

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

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"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."

A.A. Co-Founder, Bill W., February 1961, From: "The Shape of Things to Come", *I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A.*, © A. A. Grapevine, Reprinted with permission

A Word From Our Delegate

I have learned that having a positive attitude helps me think positively. Therefore I make a list of positive actions I have learned from reading and sometimes just observing positive actions of others. My goal is to practice these methods I have learned in Alcoholic Anonymous daily.



1. Make Conscious Choices

Life is choice. If I say "I had no choice" I am not being honest with myself. . And while I don't always have control over what comes at me externally, I always have a choice as to how I react. Getting up in the morning is a choice. Deciding to live is a choice. And the more I practice making conscious choices, the easier it gets.

2. Accept the Consequences

So I've made a choice and suddenly the results aren't what I was expecting – at all. I have to realize the past is over. I need to accept the present situation, and make new choices based on the best information I can gather in the moment. With a positive attitude I will experience pleasant feelings, and visualize the results I want to achieve. Even my health is affected in a beneficial way. In order to turn my mind toward the positive, some inner work is required, since attitude and thoughts do not change overnight

Positive attitude helps me cope more easily with the daily affairs of life. It brings optimism into life, and makes it easier to avoid worries and negative thinking. With a positive attitude I see the bright side of life, become optimistic, and expect the best to happen. It is certainly a state of mind that is well worth developing. The benefits of a positive attitude:

- It helps me achieve goals and attain success.
- More happiness.
- More energy.
- Greater inner power and strength.
- The ability to inspire and motivate myself and others.
- Fewer difficulties encountered along the way.
- The ability to overcome difficulty more easily.
- More respect from other people.

Simple tips for developing a positive attitude:

1. Choose to be happy. Yes, it is a matter of choice.
2. Look at the bright side of life.
3. Choose to be and stay optimistic.
4. Find reasons to smile more often.
5. Have faith in myself.
6. Associate myself with positive people.
7. Learn to master your thoughts.
8. Learn concentration and meditation.

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WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

I remember when I first came to AA, I was worried that I was getting involved with some kind of religion. Most of the meetings were held in churches, they said the Lord's Prayer, and they passed a collection basket. When I started to clear up, I realized that although we learn to start placing our dependence upon a Higher Power, AA is NOT a truly religious program. I'm free to believe whatever I want to believe. However, that did not stop me from wondering where all that money went. So early on, I asked questions, and got some answers, but it wasn't until I actually became involved in service that I realized that our group contributions are the lifeblood of AA.

Each group must first be responsible to its members by collecting enough money to cover group expenses such as rent (first and foremost), then coffee, literature, and a prudent reserve. This is expressed by the Seventh Tradition, "Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

The second responsibility of each group is to contribute anything above their prudent reserve to the other levels of service in AA. Without this continuing Twelfth Step support, our service offices would soon close and the alcoholic seeking help would have nowhere to turn. When your group offers a contribution to Area 54:

YOUR MONEY goes towards carrying the message of recovery to those in prison by maintaining a Corrections meeting list, arranging for clearance of individuals to bring meetings into correctional facilities, and bringing literature to prisons through the Corrections Committee.

YOUR MONEY goes towards carrying the message of recovery to those in treatment centers by maintaining an institution meeting list, bringing meetings and literature to treatment centers all over the area, and arranging to help those leaving institutions through the Bridging the Gap Program, which provides a local AA point of contact for the individual when he/she is leaving a treatment facility. This is provided by the Treatment/Accessibilities Committee, which also provides support to those who are visually impaired, physi-

cally impaired, or homebound.

YOUR MONEY goes towards meeting with professionals who come into contact with us about what AA is and what AA isn't. When invited, (by clergy, social workers, medical personnel, teachers, etc.) this committee speaks at schools, colleges, or to any other group about our experiences with alcoholism. Did you ever see an AA ad on a bus? Have you ever heard a public service announcement on your radio? An ad in the paper? An article about sobriety in the paper? Whether it's the printed word, public media or a community presentation, this Committee (Cooperation with the Professional Community/Public Information) is there.

YOUR MONEY goes towards preserving our rich AA history, group records, and conducting events which will continue to tell the story of our Fellowship to those who come after us, through our Archives Committee.

