

Our Primary Purpose

Ottawa Area Intergroup of
Alcoholics Anonymous 

www.ottawaaa.org

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

A Few Reflections on Step One (and the wonderful program of AA in Ottawa)

AA in Ottawa broke the hold that alcohol had upon my life. I will always be in profound debt to everyone that welcomed me and was so patient and kind and said keep coming back. Thanks to you I have not had a drink in some time, one day at a time.

Getting through Step One was for me a matter of giving in. It also meant getting past a belief that drinking was a good thing. Alcohol had been there from my childhood. By the time I was in my mid-teens, it was something I enjoyed, it worked to take away problems – or at least to kill pain long enough to postpone dealing with problems. This meant kicking the can down the road for a very long time. Eventually the can got kicked into the office of someone who understood the problem and told me bluntly that I needed to go to AA and get a sponsor. It was almost two and a half years and many AA meetings after that that I had my last drink.

My beliefs were entrenched. Moderate drinking was healthy, so they said. I was going through a (long) rough patch. What I was doing, however, in reality was hiding from myself. In the Big Book chapter “To Employers”, it is asked, how could this employee be so “weak, stupid and irresponsible”? That’s how I regarded myself – I had to try harder. I had been raised in a culture of “work hard, play hard”. I was also, however always, to some degree, restless, irri-

table and discontented, and, I now admit, actually, self-centered in the extreme.

My bottom might have been worse. There was an emergency room visit, delirium tremens and a sharp word from a physician. At that moment I looked at the hospital floor and said “I am powerless over alcohol and my life is unmanageable.”



Step 1

But to prove the point, four days later, I went for one more beer. Thankfully my Higher Power intervened in the form of friends who took me to dinner kept me from having any more drinks. That was it. The next day, my dry date, was July 1, 2018, Canadathon. Finally, I accepted having a disease. At last, acceptance was the answer.

When I started to work the steps and read the literature seriously, I realized AA was telling my story. I was typical. The progressiveness had been proven by my own experience. It has since been proven by seeing friends die.

A bottom does not have to be in a hospital room. Anyone can stop digging if they truly desire to. No one has to drink or drug to be cool; living a contented life without these things is 1000% more cool, hands down. Ottawa has incredible meetings oriented to young (at heart) people, including Labyrinth, Ottawa South, From the Heart and others. Age is no barrier.

(continued on p.2)

A Few Reflections on Step One (continued)

For those stymied by the pandemic and technology, I want to say: we are not meant to live our whole lives through computer screens. Technology can definitely be the problem, not the solution. Rather than connecting people it can frustrate and alienate people. A gadget cannot give a hug and meaningfully say "I understand, I've been there." AA is not virtual reality, it is real reality. AA is about embracing life – with each other.

In the Big Book story "Gutter Bravado" the author says "They suggested I was lucky to still have a car, ... I might consider taking the less fortunate to meetings." Driving an alcoholic to an in-person meeting can be an extremely important form of service; sending the message to another that he or she is not alone.

This is not to say that zoom meetings are bad or wrong, it is just so good to have the energy of being together. AA in Ottawa is filled with selfless people. It was your kindness that enabled me to complete Step One, to start to work the steps and to not drink for a few 24's including today. I cannot thank you enough.

Yours truly, aiming to remain teachable,
John C.



God direct my thinking...

God direct my thinking today so that it be divorced of self pity, dishonesty, self-will, self-seeking and fear. God inspire my thinking, decisions and intuitions. Help me to relax and take it easy. Free me from doubt and indecision. Guide me through this day and show me my next step. God give me what I need to take care of any problems. I ask all these things that I may be of maximum service to you and my fellow man in the name of the Steps I pray. AMEN

God forgive me...

God forgive me where I have been resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid today. Help me to not keep anything to myself but to discuss it all openly with another person - show me where I owe an apology and help me make it. Help me to be kind and loving to all people. God, use me in the mainstream of life. Remove worry, remorse or morbid (sick) reflections that I may be of usefulness to others. AMEN

First Step Prayer

Dear Lord,

I admit that I am powerless over my addiction. I admit that my life is unmanageable when I try to control it. Help me this day to understand the true meaning of powerlessness. Remove from me all denial of my addiction.

GRAPEVINE ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

Taking That First Step

BY: C.C. | GLEN ALLEN, VA.

