

THE DEAL

NEWCOMER GUIDE

Alcoholism is an illness. It can hit anyone: young, old; rich, poor; black, white. Alcoholics aren't just those old guys sitting on park benches. Young successful people can ruin their lives with alcohol too.

It doesn't matter how long you've been drinking, what you've been drinking or even how much. It's what drinking does to you that counts.

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1.0 GETTING HELP

“If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic.”

Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, Page

If you have a problem with alcohol and would like to stop drinking, call the AA Helpline. Calls are confidential and you can remain anonymous. AA doesn't employ professional counsellors or psychologists. When you phone the AA Helpline you will be talking to an AA member, a volunteer who is an alcoholic and is using the AA program to recover and stay sober.

**24 HOUR AA HELPLINE
(AUSTRALIA WIDE)**



1300 222 222

**24 HOUR AA HELPLINE
(MELBOURNE)**



03 9529 5948

1.1 ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS OFFICE IN PRAHRAN

The AA Office in Prahran supports the 12th Step work of AA groups in the Melbourne area, is an information hub for groups, and sells AA literature. The office is responsible, and accountable to the AA groups who support it.

ADDRESS: 46 Porter St
PRAHRAN VIC 3181

PHONE: 03 9529 5948

EMAIL: info@aamelbourne.org.au

WEBSITE: www.aamelbourne.org.au

1.2 THE DEAL MEN'S STAG MEETING

At **The Deal** we have a strong program of recovery, a firm focus on the Steps and an entrenched network of support. Our recovery is a matter of life and death – that is **The Deal**.

Our oldest sober members have been around since the 70's and our newest a mere matter of weeks – there is a place for you if you are a man with a desire to stop drinking!

Sunday Night at 6.00PM

Men's Big Book Study Meeting

Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall

611 High Street

ARMADALE VIC 3143

Sunday Night at 7.00PM

Men's Home Group Meeting

Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall

611 High Street

ARMADALE VIC 3143

Wednesday Night at 7.00PM

Men's Book Study Meeting

Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall

88 Kooyong Road

ARMADALE VIC 3143

1.3 AA TIMES

The AA Times (www.aatimes.org.au) provides information about Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings in Melbourne and around the state of Victoria, Australia. This web site is presented and maintained by AA members. Visit to find a meeting in your area, stay up to date on AA events, or download a printable meeting list.

You can also subscribe to receive via email:

- The AA Times Newsletter (Weekly Email Newsletter)
- Event Flyers (Flyers and notification of events sent on behalf of AA Groups and Organising Committees)
- Printable Meetings Lists (Latest printable meetings lists emailed to you each month)

Also available is a mobile friendly site accessible via mobile phones and devices (m.aatimes.org.au)

1.4 USEFUL LINKS

AA Australia (General Service Office)

www.aa.org.au

AA Inner City District (Melbourne)

www.aainnercity.com

AA Area D (Southern Region)

www.areasd.org.au

AA Melbourne (Prahran Office)

www.aamelbourne.org.au

The Deal Men's Group

www.thedealaa.com

VICYPAA (Victorian Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous)

www.vicypaa.org.au

AA Times (Meetings, Events, Group Information)

www.aatimes.org.au

AA Daily Reflections (Daily Readings)

http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/daily-reflection

Barefoot's World (AA History)

<http://www.barefootsworld.net>

Silkworth (Prayers & AA History)

<http://www.silkworth.net>

XA Speakers (AA Speakers)

<http://www.xa-speakers.org>

1.0 IS ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS FOR ME?

Only you can decide whether to give AA a try. In AA, we don't diagnose you and tell you if and when you should stop drinking. That's your decision to make.

Here are some questions which might help you to sort it out for you. See if you can recognise any of these situations in your own life. Remember, there's no disgrace in facing up to the fact that you have a problem.

