



A Vision For You

Alcoholics Anonymous
Chapter 11

We have shown how we got out from under. You say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?"

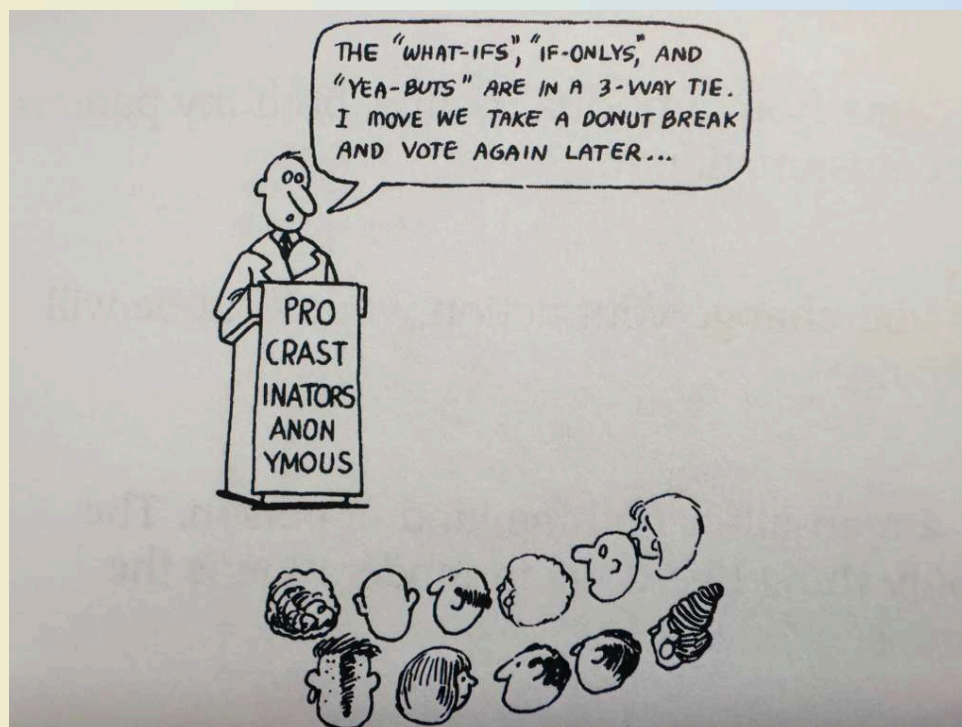
Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.

"How is that to come about?" you ask. "Where am I to find these people?"

You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

By Newsletter CoChair Editor

Joke Corner



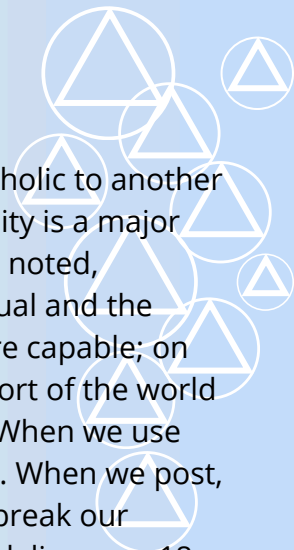
Absecon
Avalon
Atlantic City
Barnegat
Barnegat Light
Beach Haven
Brant Beach
Brigantine
Cape May
Cape May C. H.
Cape May Point
Dennisville
Egg Harbor City
Egg Harbor Twp.
Galloway
Lirwood
Little Egg Harbor Twp.
Manahawkin
Margate
Marmora
Mays Landing
New Gretna
North Wildwood
Northfield
Ocean City
Palermo
Pleasantville
Pomona
Rio Grande
Sea Isle City
Ship Bottom
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ANONYMITY



"GUARDING ANONYMITY ONLINE Modern communication in A.A. is flowing from one alcoholic to another in ways that are high-tech, relatively open-ended and evolving quickly. Protecting anonymity is a major concern for members, who are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers. As Bill W. noted, "Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical. On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes." When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and for protecting that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should consider whether we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others." AA Guidelines mg-18-internet.

In another pamphlet, Understanding Anonymity, it goes on to state: When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and that of others. When we text or post something online, we should assume that we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others.

Back in AA Guidelines mg-18-internet it clearly states: As Bill W. wrote: "At this altitude [public], anonymity — 100 percent anonymity — was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities without exception." In simplest form, this means that A.A.s do not publicly identify themselves as A.A. members using their full names and/or full-face photos.

So, if you want my opinion, the easiest way to avoid the anonymity breach altogether is to talk in general terms about "12 step programs", "program of recovery" or the like. I rounded up some helpful tips from Dave S, Cleveland OH taken from a "Anonymity on the Internet" By The AA Grapevine, Inc. (Oct. 2010).

DON'T join any group with "Alcoholics Anonymous" in its name, even if there is a disclaimer [that they are not affiliated ---"Friends of Bill W." "the 13th Steppers" "Rule 62" - all fine. Just not the TRADEMARKED "AA".---]

DON'T disclose that you are an AA member if you choose to join a group for people in recovery. Talk in general terms about meetings, recovery and Steps.

DON'T post a message on someone's "wall" regarding meetings, sobriety or AA.

DON'T publish pictures from AA functions with your friends in them unless you have their permission. Make sure that these pictures are viewable by your friends only.

DO: If you choose to "out" yourself on your profile page, make sure the page is accessible only to your friends, not to the general public.

DO: When creating an AA related "event" on the site, make sure that it is private so that invitees don't have their anonymity broken when they decide to attend. Make the guest list of an AA related event hidden.

