takes everything I've got to tolerate him sometimes. And I live alone! (bah-dump-bump)

Okay, seriously... yes, sure, I have over the years had concerns that some wacky Bleeding Deacon type was taking up so much "space" in the room that new people might be discouraged from finding what I had discovered in AA. One time (years ago) I spoke to the person. I was careful in the words I chose and came from a place of love and respect. They told me to go eff myself, shared at me from the lectern and continued doing exactly what they were doing. So I started another meeting and let God sort out who walked in which door. In other situations over the years I have sometimes raised my hand and shared my experience when they pontificated (dueling pontifications! fun at parties! not!), to provide a different voice in the room. I find that when people complain about someone in a 12 Step Meeting being too much they are rarely taking an active role in the meeting to counter-balance the person upsetting them. (I'm not talking about getting into a pissing contest with someone. I'm talking about being a visible, demonstrable example -- including sharing -- of what you want people to find in the rooms of AA.) Is this you, V.W.? Are you upset but passive, hoping someone else will solve the problem? Maybe that's not fair -- you did write after all. I encourage you to start another meeting -- even a Newcomer Meeting, if you think there's really a need -- and to raise your hand and open your mouth. Hell, start the Newcomer Meeting anyway -- it'll be some of the best 12 Step work you'll ever experience.



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see more Mr. SponsorPants at <http://mrsponsorpants.typepad.com>

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Visit our website: www.caigrp.org for
committee meeting times or to contact
a committee chairperson.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Flyers for most events may be downloaded at caigrp.org

If you have an event that you would like to appear in *Pass It On*, please forward it to newsletter@caigrp.org. Remember, because our publication is bi-monthly, announcements should be made well in advance.

Saturday

April 6

12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

District 15 Event - free, and all are welcome!

Showing of Bill W., A Documentary

Ocean Community Church, 1492 Route 72 W., Manahawkin

Lunch from noon 'til 1:30, then the movie. After, Non-Trustee
Director of AAWS Billy N. will present additional history.

History of the Article *cont'd from page 2*

Doc S. drove us both from Akron to Cleveland one night and the same pattern was repeated. The universality of alcoholism was more apparent here. In Akron it had been mostly factory workers. In Cleveland there were lawyers, accountants and other professional men, in addition to laborers. And again the same stories. The pattern was repeated also in Chicago, the only variation there being the presence at the meetings of a number of newspapermen. I had spent most of my working life on newspapers and I could really talk to these men. The real clincher, though, came in St. Louis, which is my hometown. Here I met a number of my own friends who were A.A.s, and the last remnants of skepticism vanished. Once rollicking rumpots, they were now sober. It didn't seem possible, but there it was.

When the article was published, the reader-mail was astonishing. Most of it came from desperate drinkers or their wives, or from mothers, fathers or interested friends.

Crosstalk *cont'd from page 2*

and Twelve Traditions, their practices often differ from ours in other respects. As they may have discovered in adapting the A.A. program to their own needs, what's sauce for the goose may be poison for the gander. Says Anne T., of Rome, New York, who belongs to AA. and also attends meetings of a different fellowship: "From the very beginning, one drunk talking to another has made the A.A. program go round. But in meetings (of the other fellowship), I feel, it makes sense to refrain from crosstalk. People are trying to free them-selves from extraordinary shame. When someone shares in response to something I've said, that's okay, but only so long as there's not even a hint of censure, belittlement, scolding or preaching, all under the guise of sharing. Knowing there's no risk of judgment makes me feel safe."

Looking at the subject from an AA's point of view, a G.S.O. staff member. says, "Comparing notes, many of us realized that nonjudgmental suggestions we had received in meetings in response to something we had shared, was very beneficial to our recovery. It is how we learn, and that's what 'sharing experience, strength and hope' is all about. Also, there is a thin line between guidelines and rules; and experience suggests that in A.A.'s 'benign anarchy,' rules, rigidity and attempts to control don't work very well."

Whether an individual A.A. group chooses to include the crosstalk 'guidelines' in its meeting format is entirely up to its group conscience to determine, of course. But please do not say that such guidelines came from the General Service Office.

The letters were forwarded to the A.A. office in New York and from there were sent on to A.A. groups nearest the writers of the letters. I don't know exactly how many letters came in, all told, but the last time I checked, a year or so ago, it was around 6,000. They still trickle in from time to time, from people who have carried the article in their pockets all this time, or kept it in the bureau drawer under the handkerchief case intending to do something about it.

I guess the letters will keep coming in for years, and I hope they do, because now I know that every one of them springs from a mind, either of an alcoholic or of someone close to him, which is undergoing a type of hell that Dante would have gagged at. And I know, too, that this victim is on the way to recovery, if he really wants to recover. There is something very heartening about this, particularly in a world which has been struggling toward peace for centuries without ever achieving it for very long periods of time.

*Jack Alexander
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*