1. Have you ever decided to stop drinking for a week or so, but only lasted for a couple of days? YES

Most of us in AA made all kinds of promises to ourselves and to our families. We could not keep them. Then we came to AA. AA said: "Just try not to drink today." (If you do not drink today, you cannot get drunk today.) NO

2. Do you wish people would mind their own business about your drinking-- stop telling you what to do? YES

In AA we do not tell anyone to do anything. We just talk about our own drinking, the trouble we got into, and how we stopped. We will be glad to help you, if you want us to. NO

3. Have you ever switched from one kind of drink to another in the hope that this would keep you from getting drunk? YES

We tried all kinds of ways. We made our drinks weak. Or just drank beer. Or we did not drink cocktails. Or only drank on weekends. You name it, we tried it. But if we drank anything with alcohol in it, we usually got drunk eventually. NO

4. Have you had to have an eye-opener upon awakening during the past year? Do you need a drink to get started, or to stop shaking? YES

This is a pretty sure sign that you are not drinking "socially." NO

5. Do you envy people who can drink without getting into trouble? YES

At one time or another, most of us have wondered why we were not like most people, who really can take it or leave it. NO

6. Have you had problems connected with drinking during the past year? YES

Be honest! Doctors say that if you have a problem with alcohol and keep on drinking, it will get worse - never better. Eventually, you will die, or end up in an institution for the rest of your life. The only hope is to stop drinking. NO

7. Has your drinking caused trouble at home? YES

Before we came into AA, most of us said that it was the people or problems at home that made us drink. We could not see that our drinking just made everything worse. It never solved problems anywhere or anytime. NO

8. Do you ever try to get "extra" drinks at a party because you do not get enough? YES

Most of us used to have a "few" before we started out if we thought it was going to be that kind of party. And if drinks were not served fast enough, we would go someplace else to get more. NO

9. Do you tell yourself you can stop drinking any time you want to, even though you keep getting drunk when you don't mean to? YES

Many of us kidded ourselves into thinking that we drank because we wanted to. After we came into AA, we found out that once we started to drink, we couldn't stop. NO

10. Have you missed days of work or school because of drinking? YES

Many of us admit now that we "called in sick" lots of times when the truth was that we were hung-over or on a drunk. NO

11. Do you have "blackouts"? YES

A "blackout" is when we have been drinking hours or days which we cannot remember. When we came to AA, we found out that this is a pretty sure sign of alcoholic drinking. NO

12. Have you ever felt that your life would be better if you did not drink? YES

Many of us started to drink because drinking made life seem better, at least for a while. By the time we got into AA, we felt trapped. We were drinking to live and living to drink. We were sick and tired of being sick and tired. NO

Did you answer YES four or more times? If so, you are probably in trouble with alcohol. We say this because thousands of people in AA have said so for many years. They found out the truth about themselves - the hard way. But again, only you can decide whether you think AA is for you. Try to keep an open mind on the subject. If the answer is YES, we will be glad to show you how we stopped drinking ourselves.

AA does not promise to solve your life's problems. But we can show you how we are learning to live without drinking "one day at a time". And when we got rid of alcohol, we found that life became much more manageable.

<http://www.aa.org.au/new-to-aa/is-aa-for-you.php>

2.0 WHAT IS ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

AA is an informal society of more than 2 million recovering alcoholics throughout the world. In Australia, there are about 18,000 members. They meet in over 1,900 local meetings spread around the country. Meetings range in size from a handful in some localities to a hundred or more in larger communities.

AA is nonprofessional - it doesn't have clinics, doctors, counsellors or psychologists. All members are themselves recovering from alcoholism. There is no central authority controlling how AA groups operate. It is up to the members of each group to decide what they do. However, the AA program of recovery has proved to be so successful that almost every group follows it in very similar ways.

AA is not a religious organisation nor is it affiliated with any religious body. It welcomes members of all religions, as well as agnostics and atheists. You don't have to sign up or achieve anything to be a member. You're a member of a group if you choose to be. You can come and go as you please. No one is in charge of a group. We work through the offer of help and suggestion only. No one can tell you what you should or shouldn't do.

AA works through members telling their stories of what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now. The AA program, known as The Twelve Steps, provides a framework for self-examination and a road to recovery, free of alcohol.

<http://www.aa.org.au/new-to-aa/what-is-aa.php>

2.1 THE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PREAMBLE

The Preamble first appeared in the Grapevine in June 1947, and was written by Tom Y, the Grapevine editor at that time. The aim was to offer a concise definition of AA. Shortly thereafter, the Preamble began appearing in each monthly issue of the Grapevine, and later on in much of our AA Conference-Approved Literature.

