



Sobriety in Stumptown

www.pdxaa.org
www.pdxaa.org

Portland Area Intergroup
825 NE 20th Ave,
Portland, OR
503-223-8569

March 2017
Volume 10, No. 3

March Stories and Art

Step Three and Tradition Three

by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Third Step and Third Tradition, and a section for art, inspired by the Big Book and the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Step Three

by George D. from Portland, OR

Starting life over again is never easy. Even worse is thinking you can do it on your own.

In the depth of my alcoholism, I could barely call living a life. I knew my only real hope was in a god of my own understanding. That Sunday morning, I stood in front of a cross and admitted utter defeat at just how powerless I really was.

Gary T, who is now my sponsor, led me step-by-step through the steps. Our goal was to equip me for the opportunity to "carry the message to other alcoholics who still suffer." I don't do well at voice, but through word—pen and paper—I try my best.

Dr. Bob and Bill W. brought us hope through voice, The Big Book, and their experience. If there were any step greater than the other, this writer would rank Step 3 as one of great importance. Step 3 made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

This very personal action avails us to a life of change. Our hope is to be "of maximum usefulness to others." On page 63 of The Big Book, you will find a prayer that reads:

"God, I offer myself to thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May I do

Thy will always!”

Step Three

by Mike B. from Portland, OR

I would say that speaking for myself, G.O.D. stands for Group Of Drunks, and somewhat unknowingly that's how I approached step three. When I hit my bottom, I embraced AA, and came to meetings daily, if not a couple in a day. All the wisdom and knowledge I've gained about my condition and how to deal with it came from immersing myself in the program. Granted, I was in an out-patient treatment at the beginning, and I can say that I learned a lot about the nuts and bolts of "the disease" and statistics and such. But the best thing I learned from that treatment program was to get my butt over to AA and start working the steps. Real quickly I'll just say that the Catholic Church really soured me on religion, because the kind of god they pushed was the big, invisible daddy in the sky who saw everything you did, and wanted you punished for every naughty thought. Too many BS rules and can you believe that every baby is born with a sin on his soul already?!?!

Anyway, that's the kind of "god" that made me a drunk, and the GOD that I found in AA is what got me sober. A GOD that loves me and shows me the way to redemption through self-discovery, and working with others of my kind. This is where I learned the difference between religion, and spirituality. The one is just a form of social control, and the other is something that can really change your life and open your eyes to all the beauty of the universe.

Step Three

by Luke F. from Portland, OR

Step 3 at 45 Years of Sobriety:

I think that the biggest non-issue in AA is the way we perceive introducing the subject of “God” or “Power greater than myself” to a new person just beginning their journey. For those who stay in the AA Program, one way or another, the issue becomes resolved.

Let's look at it from several angles. First, AA itself is rooted in fundamental Christianity. Don't think so? The Lord's Prayer is not something available to other faiths and both Bill and Bob shared their spiritual beliefs to new folk entering the program. Secondly, Bill Wilson incorporated some metaphysical beliefs in our book due to his personal friendships with Emmet Fox and Joel Goldsmith. To this day, according to New York General Services record-keeping, some of the most successful groups are ones who practice encouraging or often PUSHING religiosity on its members. On the TV show PENN AND TELLER they were able to garner information from General Services in regard to membership etc. but pointed out that the information was closely guarded.

No one pays much attention to GSO Reports on a group level but over the years, surveys have been passed out and I have seen them but not very often, and they give a cross-section of information regarding membership and the behavior vis a vis success with sobriety and relapse.

AA still has high praise for its successes but don't feel too proud because our success is still dismal in comparison to the problem itself. What does ring true is this: AA is a spiritual based program and that definition is as elusive as its members' ability to define their personal concept of God. We have atheists who wander the halls of AA proclaiming no belief in God, but say yes to a belief in a benevolent force which seems to run their lives. It often makes little sense to an outsider—or for that matter a potential member who simply can't accept the paradoxical absurdities. AA's trying to explain God is something like a Hooker trying to explain celibacy.

Another way to see Step Three is to realize that the process of “turning over to a Higher Power” is the very essence of ongoing sobriety. That task is troublesome and daunting for most of us and the ability to “drift” from the idea requires constant vigilance. So, one way to look at it is that sorting through that morass is one reason meeting attendance is so necessary. It's not something which can be done once and then forgotten. This relationship, and lack of same, is a major cause of relapse, following only resentment as a primary source of trouble.