YOUR MONEY goes towards getting the word out about "The AA Grapevine" magazine, our beloved monthly meeting in print. It is a valuable tool of recovery to AA groups and individuals. I'm so happy I learned where all this money goes and it makes me feel good to know that when my money is contributed by my group to Area 54 my group is ensuring that all of these Committees will be able to continue their very important and very spiritual work!

Reprinted from *OceanViews*, Rhode Island Area Newsletter, June 2017 issue; as adapted.

~Your editor, Jeff

We welcome your service-related contributions, comments and questions. Send topic ideas or complaints to:
newsletter@area54.org



Remembering our Primary Purpose in Service

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Service in Alcoholics Anonymous has afforded me the ability to grow into becoming a better person and helping others to the best of my ability one day at a time. I really love this program

Yours in Love, Service & Gratitude,
Jamie B., Area 54/67 Delegate
216-548-5410

Remembering our Primary Purpose in Service

Our fifth tradition states, "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Are we fulfilling our primary purpose at all levels of Alcoholics Anonymous? This is probably the most important question any of us A.A.'s, from the newest member to the eldest of the elder statespersons, can ask. In a Grapevine article from February 1958, Bill W. wrote: "Our first duty, as a society, is to ensure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activity... Sobriety--freedom from alcohol--through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an AA group... If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone."

To understand what will happen to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous if we fail to follow our primary purpose we only have to look at the Washingtonian movement. They began in April 1840 at Chase's Tavern in Baltimore by a group of drinkers who took a pledge not to drink. Through their weekly meetings speakers told their stories of what it was like; what happened and what is like today. Within 5 months their membership included 1,000 reformed drunkards and 5,000 who weren't sure. Through their promotion of taking the pledge, reliance on a higher power, and support of alcoholics helping each other they grew to 100,000 drunkards and 300,000 common tippers in less than four years. Members were sure that their movement could help with other issues facing society. Influential men started to control the movement and promoting causes other than sobriety. They started promoting prohibition of alcohol, affiliating with institutions, engaged in theological and political controversy. This and their carnival tactics of promotion led to their destruction

by 1848 and with it went the hope for the thousands of drunks of that day.

Adhering to our primary purpose is vital for A.A.'s survival and to help those suffering from alcoholism. As individuals we can carry the message a little bit and our groups can do a great deal more. But there are many things our groups can't do, yet need to be done if the A.A. message is to be carried to every corner of this country and of the world. This is done on different levels of service and in many different ways.

As individuals we carry this message to alcoholics. Through our groups we have greater opportunities to encounter those sufferers of alcoholism. Our groups are part of districts that provide a place to share and solve group problems. Intergroups/Central Service Offices provide vital local services including answering phones, publishing local meeting lists, selling conference approved literature, responding to inquiries about A.A. and more. Areas elect a delegate who represents their voice at the GSC in matters that may affect A.A. as a whole. The Area committee deals with all kinds of service problems concerning groups, the carrying of the A.A. message into institutions, and to the public to name a few. The GSC operates year round and meets once a year to discuss items of concern, suggestions for literature, overall policy and other items affecting A.A. as a whole. They are the link between the groups and the General Service Board (GSB). The GSB consists of 21 trustees that are concerned with everything happening inside and outside of A.A. that may affect the health and growth of our society. The Board receives recommendations from the Conference, deals with questions of A.A. policy, and exercises a generalized type of supervision over the A.A. Grapevine, A.A. World Services, and the General Service Office. Each of the aforementioned A.A. entities support our primary purpose directly or indirectly and provide invaluable services.

Any of these entities can be distracted from supporting our primary purpose. This may be the concern over the addicts and people with mental illness attending meetings; litigation of various sorts; misinformation in the press and on social media platforms; problems regarding money; bleeding deacons trying to control A.A.; lack of participation in general service; lack of qualified leaders; strong controlling personalities; and agendas driven by ego.

Perhaps we are consumed with counting things

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such as the quantity of members, number of groups, how much money we have, or how many pieces of literature we are selling. Maybe we are distracted by judging the commitment of our leaders or the general lack of interest in our fellowship. We may be consumed by fears, that we don't have enough money, not enough members, or members aren't following our traditions.