Often read at the opening of AA meetings the Preamble is as follows:

“Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”

http://silkworth.net/aa/aa_preamble_origins.pdf

3.0 THE THREE AA LEGACIES

The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous are Recovery, Unity, and Service. These legacies have been passed down to us from the cofounders and old timers of A.A:

1. **RECOVERY** is contained in the Big Book and the Twelve Steps.
2. **UNITY** is contained in the Twelve Traditions.
3. **SERVICE** is contained in every act which helps AA function, every act which carries the AA message to those who need it, and in the Twelve Concepts for World Service

3.1 THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

The relative success of the AA program seems to be due to the fact that an alcoholic who no longer drinks has an exceptional faculty for "reaching" and helping an uncontrolled drinker.

In simplest form, the AA program operates when a recovered alcoholic passes along the story of his or her own problem drinking, describes the sobriety he or she has found in AA, and invites the newcomer to join the informal Fellowship.

The heart of the suggested program of personal recovery is contained in Twelve Steps describing the experience of the earliest members of the Society:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 59-60

3.2 THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

During its first decade, AA as a fellowship accumulated substantial experience which indicated that certain group attitudes and principles were particularly valuable in assuring survival of the informal structure of the Fellowship. In 1946, in the Fellowship's international journal, the AA Grapevine, these principles were committed to writing by the founders and early members as the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. They were accepted and endorsed by the membership as a whole at the International Convention of AA, at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1950.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

While the Twelve Traditions are not specifically binding on any group or groups, an overwhelming majority of members have adopted them as the basis for AA's expanding internal and public relationships.

<http://www.patmoorefoundation.com/aa-traditions>

3.3 THE TWELVE CONCEPTS

The Twelve Concepts for World Service were written by AA's co-founder Bill W, and were adopted by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1962. The Concepts are an interpretation of AA's world service structure as it emerged through AA's early history and experience. The short form of the Concepts reads:

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA - the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives - with a traditional "Right of Decision".
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "Right of Participation", allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government; that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/smf-114_en.pdf

5.0 MAINTAINING SOBRIETY

5.1 HUNGRY, ANGRY, LONELY, TIRED

What is H.A.L.T.? These four words (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired) are often taught to us in recovery from alcoholism. A big part of staying sober is taking care of yourself and being aware of certain signs. When drinking you probably didn't consider certain feelings, continuing to just drink. Using this acronym is an easy way to recognize certain signs and to help you stay sober.

5.11 HUNGRY

When you were drinking you may have felt hunger but you just suppressed that feeling with more drinks. Everyone needs to eat; it's a basic function of survival. But is that the only hunger we deal with? No, we hunger for attention, love and understanding from others. Taking care of yourself emotionally is just as important and giving yourself the attention, love and understanding you need.

Physical hunger can be quite dangerous if not tended to because of excessive alcohol consumption. There may be some questions you want to ask yourself throughout the day to maintain a healthy lifestyle, like when was the last time I ate today? What did I eat? Am I still hungry? Asking these questions and thinking about them can help you get on a routine of staying on track.

5.12 ANGRY

Many people tend to get angry, especially in early recovery with little coping skills at their disposal. Although anger can be used as a healthy emotion, not everyone knows how to handle it in the same way. For instance some say anger is a form of depression and others direct anger at someone or something.

The first step to conquering this shortcoming is to recognize the feeling and take a look at things to see where it is coming from. The next step is to diffuse the anger. There are multiple ways to do that. Ways to dealing with anger can vary from person to person. Some need to get the aggression out on activities such as exercising, punching a pillow and even cleaning can calm some people. Another method for is to start a creative project, something to turn anger into calmness. Others call their sponsor and talk it out with them or their support group to get out all the emotions. This can help figure out where the negative emotions came from, why they came out and to learn how to approach things differently for different results. Anger can be dangerous in recovery and can lead someone to pick up that drink. It is important to find the best way to deal with your feelings of anger.

5.13 LONELY

Loneliness can be a very dark state of mind. Some may feel completely alone while being surrounded by people and that can be very dire to recovery. It can lead to depression, being overwhelmed and having anxiety. The way most alcoholics would handle this in active alcoholism would be to continue to drink.

In recovery there are other options to not feeling lonely. There are ways to unmask this feeling that most alcoholics experience when using. Some people have different opinions to handle this emotion, but the best thing you can do is turn to your sponsor and your support group and to let people know where you are at.

Other options for dealing with being lonely include running errands and even taking a walk to clear your mind which could help you identify this feeling. Going to a 12-step meeting and possibly sharing your feelings with other people or the group are highly suggested. These tactics will all help with getting out in the real world, feeling that you are a part of something important.