Aided by the “limitless hope and boundless grace” of AA, she took the Step that changed her life

I often hear at meetings that Step One is the only Step that must be practiced perfectly. But is practicing perfectly oxymoronic? As a perfectionist and as an alcoholic, I had a problem with this. Fortunately, my sponsor was a careful reader and led me to the Twelve and Twelve. It reads: “Only Step One, where we made the 100% admission that we were powerless over alcohol, can be practiced with complete perfection.” The Big Book also tells us: “There must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.” This frightened me when I first got sober. I was certainly at the jumping off point but believing in the program required a huge leap of faith. My faith was barely audible, and the disease and I had a rich history. I wanted recovery more than I wanted to

drink—but just by a nearly imperceptible hair. A civil war ensued.

Didn't Bill W. have times where he nearly reconsidered? Don't we all? I still do! While I am no longer compelled to drink, once in a while the disease comes knocking. I have a disease that tells me I don't have a disease, and, to me, this is the singularly most frightening aspect of alcoholism. It is cunning, baffling and powerful and I am grateful for the gift of enduring vigilance. I learned earlier in sobriety to “tell on myself.” I did with considerable repetition and I must still.

I remember a program friend of mine who relapsed often, sheepishly confiding that she admired me because I'd “gotten it.” She'd say: “When you're done, you're done.” At a year or so sober, I

wasn't so sure I was done. How could I be trusted to foresee beyond twenty-four hours? We don't swear off forever. I also remember getting a huge resentment over a woman in the program telling me she thought I had a First Step problem after hearing me bemoan that I'd been driving myself crazy with questions. But she was right! I did have a First Step problem. I couldn't imagine my life with or without alcohol. I was at the jumping off point, but I had no idea where I was going. I didn't want to live any longer as a drunk, yet I couldn't shake the pangs of desire.

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Taking That First Step (continued)

Beginning at age 12, I'd abused alcohol with more dedication than anything else in my life—in good times, bad times, to numb, to celebrate, to augment, to feel, not to feel, to be social, antisocial, out of love, hate and indifference, obsessively and compulsively. Without help, it was too much for me.

But if I was done, why continue with a program? I needed help with being done, that's why. I needed reminders, fellowship, literature, tools, and a spiritual program of action. This addiction steadily told me that I'd never amount to anything, that I was predestined to fail and that I had chosen to drink each and every time. When I quit and drank again, I believed, I was just changing my mind! Advantage: disease.

Personally, it was easy to concede unmanageability. However, I was not able to make the connection that if my life was chronically unmanageable I may have lost the power of choice. This understanding required Step work with a sponsor and time. It took grace, compassion and patience from sponsors, friends and professionals to hold my hand as this became clear. I finally had allies to quiet the addiction. Advantage: program.

By moving through the rest of the Steps, help from a Higher Power of my understanding and without physically picking up a drink one day at a time, I was slowly able to gain some perspective and moments of clarity. It took years to even believe that life was worth living. My sponsor repeatedly prom-

ised me that more and more peace would come, and I believed her just enough to think that maybe, maybe this could work for me, too. I had tried everything else and I was at the fork in the road—this AA thing just might work for someone like me or I might surrender to an alcoholic death, or worse, an alcoholic life.

It has been ten years now and I still occasionally refer to my invaluable First Step list where I catalogued every time (that I can remember) that I had been powerless over alcohol or that my life had become unmanageable. I do it when I entertain the delusion that I could both control and enjoy my drinking. I look at it when anger fuels a sick desire to run and hide. I look at it because I still have thoughts of drinking. I am still an alcoholic. I don't "have" this program. I practice this program 24 hours at a time. Through the Steps, my sponsor, professional help, painstaking honesty, service and trusted friends in and out of the program, I can see, more and more, that I am powerless over alcohol. What I needed was the people I heard in AA, some of them with 25 years, coming to meetings, and sharing a desire to drink. These people were my educational heroes. They gave me the courage to be rigorously honest. If they could do it, I had a chance. I didn't need quantifiable certainty. I needed, and I found, the limitless hope, boundless grace, and growing faith, love, and levity of Alcoholics Anonymous.

From the AA Archives: The Freedom Group

The Freedom Group is part of Ottawa West District 62 and it meets at Kitchissippi United Church on Island Park Drive behind the Royal Ottawa Hospital every Tuesday evening at 8:00pm. The meeting format is open speaker.

The Freedom Group's roots originated as the "**Royal Ottawa Hospital Group**" in 1973 when it was originally conceived and funded by The Royal Ottawa Hospital. The group became "self-supporting" on February 10, 1977 when it registered with the General Service Office as an AA Group. The name was changed to "**The Royal Ottawa Group**" and the format altered to an open speaker meeting. The founding members were Mike M. and Dave B. and the first GSR was Joanne M. The name was changed again in 1982 to "**The Freedom Group**". The name Freedom Group was suggested by Mike P. also known as "Cowboy Mike" and it was drawn from a hat in which all suggested names were included.