How many times do we sit in a service meeting and people are arguing about a few dollars or can't agree on what kind of coffee to buy. Perhaps there is a personality that is prejudice against people of certain sex, color, or nationality. Maybe an error or oversight in the use of Roberts Rules in the conduct of a meeting. Or someone trying to word smith an agenda item on the floor. All these behaviors can deter people from participating in general service. Perhaps they leave and don't return. We must look at our own behaviors and ask what we personally are doing to make service so attractive that people will be excited to return to a general service meetings.

We need to be always mindful that it is our responsibility to reach out to that alcoholic that still suffers and give them hope of a better way of life. Our actions must be guided by asking ourselves a single question when making a decision, "Will this help the alcoholic?" It is what we do today that will ensure that A.A. will be here for the alcoholic who has yet to be born. It is our responsibility as members of Alcoholics Anonymous to keep in mind and remind others how important it is to keep our activities aligned with our primary purpose. We need to be choosing our leaders with care and not elect someone based on personality. These are the people that we expect to protect the future of our society and keep us focused on supporting our primary purpose.

May we reflect with ever deepening conviction that we shall never be at our best except when we conform only to the primary spiritual aim of A.A. That of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers from alcoholism.

Gene W., Maine Area 28 / Delegate Panel 66
Northeast Regional Forum Presentation ~ June 3, 2017

Extending the Hand of A.A. to the Newcomer

The newcomer, for this presentation, is a person at their first A.A. meeting. Extending the hand of A.A. to them is an all-encompassing process that is based on the principals in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and which requires a coordinated effort of all the home group members. It does not start at the meeting room door with the greeters handshake and a smile. It begins with the home group members and sponsors never losing sight of our primary purpose. At our group conscience meetings or at a group inventory, we can ask: Are we doing all we can to welcome the newcomer? And the follow-up. What can we do better?

I could take the remainder of my time reviewing a list of suggestions that groups do to help welcome the newcomer. Our literature has that valuable information, which is a distillation of the shared wisdom and experience of many groups. It would make a good homework assignment for you or your home group. Here, I am going to supplement that knowledge by speaking from my recent experiences with welcoming the newcomer, as I was a greeter at my home group. I recognize that my experiences may not apply to your home group for a variety of reasons, so please take what you can use and leave the rest.

Let's return to the front door. The greeter is a service position in a home group that is responsible for arriving early to a meeting and welcoming everyone. An additional responsibility, often overlooked, is to recognize who is a newcomer and to introduce them to some home group members before the meeting starts. If you were hosting a function at your home and welcomed someone at the door, and they did not know anyone, would you not take the time to introduce them to some of the other guests? What kind of host would you be if you didn't. Not a very good one. We know the state of "pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization" that the newcomer is in because we were once in the same condition. In a sense the newcomer is our future being born. Do we want them to sit alone and unrecognized, before the meeting begins?

Sometimes the greeter is someone early in recovery, in their first service commitment. If you have been around awhile it is relatively easy to recognize a newcomer. A greeter that is early in recovery, maybe not so much. In this case, members need to support the greeter. Some

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Extending the Hand of A.A. to the Newcomer

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groups have written guidelines or a description of the responsibilities of a greeter. For other groups, the only guideline is the plaintive plea, heard at a meeting, "we need a greeter." I ask you, which one has a better chance of recognizing a newcomer? I think that if there were droves of newcomers coming through the doors to our meetings it would be safe to say we would have a much more heightened sensitivity as to how they are welcomed. But instead, they come in less frequently, in ones or twos. And because we are human, we tend to fall into the routine of what we always do at meetings. The setting up of the room, sponsors and sponsees conversing, someone helping another alcoholic or simply relaxing with a cup of coffee and enjoying the easy-going congeniality of the fellowship. It would be unreasonable to expect trusted servants to be on their toes always in anticipation of the arrival of a newcomer. In fact, it would be counter-productive because it is unnatural. However, when the greeter recognizes a newcomer and introduces them to a home group member, or members, they can stop what they are doing and completely focus on carrying out our primary purpose.