5.14 TIRED

Everyone gets tired but to varying extents. Being tired can take a toll on the body, mind and soul and can often lead to depression as well as other dark symptoms. This affects your wellbeing and sometimes people just need a break.

Taking a day off from everything and everyone will help you relax. Also, make sure you are getting the right amount of sleep you need. Sleep is a very essential part of your life. You may be surprised at how taking a break from everything and recharging your body can work wonders. But never ignore the feeling of loneliness or feeling tired. It can lead down a path that could affect your journey in and out of recovery.

5.15 H.A.L.T.

H.A.L.T. can be an important part of your recovery process as well as keeping yourself healthy. Not only can it affect your wellbeing but also your recovery. Staying clean and sober is saving your life and freeing you from the disease of addiction. Make it a daily routine to ask yourself throughout the day; am I hungry, angry, lonely or tired? Don't ignore these feelings and emotions because one bad decision or reaction can be vital to your wellbeing and recovery process. The H.A.L.T. acronym is there to help maintain recovery and life on a daily basis. (Lauria)

<http://www.addiction-recovery.com/HALT-hungry-angry-lonely-tired.php>

5.2 WHAT TO AVOID

	<p>PUBS, BARS & CLUBS</p>		<p>OLD DRINKING ACQUAINTANCES</p>
<p>THE OLD NEIGHBOURHOOD</p>		<p><u>NEGATIVE</u> <u>PEOPLE</u></p>	

5.3 KEEP IT SIMPLE

Bottom line for so many of us is that if we are not sober, we are a mess, and our lives are a wreck. Living in today, focusing on staying sober, and doing whatever it takes to do so for the NOW.

Remember "This too shall pass".

Sometimes saying "Ok, I can do this for the next hour", and continuing to do so as so many of us know that "This too shall pass"...in the meantime find another person in AA, get to meeting, use the phone to call your sponsor or other friends in AA, read your Big Book, use your computer to go online and find support.

Not drinking for a lifetime was never feasible; not drinking for this moment is doable. Do what works. If you feel you have medical issues in detoxing, it is suggested in AA to seek medical attention, with your doctor, or a hospital if urgent care is needed.

5.4 CULTIVATING SOBRIETY

1. Remember the Physical Allergy. Alcohol activates it! Don't pick up the first drink.
2. Get honest with yourself.
3. Get an AA Home Group.
4. Get an AA Sponsor.
5. Attend regular meetings.
6. Start the day with an AA reading (i.e. Daily Reflections, Just for Today).
7. Don't drink...One day at a time.
8. Keep it simple!
9. Easy does it...But do it!

10. Nickel therapy – Contact other members from the fellowship daily.
11. On awakening, surrender and put yourself in your Higher Power's hands, asking for another day's sobriety.
12. If agitated, pause and ask for guidance and direction; relax and take it easy.
13. Retire at night and thank your Higher Power for helping you to remain sober throughout the day.
14. Study and work the 12 Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

5.5 ATTENDING SOCIAL OCCASSIONS

5.51 Social Functions In Recovery

One of the most difficult challenges for people in early recovery can be attending social occasions. It is particularly hard if this is an event where alcohol is going to be available. There may be almost overwhelming temptation at such gatherings if people are not strong enough. It can feel incredibly uncomfortable to remain sober while everyone else seems to be getting intoxicated. You may find yourself overcome with cravings and feel on the verge of relapse.

5.52 The Need To Avoid Social Functions In Early Recovery

It is recommended that people in early recovery try to avoid events where there is going to be people drinking. This is because the individual will be far more vulnerable to relapse during the early months of sobriety. It just makes practical sense to avoid anything that could make things more difficult. If people are in a situation where attendance is important then they need to prepare adequately for the event. It is likely to be a real challenge, and if people are not ready for it they could be in danger.

