

Our Primary Purpose

Stories, news and information from our fellowship in the National Capital Region

A member shares:
pandemic
ponderings



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The Creative Corner:
nature's beauty sustains
us



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From the AA archives:
why we celebrate OUR
Ottawa past



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The “new” AA has already arrived Groups decide to be both online and in-person

When the City of Ottawa announced in early September that its facilities were reopening, the Sunday Night Big Book Study Group (SNBBSG), in Orleans, was ready to put a plan into action, and bring back their face to face meeting.

Then, after just two in-person gatherings, new provincial guidelines were announced. As Ontario returned to a modified Stage 2, the SNBBSG quickly decided they needed to reactivate their online platform...which they had decided to close down.

But interestingly, the SNBBSG, has continued to hold its face to face meeting (albeit a smaller one), and now runs two completely independent meetings at 8 p.m. on Sunday night – one virtual, one in-person.

Will this become the new normal? Are we witnessing an organic transformation as this pandemic drags on; a fellowship that's trying to adapt and respond to the needs of its membership.

“Running two meetings definitely takes more volunteers. No one knows where this is going right now, or how sustainable it is. We'll just have to wait and see if we're still holding two parallel

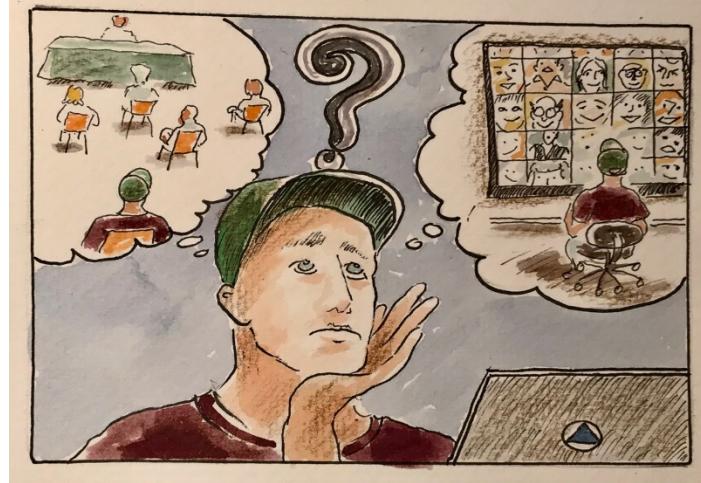


Illustration by Ron M

A Covid-19 second wave has left us wondering which is better, online or in person?

meetings, when the pandemic is finally over,” said Steve W, a long-standing member of SNBBSG.

The SNBBSG, like any number of well-established home groups in the National Capital Region, was feeling a certain amount of “zoom” fatigue by cottage season. Re-opening committees were struck, and plans put in place.

No one knew exactly if or when a Covid-19 second wave would hit, but it seemed that more and more members were hopeful “the rooms” of AA might reopen...even if under strict public health guidelines.

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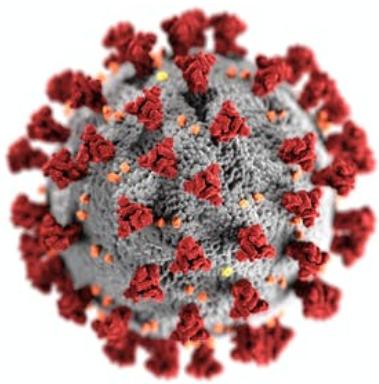
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Editorial – we're so lucky



Remember back in March...when Covid-19 hit us...right between the eyes? Many of us soon realized that the whole world was being forced to do a Step Three. Our global society had to take a deep breath and TURN IT OVER!

We had to accept the fact that we had absolutely no control over the outcome of this pandemic...how many it was going to infect, how long it was going to take for our best and brightest scientific minds to come up with a vaccine.

Fast forward eight months...**HOW ARE WE DOING???**

Well, one might choose to believe that those of us "in recovery" might actually be doing a tad better than many others on mainstreet.

And, **HOW IS THAT?**

Ponder **HOW**. We all know it stands for **honest, open and willing.**

Raise your hand if you've been honest, open and willing about sharing how, at times, you've been a little freaked out about the pandemic and what it might be doing to your loved ones, your career, your finances...to your life in general.

No one, if they're being truly honest with themselves, likes uncertainty. We just don't. We want control.

But how, in the face of so many unanswered questions, can we get back control...