I am not here to tell you how to extend the hand of A.A. at this critical juncture. We all do the A.A. way through the prism of our own recovery and sobriety. However, from my experience, I can offer two suggestions, that I think apply, found in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter 7 Working With Others*: "At first engage in general conversation" and "don't start out being an evangelist or reformer." Sometimes just keeping-it-

simple by offering a cup of coffee is all the extending of the hand to the newcomer you need to do. Less can be more. Our shared experience has found that greeters or members that are overbearing can make the newcomer feel uncomfortable and on the defensive.

Also, it helps me to keep in mind that the newcomer is a like a person entering a foreign land, where they do not understand its customs or the language. For example, we have open meetings and occasionally a newcomer identifies themselves as an addict. Our group conscience is that we don't stop the meeting to school them on our primary purpose or to suggest that they are in the wrong fellowship. At the scene of an accident do EMTs treat only certain types of injuries? We know that there is a time and place to discuss this with a newcomer, thereby benefiting the group and the individual's recovery. When it applies we refer to another fellowship which can save their life. In addition, our group is committed to providing a safe environment for all members, including newcomers. Unsafe behavior is handled in an appropriate manner.

During the meeting, we ask if there is anyone new to A.A. Together we vocalize a warm welcome to the newcomer. Some groups offer a 24-hour chip or coin. Our shared experience is that the newcomer should feel welcome to participate but should not become the focus of the meeting.

When the meeting has ended, two or three of the group members can ask the newcomer if they have any questions. A meeting list, a pamphlet or two, and some of the member's phone numbers can be sufficient take home information for them. Information overload, we have found, can intimidate the newcomer. We don't expect the

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Let's Go Green!

Area 54 General Service is inviting you to Go Green! Get your Area flyers, information, and an EXPANDED web-only version of the *Northeast Ohio Recorder*. All the information that comes to your USPS mailbox now can come to your inbox.

The *NEOH Recorder* you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of this issue of *NEOHR* is packed with lots more experience, strength, and hope.

Let Justin S., your Area 54 Mailing Secretary, know that you would like to save a tree or three (and save the area some \$Green\$) with a message at mailingsecretary@area54.org

Please note: if you do nothing, you will still get your Area mail by USPS and by email (if we have your email address) as you always have.

Expanded Content (10 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>

Attraction, not Promotion

newcomer to grasp a comprehensive understanding of the disease of alcoholism and the A.A. program of recovery at their first meeting. There may be an opportunity for the “meeting after the meeting.” In any case, we thank them for coming and invite them to return.

We know from our experience that the hand of A.A., that was extend to us when we were a newcomer is life-saving. It can lift a person out of the living hell of active alcoholism into a sober life that is “happy, joyous and free.” It’s a powerful hand – a power greater than ourselves.

Joseph S., Panel 67, Area 47 CNY
Northeast Regional Forum Presentation ~ June 3, 2017

Attraction, not Promotion

Several years ago when I was an alternate DCM, we had our Area’s Delegate’s Day of Sharing, the pre-Conference meeting. I was the secretary/recorder for the table discussing Public Service Announcements – I think this may have been the year that we were talking about funding what would become the PSA Tengo Esperanza, I Have Hope -- and our discussion was going along nicely except for one member at our table. All of us, with the exception of this one person, were in favor of funding more PSAs. This one person who was the hold out, was DCM for another District in Area 48 and his viewpoint was totally different from the viewpoint of everyone else. He was opposed to PSAs. All of them. He felt they were promotion and he was firm in his opinion.

When we gave our reports to the assembled Area, I turned the floor over to him to present his minority opinion because in all honesty I did not feel I could give his opinion the background, the force, the conviction, that he could. He was vocal – In his opinion, PSAs are active attempts to promote the program of AA.

It was just my luck that I had given him and two other AAs a ride to the Assembly. He sat next to me on the 2-hour ride back and he would not let the discussion drop. He was not quiet about this for the entire way home. He was immovable in his opposition to AA having Public Service Announcements. The discussion went in circles with him coming back again and again

to his central point like a dog to a bone -- that the PSAs were made by AA to make AA look good, to encourage people to try our program and not another, that as such they were promotion and not attraction. At one point I looked into the rear-view mirror and saw the two other AAs in the back seat laughing their heads off as he brought the same points up over and over again.