5.53 Legitimate Reasons For Going To Bars And Clubs

There are recovering alcoholics who will never go to a bar or club no matter what the justification. This means that they never have to worry about succumbing to temptation while in these establishments. This decision to outlaw drinking establishments completely may work well for some, but for many people it will not be a practical solution. Most sober individuals will go to these places if they have a legitimate reason to be there, such as:

- They have a business lunch
- There is an important social event taking place at one of these venues
- There is a restaurant there where friends or family would like to eat

There are other excuses for visiting a drinking establishment that would **NOT** be considered legitimate, including:

- A desire to watch people getting drunk – getting intoxicated vicariously
- Going to a bar because the individual misses the atmosphere
- Wanting to spend time with old drinking buddies
- Going to a drinking establishment out of boredom or loneliness

5.54 How To Survive A Social Occasion In Recovery

There are some social functions that will be difficult to avoid. This can include family weddings and social obligations related to work. If people are faced with a situation where they have no real choice but to attend a function then there will be things they can do to make the situation less of a challenge, such as:

- **Bring along another sober friend.** Ideally this should be somebody who is firmly established in their own recovery; otherwise both people could be putting their recovery at risk. Those who belong to AA may be lucky enough to have a sponsor who will be willing to accompany them.
- **Leave the event early.** It will be near the end of the event when people tend to be intoxicated. This is when the most serious drinking takes place. It is best to leave the party before people have reached this stage of inebriation. It tends to be a joyless experience for sober people anyway.

- **Practice saying no to alcohol.** This might sound like an unnecessary preparation, but it really can make a difference. There will always be people who seem to take it as a personal insult if everyone else is not drinking alcohol – this will often be somebody with their own drinking demons. They can be annoying and persistent, and it can take a bit of practice to be able to fend these people off. It is best to be prepared for them and role playing can be good for this. By practicing saying no it will be easier to do this at the actual event.
- **Have a reason for not drinking.** You may not want to tell everyone your life story. It can therefore be helpful if you have a reason for not drinking. You do not have to lie, but there is also no obligation that you divulge personal information. Such questioning can be put to rest with a simple, “I do not drink”.
- **Bring along some recovery material.** This does not mean that you have to walk around the party holding onto the AA Big Book like it was a life raft. We now live in an age of some wonderful technology that is ideal for using at social occasions. If you have a smart phone, you will be able to use one of the many recovery applications. If you have an MP3 player you might want to listen to some inspirational talks if you are feeling vulnerable during the party.
- Those who belong to a fellowship may want to **go to a meeting right before the event.** This will give them the chance to voice any concerns and build their strength. It can also be a good idea to arrange to go to a meeting right after the event. This is particularly important if people are feeling a bit shaky afterwards.
- **Be aware of other people who are not drinking.** It is only when people stop drinking that they become aware of all the other sober individuals who attend these social functions. These are often people who never had a drink problem; they just do not like being intoxicated. It can be inspiring to see these people have a good time without the need of alcohol.

5.55 Relapse Prevention At Social Occasions

Attending a social occasion is a risk and for some people it will prove to be too much. Those who feel that they are in danger should:

- Leave the event immediately.
- Those people who have a sponsor should ring this person right away.
- Explain the situation to trusted friends or better still other people in recovery.
- There are a number of different alcoholic helplines that people can contact if they feel on the verge of relapse. There are also online recovery forums where they will find advice and support at any time of the day or night.
- Members of AA are advised to go to a meeting and share their concerns.
- Those individuals who are attending therapy sessions may want to schedule an appointment as soon as possible.
- People who have just left rehab will usually have a counsellor whom they can contact for advice.
- Reading addiction recovery material can help people refocus.
- Those who have been maintaining a recovery journal should go back and read this. It will remind them of how much they have achieved and how much they have to lose.
- The most important thing is not to pick up a drink no matter what.

Remember, **SOBRIETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.** It's not selfish to leave and potentially offend people.

IT'S SELF PRESERVATION! (Attending Social Occasions in Recovery)

<http://alcoholrehab.com/addiction-recovery/attending-social-occasions-in-recovery/>

6.0 PROGRAM OF RECOVERY

6.1 THE TWELVE STEPS

AA's Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Foreword

The fellowship (meetings and interaction with other AA members) is "a group of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other", and the Program (the Steps) is "a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole". Understanding this then, it is very incorrect to be at a meeting and say "I've been in the program for six months but it doesn't seem to be working for me". If you haven't gotten into working all of the Steps with a sponsor (no matter how long you've been dry), you are ONLY in the FELLOWSHIP, not the PROGRAM.

<http://www.barefootsworld.net/aaworkstepsintro.html>

Unless each AA member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Tradition Nine, Page 174

Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA group.

Pamphlet 35, Problems Other Than Alcohol

6.2 SPONSORSHIP

6.21 WHAT IS SPONSORSHIP?

Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W, only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: "You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!"

He found Dr Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need AA was born. The word "sponsor" was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.