Meetings were held on Tuesdays at 8:00 pm in The Patients Centre at The Royal Ottawa Hospital from 1973 to 1983. In September 1983 the meeting location was changed to Kitchissippi (formerly Kingsway) United Church where it remains today.

The Royal Ottawa Group's first Information form to the GSO in 1977 indicated they had 15 members. By the mid 1980's attendance grew into one of Ottawa's largest mixed meetings running consistently with 100 - 150 people in attendance. Group Mem-

bership was approximately 20 to 30 active members at that time.

In the late 1990's, smoking was banned during the meetings and attendance dropped dramatically to 30 - 40 people and sometimes less. Attendance at Business Meetings also dropped to 4-5 members and there was concern the meeting might fold. However attendance began to grow again to where it is today, normally around 40-50 people and can exceed to more than that for celebrations. It is very rare that we don't have at least two birthday celebrations every month. Freedom's Business Meetings are well supported with a minimum of 9 to 14 active members in attendance on a monthly basis.

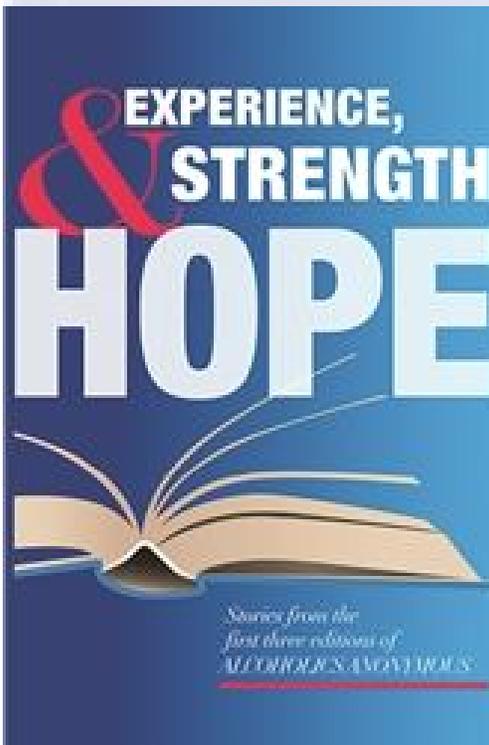
Membership mainly came from The Meadow Creek Treatment Centre located in the Royal Ottawa Hospital during the 1980's until it closed the Fall of 2016 when it was closed. As part of their drug and alcohol rehab programs, clients were required to attend Freedom Group Meetings. As such, many make Freedom their home group once they completed rehab. Members also come from other AA Groups in the area, The Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre as well as other Detox and Treatment facilities such as Jericho Road and Serenity House. The general demographic is about 50% over 40 years

of age with the balance under 40 years of age. The mix of men to women is currently about 70/30. Our Members are very active in all aspects of AA Service with sobriety ranging from less than a year to over 25 years.

In March of 2020 The Freedom Group ceased in-person meetings as The Church was shuttered. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 health officials mandated that indoor gatherings were not permitted. Freedom Group continued on-line by hosting meetings with the same open speaker format using the ZOOM platform. The on-line meeting was well received and averaged 30-45 attendees weekly. The online meetings lasted from March 2020 until the end of September 2021 then in October 2021 the meeting was allowed to re-open with restrictions. This is when we introduced the "hybrid" meeting format incorporating the ZOOM meeting on line with the in-person. This proved effective with an average of 40-45 members in person joined by 15-25 members on ZOOM.

Bruce C. March 30,2022





Experience, Strength and Hope

This anthology contains 56 stories retired from the first three editions of the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The membership of Alcoholics Anonymous continues to grow and change, but these stories from the past will never be outdated. The essential A.A. story—"what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now" - is a constant. That timeless formula for A.A. talks rings just as true in these stories from our history as it does today in the meeting around the corner. Hardcover.

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Area 83- Eastern Ontario International

Will be offering a hybrid Spring Assembly

April 14-16, 2023

The in-person event will be held in Kingston, Ontario

Saturday and Sunday's events at [St. Lawrence College](#)
group rate accommodations with the [Holiday Inn, Waterfront](#)

TO MAKE HOTEL RESERVATIONS:

Telephone: 613-549-8400 ext 2660
(M-F 9am-430pm)

Reservation Code: "[Area 83 Group Block](#)" or block code: **AAB**

Or Online: [Area 83 Hotel Room Booking Link](#)

Book early, as Group rates are based on availability or until March 14, 2023



What to expect:

Friday evening Open
Speaker

Saturday 9—5 Service
Information Day
Workshops

Saturday evening Ban-
quet and Open Speaker
meeting

Sunday (all day) Area
Assembly—Business
meeting

Pearls of Wisdom

This column features simple pearls of wisdom which have been imparted to me and others over the years. These statements are in no particular order in our recovery or of importance:

Nothing changes if nothing changes.