- How long will wave two last for?
- Can our health care system handle all the new cases?
- What's the long-term damage going to be to the economy and our retirement fund?
- Is it going to lower my standard of living, or my children's?
- Can we really expect a vaccine? And will it be effective? And safe?
- Who can I really hang around with in my so-called bubble?
- What if I do get sick? Will I have long-lasting symptoms, like these so-called long haulers who never really recover?

You can be sure that everyone is asking themselves these questions.

But WE have a program. WE have the 12 Steps. WE have a sponsor. We know how or where to turn when we need to share our angst, apprehension or anxiety.

We know how to *turn it over*.

Or do we?

If we don't, then we better start figuring out how to go about it. Like talking to our sponsor, or getting a sponsor, or at least a temporary sponsor.

We're in this for the long term.

But, hey, we're so lucky.

p.s. tried making a gratitude list lately?

Announcements

Intergroup Elections

Nominate a member or step forward to volunteer to take on one of the positions coming up for new 2-year terms starting in January 2021. The positions are: **Treasurer, Telephone Answering Service Coordinator, Literature Coordinator and Newsletter Editor.** Submit nominations to chair@ottawaaa.org

Virtual Alkathon is in the planning!

Stay tuned for more information.



ALKATHON

If you want to help out, email genmichael1234@gmail.com

Planning to be flexible from Page 1

The question was, and still remains, how many people would be ready to show up in person, with masks on, ready to share contact tracing information, before being allowed into a meeting room.

By early October, with new infection rates beginning to spike, many were left wondering what to do: stay online, or try checking out one of the newly opened, face to face meetings.

Having core values

None of us can predict the future, especially when it comes to a Covid-19 timeline, and a return to somewhat normal living. In fact, most of us are now conceding we must learn to embrace an ever-evolving world, one where patience and flexibility are keys to success.

This brings us back to how AA will continue to reinvent itself.

"The sense I'm getting from talking to people across our region is that we are doing our best to stay focused on core values, and that is to help each other stay sober," said Harry B, chair of Ottawa Area Intergroup.

"Whether the individual group conscience is to stay online, reopen a face to face meeting, or try doing both, it will always be up to the groups themselves. What's important is that we act responsibly and consider AA as a whole."

If nothing else, the pandemic is showing us that we can be resilient, finding new and different ways to keep our recovery journey moving forward. Online meetings have in fact helped to make the fellowship more inclusive by reaching those infirmed or burdened with other responsibilities (like child-care) or other constraints.

At the same time, we need to be mindful of others not comfortable with an online environment, some of whom are falling through the cracks.



Helping the newcomer

Preliminary reports suggest the pandemic – by putting people out of work and isolating many more – is taking a toll on our collective mental health and encouraging some to self-medicate.

It's hard to say whether those who suspected they had an addiction problem before Covid-19 arrived have found it more difficult to address their challenges since. But most agree that getting sober online, during a pandemic, cannot be easy.

"This is why it is so important that we try to have face to face meetings for newcomers to get to. And if the groups are small in number that can actually help those who are just arriving," said Steve W.

"We can all remember how difficult it was to share when we were just coming in. The more we can help a newcomer, or someone coming back, feel connected to the group and the program of AA, the greater their chances of success."

A post-pandemic AA

Eight months into the pandemic, we all know the needle is going to continue to move slowly. It only follows that changes to our fellowship will also come gradually.

How many more groups will decide to hold face to face meetings, or even double track an online meeting with an in-person gathering...no one can say.

Our mission – to help the suffering alcoholic – will determine the path we choose.

"To me, what might be most impressive is how our fellow members have come forward to be of service and to help each other. It just goes to show that it's during tough times that you really discover what people are made of. And most of us in this fellowship are made of pretty good stuff," said Steve W.

A member shares ...

The AA way

I can thrive my way through this pandemic or grit my teeth and hope to survive it. I choose the former! I didn't feel that way up until a few days ago because I'm someone who lives to wander. I rarely stay in any one place for any length of time.