What does AA mean by sponsorship? To join some organisations, you must have a sponsor - a person who vouches for you, presents you as being suitable for membership. This is definitely not the case with AA. Anyone who has a desire to stop drinking is welcome to join us!

In AA, sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr Bob did. Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through AA

When we first begin to attend AA meetings, we may feel confused and sick and apprehensive. Although people at meetings respond to our questions willingly, that alone isn't enough. Many other questions occur to us between meetings; we find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to "live sober."

So we select an AA member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and confidentially, and we ask that person to be our sponsor.

Whether you are a newcomer who is hesitant about "bothering" anyone, or a member who has been around for some time trying to go it alone, sponsorship is yours for the asking. We urge you: Do not delay. Alcoholics recovered in AA want to share what they have learned with other alcoholics. We know from experience that our own sobriety is greatly strengthened when we give it away!

Sponsorship can also mean the responsibility the group as a whole has for helping the newcomer. Today, more and more alcoholics arriving at their first AA meeting have had no prior contact with AA. They have not telephoned a local AA intergroup or central office; no member has made a "Twelfth Step Call" on them. So, especially for such newcomers, groups are recognizing the need to provide some form of sponsorship help. In many successful groups, sponsorship is one of the most important planned activities of the members.

Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal, but it is a basic part of the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism through the Twelve Steps.

6.22 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How Does Sponsorship Differ From Twelfth Step Calls?

A Twelfth Step Call - visiting an alcoholic who has asked for help and talking about the AA program with him or her - may become the beginning of sponsorship, but by itself it is not necessarily sponsorship.

Sponsorship, with its continuing interest in another alcoholic, often develops when the prospect is willing to be helped, admits having a drinking problem, and decides to seek sobriety as a solution.

Sponsorship is Twelfth Step Work, but it is also continuing responsibility for helping a newcomer adjust to a way of life without alcohol.

How Does Sponsorship Help The Newcomer?

It assures the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation fully and cares — one person to turn to without embarrassment when doubts, questions, or problems linked to alcoholism arise. Sponsorship gives the newcomer an understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most. Sponsorship also provides the bridge enabling the new person to meet other alcoholics — in a home group and in other groups visited.

How Should A Sponsor Be Chosen?

The process of matching newcomer and sponsor is as informal as everything else in AA. Often, the new person simply approaches a more experienced member who seems compatible, and asks that member to be a sponsor. Most AAs are happy and grateful to receive such a request.

An old AA saying suggests, Stick with the winners. It's only reasonable to seek a sharing of experience with a member who seems to be using the AA program successfully in everyday life. There are no specific rules, but a good sponsor probably should be a year or more away from the last drink - and should seem to be enjoying sobriety.

Should Sponsor And Newcomer Be As Much Alike As Possible?

Often, a newcomer feels most at ease with a sponsor of similar background and interests. However, many AAs say they were greatly helped by sponsors totally unlike themselves. Maybe that's because their attention was then focused on the most important things that any sponsor and newcomer have in common: alcoholism and recovery in AA.

AA experience does suggest that it is best for men to sponsor men, women to sponsor women. This custom usually promotes quick understanding and reduces the likelihood of emotional distractions that might take the newcomer's mind off the purpose of AA.

What Should A Newcomer Expect From A Sponsor?

An AA sponsor does not provide any such services as those offered by a social worker, doctor, nurse, or marriage counsellor. A sponsor is simply a sober alcoholic who helps the newcomer solve one problem: how to stay sober!

And it is not professional training that enables a sponsor to give help. It is just personal experience and observation. A sponsor was once a newcomer too, and has tried to use the AA program to deal with problems similar to those the newcomer is facing now.

Must The Newcomer Agree With Everything The Sponsor Says?

No. If the sponsor's ideas sound strange or unclear, the newcomer had better speak up and ask questions. There is supposed to be an easy, open relationship, in which both parties talk freely and honestly with each other.

The AA program is simple, but it didn't seem that way to many of us at first. Often, we learned by asking questions, at closed meetings or – most especially - in conversations with our sponsors.

What If The Sponsor Is Unavailable When Needed?

It is the whole AA program - not the individual's sponsor - that maintains the newcomer's sobriety. Sponsorship is just the best way we know of introducing a newcomer to the program and helping them continue in AA.