GOD is Good Orderly Direction.

FEAR is Frig Everything
And Run -OR Face Every-
thing And Recover. You
Choose!

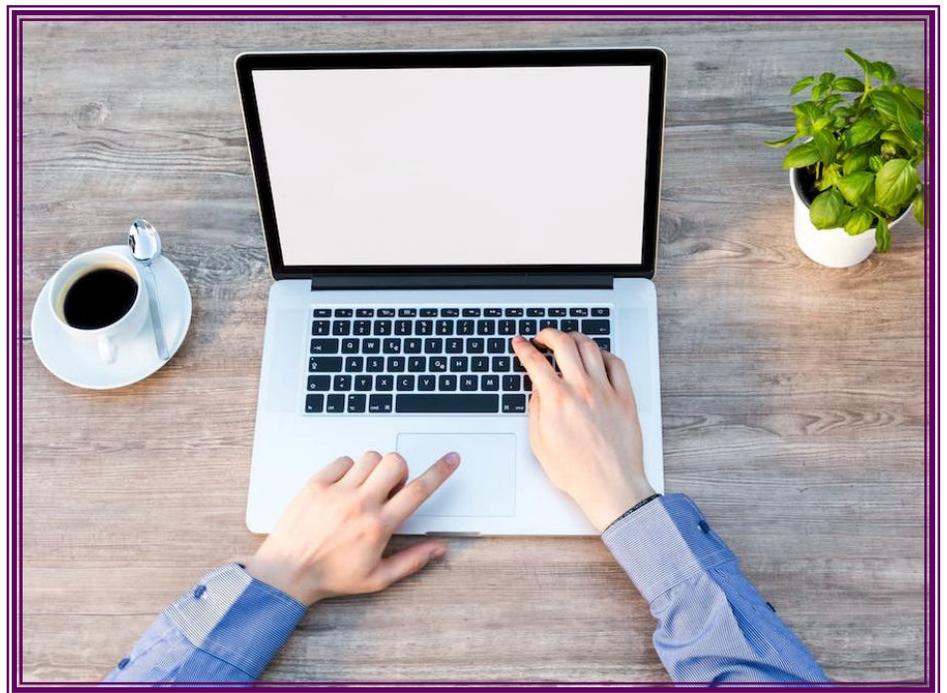
Perseverance Not
Perfection.

Easy Does It, But DO IT!

SLIP is Sobriety Losing
Its Priority.

Today, you can do it with
one hand in God's and one hand in the Fellowship's.

You're a piece of the puzzle, not the puzzle maker.



A thank you to Stephan P. for his Pearls of Wisdom this month!

Submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: newsletter@ottawaaa.org

***DISTRICT 66, GOLDEN TRIANGLE
39TH ANNUAL ROUNDUP
Lombardy Agricultural Hall
6 Kellys Rd., Lombardy, ON
Saturday, April 8, 2023***



"Is My Triangle Balanced?"

***Doors open at 11:30 a.m.
Round-Up starts at 12:15 p.m.
AA and Al-Anon Panels
Presentations, 7th Tradition
Sobriety Countdown, Guest Speaker
Potluck Dinner***



***Questions? E-mail:
roundupchair@lanarkleedsaa.org***

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Article submission deadline is
the 20th day of the month
preceding publication date

Ottawa Area Intergroup

Chair – Mary K.
Vice-Chair – John D.
Secretary – Dick G.
Treasurer – Stephan P.
Website – Paul D.
Telephone Answering– Eric S.
Literature – vacant
12-Step Coordinator– Steve R.
Spring Conference – vacant
Eastern Ontario Conference– Kerri D.
Newsletter – Dawn-Marie M.

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Corrections Facilities & Treatment - Elaine H. cft@ottawaaa.org
Archives – Andrew F. archives@ottawaaa.org

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* Discontinued. Please contact District 54 or District 62.

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)

([ZOOM Meeting ID 638 562 068 Passcode 016224](#))

CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT..... Fourth Tuesday (6:30 pm)

([Zoom Meeting ID 815 5183 4935 Passcode 521429](#))

PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS..... Fourth Monday (7pm)

([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 questions and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly virtual 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 newsletter coordinator 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. It neither seeks 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 newsletter coordinator 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!