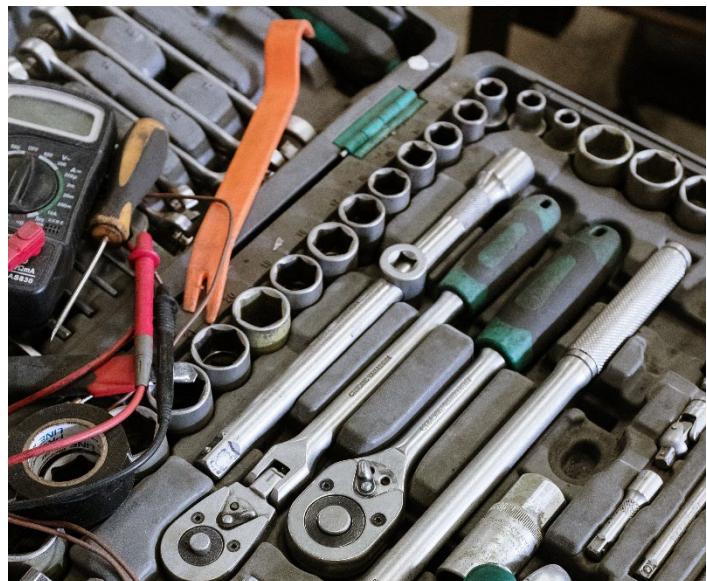
In another life, I was probably one of those daring souls who boarded a wooden ship to sail to the New World. But after three, each progressively more difficult, post-travel home quarantines, I decidedly won't be getting on an airplane or ship anytime soon. This pandemic has finally clouded my normally bright, adventurous, and eternally hopeful outlook on life.

Yes, yes, I have a cozy, comfortable, safe place to live. I'm in good health. I have a fridge full of food and I have my best canine friend curled up beside me. But despite all that, I still found myself listing all the destinations, all the yet-to-walk paths and all the old and new friendships COVID would deny me this and probably also next year.

By any AA sponsor's standard, it was a major pity pot session. Then I heard this faint, irritatingly creaking sound. I looked around. Nothing. I listened harder. Still there. What was it? Ah ha, the weathered hinges of my AA toolbox lid were calling to me. You see, for years I've carried an AA toolbox around in my head. But sometimes I get sucked into the vortex of life's craziness and I simply forgot that I have it.

So, when the pandemic pity pot finally became just a bit too uncomfortable, I rummaged through that toolbox and, not surprisingly, found everything I need. The AA slogans – One day at a time, Let go and let God, Easy does it, Keep it simple, By the grace of God, This too shall pass – my quick fixes for any given challenge.

The power of my white desire chip I accepted years ago; my 5, 10 and now 20-year medallions with all their hope of better tomorrows. Two glimmering



gems from The Promises – *that feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear and we will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

My gratitude journal with her pages upon pages of life's blessings. My sponsor's phone number screaming, "call me!" And at the very bottom of the box, my highlighted and underlined-to-death Twelve and Twelve. I held it to my chest knowing that in it lies every solution I might need to not only understand, but to manage all my doubts and fears of the coming months.

The 12 Steps of AA have always been solid steppingstones across the, at times, raging waters of my life. I've been blessed with many safe crossings since surrendering years ago. So, whenever I feel lost in the darkness of uncertainty, fear, doubt or even loneliness, the AA 12 Steps will always be there. I just need to take one Step forward. Then rest, breathe, and take another, followed by another and when the time is right, yet another.

For all of life's challenges, the AA Steps just ask me to surrender, to believe and then decide to act. This is the 'AA way', even in a pandemic!

Colette Z

The OPP Creative Corner

Covid-19 is giving us gifts. We have more time to reflect and to create. Our new “Creative Corner” is a place where we can share what AA members are doing with extra time on their hands during the pandemic. ***Send us your poetry, or your paintings, or your photographs.*** You can reach us at: newsletter@ottawaaa.org



Photographs by Bruce M

Why do we need an archives in Ottawa?



Ottawa Area Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous

This question has been asked many times whether we need an archives in Ottawa when the General Service Office (GSO) is keeping an archives for Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide, at the New York Headquarters.

The archives at the GSO keeps the history of major events in AA but not the local histories or events for any cities, towns villages, etc; that is the responsibility of the local Archives committees in these places.

The purpose of a local archives is to retain the records of the local AA groups and committees as well as events of a local nature like Roundups or Conferences. Ottawa Archives is a part of General Service and is funded by the three Districts in Ottawa. AA has been in existence in

Ottawa since 1945, and fortunately the Ottawa Archives has the records from the original committee at that time.

In the Ottawa Archives we have group histories, minutes of business meetings of groups and committees including the Spring and Fall Conference, District Committees, Intergroup, the Alkathon and the Canadathon. There are discs of long timers talks and memorabilia from individual members donated by families of deceased members. By retaining these records, we are able to refer back to what may have happened before and therefore have the benefit of the collective experience of the groups in Ottawa.