So we have many recourses when we are unable to contact our sponsors. We can telephone other members; go to an AA meeting; phone or visit the nearest AA office or clubroom for sober alcoholics; read AA books or pamphlets or our magazine, the AA Grapevine, to find answers for almost any problem troubling us at the moment.

May A Newcomer Have More Than One Sponsor?

Many feel it is best for a newcomer to have only one sponsor. Choosing one sponsor helps to avoid the precarious practice of a newcomer going from sponsor to sponsor seeking the advice he or she wants to hear.

May A Newcomer Change Sponsors?

We are always free to select another sponsor with whom we feel more comfortable, particularly if we believe this member will be more helpful to our growth in AA

If A Newcomer Has Received A Thorough Course Of Treatment And Indoctrination In An Alcoholism Program Outside AA, Will A Sponsor Still Be Needed In AA? Is A Special Approach Needed?

The alcoholism programs of government, industry, and other agencies are referring more and more alcoholics to AA. These newcomers usually reach us in a physically dry condition, at a somewhat later stage in recovery than the shaking newcomer of the past. Detoxification is often weeks and even months in the past and the physical compulsion to drink is gone. But the mental obsession with alcohol may still be there and, as AA groups that have welcomed such newcomers generally believe, sponsorship is necessary as soon as possible to help overcome that obsession.

This newcomer may have learned many medical facts about the disease of alcoholism. But learning about alcoholism in an institutional setting is one thing, and functioning as a sober alcoholic in a drinking world is quite another, we find. The sponsor is ready to share experience in how to cope with this situation. The sponsor's personal experience can enable the newcomer to find guidance in applying AA principles to everyday life - just as any other newcomer does who arrives at AA's doors for help.

Learning about the AA program, is not the same as Living it. Chances are the newcomer has already learned some facts about alcoholism – but has had no experience in using AA as a continuing program of sobriety maintenance. Again the sponsor's personal experience can enable the newcomer to find guidance in applying AA principles to everyday life – just as any other newcomer does who arrives at AA's doors for help.

Is It Ever Too Late To Get A Sponsor?

No. An AA who has been in - or "around" the Fellowship for many years often finds that getting a good sponsor, talking frankly, and listening can make the whole program open up as it never did before. Most AAs feel that sponsorship is a vital part of their ongoing growth and progress in recovery, including persons who have long term sobriety.

Sponsorship can be the answer for the person who has been able to achieve only interludes of sobriety or has attended meetings casually and has not really taken the First Step. For such a person, a sponsor with a firm grounding of sobriety in AA can make all the difference.

Even if we have many dry years behind us, we can often benefit by asking an AA friend to be our sponsor. We may have been feeling discontentment or real emotional pain because we forgot that the AA program offers a whole new way of life, not just freedom from alcohol. With a sponsor's help, we can use the program to the full, change our attitudes and, in the process, come to enjoy our sobriety.

<http://www.ccaa.org.au/Q&A%20on%20Sponsorship.pdf>

6.3 AA HOME GROUP

In a recent letter to a member of the Fellowship, a member of the General Service Office staff referred to the home group as the heartbeat of AA. That made a big impression on me, and I believe that just as surely as we are aware of, sensitive to, and in need of our own heartbeat, each of us needs a home group.

It all began in the home group, didn't it? Not all of us readily identified that mysterious group of people who were trying to help us get sober as our home group. In fact, I am painfully aware that the commitment to become part of anything escapes many in the early stages of recovery.

Most members of the Fellowship will never have the rewarding experience of attending a General Service Conference. Only a few are even touched by our area assemblies, state and national conventions, and other functions which bring members together from many home groups.

Even the district functions might be attended by only a small portion of the membership of the groups involved. To many, their only AA is the home group. If this is so, what should the home group be to the member, and why should a member have a home group?

When we took those first faltering steps to recovery, many of us would have stumbled and fallen once again if we had to make what was to be a miraculous change by ourselves. In my case, the first rays of hope came from those sometimes loving, sometimes cantankerous old geezers who sat around the table in my hometown. A long time before I believed, or even heard, what they told me, I began thinking there might be a chance simply because I thought if they could do it, so could I.

The first slogans I heard came from them. Later, when I heard the same things from speakers at a convention, I thought it was so wise; but it was months before I realized that I first heard those thoughts from the fat little guy who I thought was so windy and who eventually became my sponsor. In fact, after I got into service work, I thought I needed to go to conventions, assemblies, and Forums to get my batteries recharged because things were so dull and routine in my home group.