The gentleman is not with us anymore, he died sober, a powerful example to all who knew him in his dedication to sobriety and to helping the next alcoholic. And, to be fair, he had a valid point of view which we should not just dismiss lightly.

PSAs are not the same thing as bringing someone to a meeting. They are not the same thing as a 12th Step call. They are not one alcoholic sitting down and sharing their experience, strength and hope with another alcoholic. They have a goal: they are there to let the still sick and suffering alcoholic know that there is an alternative. Since they are there to let new people know about us, since their goal is to carry some message about AA to the still sick and suffering alcoholic, the question stands: Do they constitute a breaking of our Tradition of Attraction and not Promotion?

I have given this a lot of thought over the years since that car ride. I especially have given it thought recently as alternate chair of the PI committee. At the 67th Conference, we passed the Advisory Action to begin funding a new PSA. And we were all very interested in hearing that Nielsen has ranked our PSA “Doors” as Number 26 out of all 1855 PSAs monitored. That puts it in the top 5% of all Public Service Announcements!

So exactly what makes something a case of promotion and what makes something attraction?

In the interests of full disclosure, I should also say that I worked in the marketing departments of several corporations when I was working in industry. My title, twice, was Promotion Manager, so, I have been expected to know what Promotion is.

But let’s look at our Tradition first. Our literature does not go into a great deal of detail. The long form of Tradition 11 says, “*Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our*

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Attraction, not Promotion

names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us."

If you think about it, this does not really help. It tells us not to have sensational advertising, and to not praise ourselves, but does allow us to have our friends recommend us and it doesn't say how to stop our friends from praising us, and what about non-sensational advertising?

So how do we recognize the difference between letting people know that AA exists and how AA works and what it does and does not do, and sensational advertising and pieces that contain self praise and unjustifiable promises? Can we have ads with our friends praising us?

Perhaps recognizing when something strays from attraction to promotion is not unlike the famous quote from Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in 1964 about recognizing pornography, he said, and I quote here, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description ["hard-core pornography"], and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But *I know it when I see it.*"

When I was writing advertising it was understood that while I should never actually LIE about the product, flat-out lying was a definite no-no, I could, shall we say, *exaggerate* the benefits of owning it. There was a message in all of the promotion, and it was far more explicit than implicit, that if you the reader, the viewer, would give us, the company, money, we would in return give you our product. And our product was then going to give you something more, be it, added wealth, added beauty, added prestige, added sex appeal, added joy. You give us money, we give you happiness. And our product would do this better than any of our competitor's products. Now That I recognize as Promotion.

To promote something is to put it ahead of other things. It is saying, our brand is better. Promoting something is like promoting a person. It is putting it

ahead of, above, something else. To Promote AA, we must say that AA is better than another program or way, that in return for your time and money that AA will give you something in return and will give you a bigger, a better, a faster return, than some other program will. So the question becomes then, do our PSAs do this?

As our PSA "Doors" finishes it has a closing message, and it is a simple one: it says, "If you have a problem with alcohol, contact AA. It works."

During our PSA "My World" a voice says, We're AA, Alcoholics helping other alcoholics get sober for over 70 years." The final screen shows the "Blue People" and the words, "Alcoholics Anonymous We Can Help."

What kind of promotion is this? We can help. It works. Our PSAs say, Tengo Esperanza – I have hope. "I Have Hope says, "I got help from people who know what I've been through."

Where are we saying anything about an exchange of money for prestige or wealth or power? Where is our boast "Buy us because our competitor is a fraud."

Our Tradition says, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion," Our Public Service Announcements do not violate this statement. Nor do they go against what we say in the forward to the 2nd edition of the Big Book, that we have no monopoly on recovery. Our PSAs talk about help, they talk about a Program that works, they talk about having Hope.

These PSAs make for lousy promotion, but great attraction because they use the words of attraction –not the hype of promotion.

Bill W., Delegate Panel 66, Area 48 – Hudson Mohawk Berkshire NY; Northeast Regional Forum Presentation ~ June 3, 2017

Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our A.A. experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, expressed through our group conscience, is our sole authority. World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy. Our meetings are informative and educational. They are held so that the Committee Members, GSRs, and all interested members may be better equipped to carry the message of World Service back to their home groups and individual members, thus giving a better understanding to our purpose, our hopes, and our work.

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