Archives accepts memorabilia from members who wish to donate these items to the Ottawa Archives. Our most recent gift has been the papers of one of our Past Delegates from the Ottawa area which explains his service life in AA; from being his group's General Service

Representative (GSR) to the position of Delegate for Area 83 Eastern Ontario International.

Once the Bronson Centre reopens, anyone interested in viewing items in the Archives may arrange a visit by emailing: archives@ottawaaa.org.

How can you help? Be involved with Archives and volunteer. We would love to have you!! Email archives@ottawaaa.org.

From the Literature Coordinator

With the winter months approaching and with reduced hours of sunlight, it's sometimes hard to live in the positive, finding the sunlight of the spirit. Seeking to grow in sobriety and staying grounded in recovery are essential activities people with long sobriety practice. Scheduling quiet time, recovery readings, contemplation, meditation and prayer are some of the ways members maintain a stable sobriety that is the basis of a rich and rewarding life.



SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS
Journeys of the Spirit

The practices we find to continue our growth in sobriety are as varied as we are. These two books have a collections of our distinct and varied voices, spanning almost 60 years. *Spiritual Awakenings* and *Spiritual Awakenings II* present the stories of AAs as we describe with warmth, passion, and humour the diverse ways in which the "sunlight of the spirit" has come into our lives.



SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS II
More Journeys of the Spirit

For many AA members, the spirit and energy of recovery is not connected with a sense of an interventionist God. We, too, have found we can practise Step 11. Atheists, agnostics, nonbelievers and secular alcoholics have been members of the AA fellowship since its earliest days, making significant contributions to the development of the program, helping to swing the doors of AA ever-wider. But finding our path has not always been easy. *One Big Tent* is a collection of stories, originally published in Grapevine, which represent the shared experience of secular AA members who have struggled with alcoholism, yet ultimately found a common solution in AA. These members share how they found their place in AA, work the program, do service and sponsor others.



ONE BIG TENT
Atheist and agnostic
AA members share their
experience, strength and hope



NO MATTER WHAT
DEALING WITH ADVERSITY IN SOBRIETY

Stories from AA Grapevine

Life on life's terms. Regardless of what external circumstances are at the moment, we don't drink, we stay steadfast in our sobriety. Whether, thanks to Covid-19, we gather with fellow members via the internet or tentatively and carefully gather in small numbers for in-person meetings, we affirm our commitment to recovery.

The Grapevine stories in this book show how AA members use the tools of the program and embrace the Fellowship to deal with tough issues.

SERVICE CALENDAR

Online meeting logistics are shown for committees that have provided it.

No matter how much sobriety you have, you can help and be part of the greater whole. All AA members are welcome to attend any of the following committees:

OTTAWA INTERGROUP MONTHLY MEETING..... Second Wednesday (7:00 pm)
[\(ZOOM Meeting ID 824 3878 6359 Passcode OAIG2020\)](#)

DISTRICT 54 MEETING..... First Thursday (6:30 pm)
[\(ZOOM Meeting ID 834 9953 9650 Passcode 141892\)](#)

DISTRICT 58 MEETING..... First Monday (7:00 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 213-in-person meetings suspended)

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)
(All Saints Church, 347 Richmond Road-rear entrance-in-person meetings suspended)

CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT..... Fourth Tuesday (6:30 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 108-in-person meetings suspended)

PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS..... Third Monday (6:30 pm)
[\(ZOOM Meeting ID 815 4385 6025 Passcode PICPC\)](#)

OTTAWA ARCHIVES..... Third Wednesday (7:00 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 108-in-person meetings suspended)

Is your AA Group's meeting information correct on ottawaaa.org? Please send all updates as well as temporary closures to Ottawa Intergroup at info@ottawaaa.org.

Do you have a question for the Intergroup board? Please email us with your question and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly board meeting. Send your email to chair@ottawaaa.org.

If your group needs insurance, please contact Ottawa Intergroup at info@ottawaaa.org to discuss.

"Our Primary Purpose" publishes articles reflecting the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. In determining content, the editor relies on the principles of the Twelve Traditions. "Our Primary Purpose" values the shared experience of individual AA members working the AA program and applying the principles of the Twelve Steps. Seeking neither to gloss over difficult issues, nor to present such issues in a harmful or contentious manner, "Our Primary Purpose" tries to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship.

The editor of "Our Primary Purpose" reserves the right to accept or reject material for publication, based on the AA traditions. Note: this policy is consistent with that of the AA Grapevine.

Articles are not intended to be statements of AA policy, nor does publication of any article constitute endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or Ottawa Area Intergroup. Submissions are always welcome.