

INCLUDE THE FAMILY

It is said that the average practicing alcoholic affects the lives of at least five other people and that alcoholism is a family illness. It is important to involve your family in your recovery.

Here are some ways to share your recovery:

OPEN A.A. MEETINGS: Take your spouse or significant other, family members or close friends to hear A.A. speakers. All meetings in San Francisco and Marin County are open meetings unless designated in the directory as closed (CL).

SOCIAL EVENTS: Special social events like anniversary parties, picnics, and dances are regularly hosted by A.A. groups for A.A. members and their families.

A.A. CONFERENCES: Weekend conferences at resorts and hotels are held throughout the year and offer activities for A.A. members and their families. Often Al-Anon and Alateen meetings are held at the same time, however both these organizations are separate from A.A..

TRAVELING

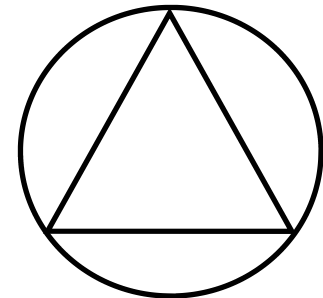
Alcoholics Anonymous is well established in almost every town and city in the United States and there are meetings throughout most of the world. You can find the local number for Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book or through directory assistance. U.S., Canadian, and International Directories are available at Central Office or on the literature table at many meetings.

WHAT A.A. DOES:
Helps sober alcoholics stay sober

WHAT A.A. DOES NOT DO:
Furnish initial motivation
Solicit members
Charge dues or fees
Operate clinics or drying-out facilities
Operate clubs
Provide housing, meals or transportation
Lend money
Keep membership records
Follow-up on errant members
Control its members
Hold classes
Practice medicine, psychiatry or nursing
Offer religious services
Offer professional counseling
Accept money from non-members
Do research
Join councils of social agencies

Individual members may be involved in some of these activities on a personal basis, but not as part of their membership in A.A.

FOR BEGINNERS



Intercounty Fellowship of
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Central Office
1821 Sacramento Street
San Francisco CA 94109
(415) 674-1821

Meeting list on-line:
www.aasf.org

GETTING STARTED IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

TRY OUR WAY

Have you decided that you are powerless over alcohol and that life has become unmanageable? Are you willing to go to any lengths to stay sober? If your answer to both of these questions is "yes," then you are ready for A.A. and we will be glad to help you.

We have a way of not drinking one day at a time that has worked for countless thousands. It can work for you. Our way may not be what you expect or want, but it works. Obviously, your way didn't work or you wouldn't be seeking help. If you are willing to make a decision to give our way a try, here are some things you need to know to get started.

DON'T TAKE THE FIRST DRINK

Which drink is it that usually makes you lose control? Is it the third, the eleventh, or the seventeenth? If only we knew how to stop just before that one!!

The first drink starts a process of craving that we are unable to stop. It is a cold hard fact that if you don't take the first drink then you can't possibly get drunk—100% guaranteed. The process doesn't get started. The first drink is the deadly one because it leads to all of the others.

LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

It is unimportant how we will handle the next office party or Jane's wedding next month. The only thing that really matters is staying sober right now. We are not cured of alcoholism; what we have is a daily reprieve.

We try to break life into small manageable pieces. We avoid the first drink one day at a time, and if necessary, one hour at a time. We turn our worries and fears over to a power that is greater than ourselves, whatever our understanding of that power may be.

We ask for help from other A.A. members, our sponsors, and that Higher Power. We learn to depend on them for our recovery.

GO TO MEETINGS

There are A.A. meetings at most times of the day. Get a directory of meetings in your area. They are available on the literature table at nearly all meetings. If not, ask someone where to get one.

Take in as many meetings as you possibly can. Shop around for the meetings that you like best. If at first you dislike meetings, then think of them as the bitter medicine you would gladly take to cure a deadly disease.

PHONE OTHERS

Most A.A. members are glad to give you their phone numbers so that you can stay in touch with them. We find that regular contact with newer members is a great way to aid our own sobriety. Some groups also maintain phone lists of those members who welcome calls. If your group does this, ask the secretary for a copy.

We also know that if you make a practice of calling people on a regular basis, in times of emergency you won't hesitate to call them to ask for help, especially if your sponsor is unavailable.

READ THE BOOKS

The only authority on the A.A. program is the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," also called The Big Book. The first 164 pages describes alcoholism and our program of recovery. Some of us didn't like the style of writing but it is typical of when the book was first published. Don't let this stand in the way of your recovery. The latter portion of the book contains personal stories, many of which reflect the current era.

The book "Living Sober" gives many practical suggestions for avoiding the first drink and managing our lives when we are newly sober.

There are many other A.A. books that will be of interest and help including: "12 Steps and 12 Traditions," "Came to Believe," and "Daily Reflections," just to name a few.

GET A SPONSOR

Our experience tells us that you have a much better chance with a sponsor than without one. There's an old saying in A.A.—"A person who sponsors himself has a fool for a sponsor." Working with another A.A. member brings objectivity to your recovery.

Ask a few people how they got their sponsors or read the pamphlet, "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship." Listen to speakers at meetings for possible sponsors. Most A.A. members will be pleased to be asked, though not all are ready to be sponsors.

Your sponsor will help you understand the 12 steps of the A.A. program, listen to you, give you suggestions, tell you what works for them, point out trouble spots and help you decide what to do about them. In other words, your sponsor helps you to understand the A.A. program and guides you along the path to recovery.

HAVE A HOME GROUP

When some of us were introduced to A.A. through a particular group, we thought we had been assigned to that group and should not go to other meetings. Nothing could be further from the truth. Feel free to visit many groups, but sooner or later you should settle down to a regular meeting that you want to consider your "home group."

However, having a home group should not keep you from going to other meetings. Attend as many meetings as you like, and then some more.

There are many different types of groups available. The home group you choose should be one in which you can get sober, stay sober, and feel that you belong.

Your home group ought to be the place where you are challenged to keep growing and where you feel you have so many friends you can't afford to stay away.