Also, the ability to reach someone you are sponsoring who has dug in his heels; he simply won't or can't accept a power outside his tiny world. This takes prayer, sometime, to ask God for the necessary skill to reach someone who often wants to believe but can't find a solution.

I once sponsored a brilliant man, who was also a scientist, and who, like Carl Sagan could not accept a deity. One night, when we were walking into a meeting, I pointed out the stars in the sky and asked him: “Do you think there is an order to it all? Some power that keeps things working in a way that makes it possible for beings like us to survive?” He smiled and nodded. “That's not the same as calling it God,” he assured. Now it was my turn to chuckle. “That's all you need, then.” I told him. “Names aren't as important as beliefs.” That was his beginning. We all start somewhere.

AA has led me to a whole new spiritual belief system which, like Buddhism, is not a Religion per se. I told my teacher a few years ago that I would never have had the ability to understand or think I needed my current path without 39 years in AA at the time. I used to micro-manage my life. The appropriate response for a guy like me is to ask this power I believe in to take over the micro-management for me. I'm amazed at how well its' been working...

Tradition Three

by Riley S, Portland, OR

In one meeting I go to an old timer says that he prefers, what he claims was the original version: an honest desire to stop drinking, as the only requirement for membership. Whether it be honest or not, the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. For the most part the honest piece seems to weed people out on their own accord. If someone comes into Alcoholics Anonymous without an honest desire to stop drinking, he usually escorts himself back to drinking with or without anyone else's help. That said, it is meant to be inclusionary; I think it's the 12 x 12 that states, “You're a member if you say you are.”

In my own recovery, this tradition has had a few implications. For one, I've learned that we can't kick anyone out of AA. I've faced this several times working at the Alano Club. We had to, and

had the right to, kick several people out of the club. “You can’t kick anyone out of AA though!” people said. Yeah well, the Alano Club isn’t AA, and we can in fact ban people for being violent, bathing in the bathroom sinks, berating employees, or other such occurrences. I’ve also seen people escorted out of meetings. That can be quite important if someone is threatening people or making such a nuisance that it sabotages the whole meeting. But that has nothing to do with kicking people out of AA.

Over the past six months while going to less and less meetings due to my grad school schedule, my alcoholism worked on me, saying, “Well your bottom wasn’t bad enough, or why don’t you go out and see what your drinking is really like.” It caused a lot of anxiety regarding my status as an alcoholic—I felt like a fraud of sorts; but it was just a lie I was telling myself. During the two years I’ve been in AA, not a single person has said my story doesn’t qualify me for AA. In truth, plenty of people have said that I’m an alcoholic and have earned my seat; however, if one of those people had reinforced what my head was telling me—that I didn’t belong—it could have been dangerous. That’s why I’m grateful for tradition three; it’s given me a chance to sort things out without any pressure of expulsion.

Step Three

by Kristen D. from Portland, OR

Self-will run riot was the only way I knew how to live, and letting go and letting God was not in my vocabulary. I spent all my time in bars, jails and hospitals and thought I had life all figured out. My perception was distorted, I spent most of my days blacked-out drunk, but I thought I was winning at life. Wrong! The truth was my disease was directing me like a puppet on a string and my life was out of control and completely unmanageable. My twisted thinking kept my disease alive; it would whisper in my ear that if I talked about my drinking out loud it would become real, and real problems require solutions. The fear of giving up control was overwhelming and I couldn’t even consider living my life without alcohol. Fear was the catalyst that would push me through the next 15 years of destruction; fighting the losing battle, desperately trying to moderate my alcohol consumption. The insanity of picking up the first drink would always end in chaos and consequences. I found myself walking out of an emergency room from alcohol poisoning for the last time and through the doors of my first 12-step meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. After several months of going to meetings I began listening and identifying with what people were saying. Finally, I began to accept how powerful my disease was, and that my relationship with alcohol shaped a spiritual malady in my life. After working steps one and two with a sponsor I was ready to face my biggest fear; accepting that I lost the battle with alcohol and giving up control. I was willing to embrace step three, by turning my will and my life over to the care of God I understood him, but how?