(Source GSO)



Local Stories of Experience, Strength, and Hope

Was Too Young to Be an Alcoholic—So I Thought

At 23 years of age, I was single, unemployed, and drunk daily like everyone else in my family. I believed that my last car wreck wasn't my fault because the other guy pulled out in front of me. I couldn't admit that I was "buzzed driving." While recovering from that accident, I drank alone and was in complete denial about my drinking. I lied to my parents, who lived 3,000 miles away, about my drinking but slipped up and told my girlfriend just a little about how much I drank. That was the beginning of the end. One of us called the AA hotline for a meeting list, and to this day she claims it was her. She said that if we were to stay together, I had to attend AA. A few drinks later, I walked into a church basement and saw "Chriso," a guy I partied with. He told me several things that night that I'll never forget; he said, "Someday you'll be able to come to AA without first taking a drink, have a cookie, shut up and sit down, and just listen." That's all I remember of my first meeting.

That was in 1987. I didn't think Alcoholics Anonymous was for me because I was too young to be an alcoholic. I thought everyone in the rooms was old and had silver hair. It wasn't for me because someday I would need to make a champagne toast at my wedding. It didn't occur to me that no one wanted to marry a drunk like me. Talk about being in denial.

In spite of my best thinking, my life started improving in AA. The girlfriend stayed, I got a good job, bought a new car, and I looked forward to seeing "Tommy" the greeter each week. After a while, the old-timers seemed to grow younger and became more relatable. I began to listen to learn and learned to listen. Old-timer "Tony" tricked me into service by saying, "There's sobriety in the bottom of a coffee pot, clean it out and get yours." This forced me to come early and leave late. Guys started to get to know me, and I began to feel a part of AA.

At age 60, I now enjoy a rewarding career with the same company for over 37 years. My hair is silver, and I'm called an old-timer while attending three meetings a week. I sponsor two guys (who know it) and have 37 years of continuous sobriety. My wife of 34 years is the girl who called AA for me, and my four adult children have never seen me take a drink. The people in AA saved my life and gave me a life, and for that I'll be eternally grateful. By Rob Marmora

Mental Health Matters

We are very lucky in A.A. to have two founders with very different personalities. Dr. Bob, the more cerebral of the two, could be thought of as the “Don’t drink and go to meetings” kind of guy. Bill Wilson remarked of Dr. Bob, “Simplicity, devotion, steadfastness, and loyalty; these were the hallmarks of Dr. Bob’s character...” His final words to Bill were, “Remember, Bill, let’s not louse this thing up. Let’s keep it simple.” I have deep respect for Dr. Bob; however, his counterpart, Bill Wilson, is the one with whom I most identify. Bill, the deep thinker, often seemed to complicate simple ideas and explored many different avenues as a way to calm what he referred to as neurosis. Bill W. was not known to be guided by simplicity. He was a self-described “neurotic,” which, in the realm of mental health today, is characterized by experiences of frequent and intense negative emotions such as fear, anger, depression, self-doubt, and a host of other challenging emotions. Bill W. suffered from anxiety and intractable depression for years. In his seminal letter, now published in *The Language of the Heart* and titled “The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety,” Bill reveals his deep thoughts on the unconscious and emotional disturbance. In this letter (to a friend also suffering from depression), Bill shares that he believes he has found the solution to his depressive nature and that it lies in living out the ideals of the St. Francis Prayer. While the beautiful sentiments of this prayer are something for all beings to aspire to, it was just two years later that Bill was undergoing treatment on the West Coast using psychedelics, specifically LSD, hoping not only to treat his depressive symptoms but also to try and replicate the “white light” experience he had upon his initial spiritual awakening back in 1934. Additionally, Bill would later undergo intensive vitamin therapy after 1960 and was said to have encouraged fellow A.A.’ers to try this method as a means to address mental health issues.

We hear quips in A.A. such as “A.A. is not a hotbed of mental health” and “If you’re a drunken horse thief and you stop drinking, you’re still a horse thief.” All of this is to say that many of us have problems other than alcohol. Some of us are trauma survivors, whether that was childhood trauma known as CPTSD (Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) or adult PTSD; many of us have both. With illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, it is hard to know which came first, the alcoholism or the mental health issue. We often medicate with alcohol to quell the symptoms of an underlying issue, or the alcohol may cause symptoms of depression, anxiety, and the like.

It is said that nearly a billion people worldwide suffer from a mental health illness; this, of course, doesn’t account for unreported issues, as well as the growing number of traumatized people currently suffering under the lash of war, oppression, chronic discrimination, and poverty.

As members of A.A., we must be cautious to remember that most of us are not physicians or psychiatrists, and when acting as a trusted A.A. friend we must remember our primary purpose. Our pamphlet *The A.A. Member—Medications & Other Drugs* is very clear that it is “wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication, which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems.” (p. 6)
The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation says this about alcoholism:

“Like depression and other mental illnesses, addiction is a very real medical disorder that is rooted in brain changes. Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social, and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. Rather than thinking in terms of cause-and-effect, it’s helpful to view the co-occurring nature of these conditions. Mental illnesses can contribute to substance use disorders, and substance use disorders can contribute to the development of mental illnesses.”

The longer I stayed sober, the more apparent it became that for any hope of long-term sobriety, I had to address the dreaded underlying issues; I had to address my disease as well as my dis-ease. This I could not do alone, and thankfully I always had good sponsorship that encouraged me to seek outside help. It is only in growing my emotional sobriety and prioritizing my mental health that I have been able to experience the essence of what it means to be happy, joyous, and free. Bill Wilson’s closing line in his *Emotional Sobriety* letter says, “I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.” How true this is for me today—and I can find that quiet place, even on a cloudy day. By Karin