Now I know that it's not the wonderful people I've met from throughout these great lands who have helped keep me sober most of the time, but those wonderful people sitting around the table in my hometown who loved me when I could not love, who waited for me to quit lying, who tolerated me when I would be a part of nothing, and who never asked me to leave when I was obnoxious. Because of their love and patience, I was able finally to get outside of myself and make some sort of commitment to the group.

It seems to me that, in the beginning, a home group is all most of us can possibly handle. It's where we first find a sponsor, where someone first sees that we get a Big Book, where we first see the Steps on the wall, where we learn again to pray, and where we first begin to recover (Remember the heartbeat?). But most of all, because of the trust that develops through the meetings of a home group, it is where we might first begin to care about someone else so that we might eventually begin to love again, both in AA and among our friends and family.

It is where we first learn to take responsibility so that we might eventually take responsibility for our lives. In my case, that began with the simple chore of clearing out ashtrays (How wise that they knew I could do no more!). It was there we learned to do Twelfth Step work so that we could eventually pass on to others what was so freely given to us, thereby assuring the very future and survival of the Fellowship. It was there that someone began answering the questions about all the mysteries of what makes the whole thing work.

Oh yes, the home group is the heartbeat of the Fellowship. There are many reasons why the groups need each and every member running through their life veins. But most important, we need our home groups. That's where it all began, and it's where it will all end for us. Yes, all of us have also had the job of burying some of those people who passed the recovery program on to each of us.

This phase of my service to the Fellowship as Conference delegate begins to wind down. What will I do now? If I am very, very lucky, those who are doing such a marvellous job of serving the Fellowship in my home group might, just might, allow me to make coffee next week and maybe even talk to a drunk.

<http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie/download/1/newsheet/October%20-%20November%202013.pdf>

6.4 THE DRILL

6.41 AA MEETINGS

Going to an AA meeting is simple. You find out where and when there is a meeting convenient for you (<http://www.aatimes.org>) and you just turn up. That's it. There's no signing in, no money to pay, no appointment to make. There are no intrusive questions, no obligations. Your privacy and anonymity will be respected. You'll never be met with a demand to come back to any meeting or indeed to AA. You can go to different meetings as often or as little as you wish.

Many of us had no idea what to expect of our first meeting. For some of us the idea was quite scary, so we were greatly relieved to find that our fears were groundless. AA meetings are relaxed, friendly and open.

By far the most common type of AA meeting is called an ID meeting. Members just tell their stories of what they were like, what happened and what life is like for them now. There are also Steps meetings where AA's 12 Step program of recovery is discussed in detail. There are also various other types of discussion and book study meetings.

Most AA meetings are open. That is, anyone is welcome to attend. Closed meetings are for AA members or people who are new to AA who want to stop drinking.

Meetings will consist of members telling their stories (sharing), but if anyone isn't in the mood to talk, it's fine to decline. You may be invited to speak but it's quite okay if you don't want to.

Try to show up early to the meeting and leave late. This allows you to talk to the other people attending, and ask questions or simply listen to those who are sharing as the meeting sets up.

www.aa.org.au

6.42 NICKEL THERAPY

Ask those in your first meeting for phone numbers. They are a good insurance plan in the event the cravings to drink kick in, gather phone numbers at each meeting you attend if possible. When the cravings set in early in sobriety, it is suggested we pick up the phone!! It is very hard sometimes to reach out and call those in AA and say "I'm having a hard time, and want to drink" we know this, because we too have been where you are!!! It is okay to feel that way, just take action. AA works, when we work it, and the person you call may need the call as much as you do making it!!

<http://www.cyberrecovery.net/suggestionsfornewcomers.html>

7.0 NINTH STEP PROMISES

The clutches of alcoholic addiction are a terrible thing, 'the great dissolver' (of marriages, homes, families, lives, finance and health) as it is known in the fellowship.

Through taking on the suggested program of recovery – getting a home group, attending regular meetings and getting a sponsor - you are promised the following 12 things, though remember, you cannot expect to understand how it will feel right now, because as the 1st promise says, it will be 'new' to you

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous repeatedly states that if you take certain actions you will get certain results. We often refer to these results as the "9TH Step Promises":

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.

1. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.
4. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
5. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
6. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
7. Self-seeking will slip away.
8. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
9. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
10. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
11. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.
12. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 83-84