I was taught that ego can be incredibly powerful. My sponsor always used to say “starve the ego and feed the soul” and this is how I learned about humility. I lived 15 years like a roaring tornado, smashing through life without a care in the world – full of pride, resentment and self-centeredness. Turning my life over to my higher power and being of service to others was a foreign concept to me. Nonetheless, getting rigorously honest and working step three with my sponsor, allowed me to open my mind and add a spiritual practice to my life. The willingness to

practice this step ultimately changed the direction of my life. All I had to do was listen to a few simple suggestions and take action. Each morning I wrote a short letter to my higher power to strengthen my connection, followed by prayer and meditation. I learned how to rely on my higher power instead of relying on alcohol. Eventually, the basics of this step organically molded into my daily reprieve -- and it provided the solid center in my life that allowed me to be a useful instrument of service to others which brought peace into my life.

A wise woman once taught me that things can change in an instant. One moment the sun could be shining on my face and the birds could be singing to me, the next moment I could be in the middle of a dark storm that we sometimes face in life. The only thing that could be between me and that first drink is my higher power. Therefore, I should always do my best to keep in spiritual fit condition. She always reminded me that storms in life are temporary but most importantly, out of my control. Today, I practice turning my life over to my higher power on a daily basis and work the steps to the best of my ability. I don't do it perfectly but as long as I continue practice and remain teachable, the 24-hours ahead are often filled with peace and serenity, for that I am truly grateful.

Art

by Kari F, Portland, OR



Monthly Business Meetings

For details about monthly business meetings, contact the PAI Office at 503-223-8569. Or send your questions or concerns to: 1212@pdxaa.org

Portland Area Intergroup (PAI): Business Meeting, 2nd Monday of every month, 7:00 PM, 4524 SE Stark St. (Unity of Portland), Portland.

Portland Deaf Access Committee: Monthly, 2nd Sunday of every month, 6:30, The Alano Club, NW 24th & Kearney.

Dist 9: 1st Wed, 6:30 PM, 24th and Kearney, Portland

Dist 10: Last Mon, 7:00 PM, 12945 Beaverdam Rd., West Side Service Cntr, Beaverton

Dist 11: Last Thu, 7:00 PM, "URS" Club, Portland

Dist 12: 1st Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland

Dist 15: 1st Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6th St., Oregon City

Dist 18: 1st Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6th St., St. Helens

Dist 23: 1st Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn

Dist 24: 1st Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland

Dist 25: 4th Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR

Dist 26: 2nd Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42nd Ave., Portland

Dist 27: 1st Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie

Dist 31: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro

Dist 34: 3rd Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone

Dist 35: 2nd & 4th Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton

Dist 36: 2nd Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland

Dist 37: 2nd Tue, 6:30 PM, 29775 SW Town Center Loop East, Wilsonville

Committee News

We have several committee positions available. Portland Area Intergroup needs your help. Working on a committee is excellent 12th Step service work. If you are interested in being on any Portland Area Intergroup committee, send an email to pdxaa.org with "COMMITTEE INTEREST" in the subject field. Or, just click on **Service** on the Intergroup website. **Intergroup committees carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.** Please help yourself and others. Sign up. Thank you.

Bridging the Gap (BTG): Provides a one-time temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to AA meetings. BTG meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Portland Intergroup Office basement, located at 825 NE 20th Ave, Suite 200, Portland. "We Bridge the Gap so alcoholics leaving treatment don't have to walk alone across that scary gap between the beginning of recovery in treatment and the continued recovery in AA." Please contact the PAI office via phone, 503-223-8569, or email 1212@pdxaa.org, if you are interested.

AA Hotline: The AA Hotline keeps the Portland phone number for AA active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The way this is accomplished is by volunteer support. Calls to the AA number placed after Central Office hours and redirected to volunteers' phones, keeping the volunteer's number anonymous. A volunteer can elect to go on a 12th Step call or just provide the information the caller needs about meetings. Commitments are generally two times a month.

In particular, if you're a night-owl, we'd really appreciate your help. Call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

Newsletter (*Sobriety in Stumptown*): The committee for the very publication you are now reading is looking for members. Send an email of interest to: newsletter@pdxaa.org

Events: The Events Committee needs committee members. Send an email to Events@pdxaa.org for more information.

Get Published!

If you have AA news, a meeting change, a big event, a story, a painting, a poem, or just a rant, Sobriety in Stumptown wants to hear it! Send articles of 1000 words or fewer to:

newsletter@pdxaa.org

Deadline for the April issue: April 1st.

Step Three

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

Tradition Three

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

Serenity Prayer

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

-Reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.