



Sobriety in Stumptown

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Portland Area Intergroup
825 NE 20th Ave,
Portland, OR
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April Stories and Art

Step Four and Tradition Four

by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Fourth Step and Fourth Tradition, as well as the first part in a three part series on relapse, and a section for art, inspired by the Big Book and the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Step Four

by Terry M. from Portland, OR

My first experience with this step was about writing everything down that I had a resentment over, and to face what was real in my life and what was a delusional. I was told that I needed to be honest, as well as fearless and thorough. Big words with no meaning to me so I had to look them up in the dictionary. What did that all mean? Fearless meant, "not afraid." Thorough meant, "carried through completion, complete in all respects, detailed." I was not afraid to write all this out, because I thought my sponsor would not want to sponsor me if she knew who I really was; she reassured me and said she would love me until I could love myself. I wrote everything out, and was not judged or kicked out of AA for all the things I had done.

As time goes on, I am able to take great comfort in knowing that instincts were God given gifts not to be used lightly or selfishly. I was able to learn to bring my instincts into a more balanced ideal, with God's help. I have learned over the years that my thinking can imagine all kinds of fears, frustrations, and worries, and that I have to ask myself, "is this fear real or imagined?" This step helps me to embrace my humanness and understand that every day is a new day to bring balance to my God given gifts and to always ask for Gods help.

Step Four

by George D. from Portland, OR

Quick, run and hide!

The fourth step monster has been seen in Portland and in AA meetings throughout the world. Sounds a little silly, but not really. The fourth step frightens both the newcomer and many old timers alike. This fear slowed me down to almost a dead stop.

This step follows the third step for a reason. That step was paramount. Knowing the renew of my faith in "A God of my own understanding", can and will carry me through this and many things that were to come.

Another aid that came to my rescue was the encouragement found in the rooms of AA meeting halls. Second only to my higher power was the trusting of a sponsor. A sponsor who had worked the steps, and in my case had been around AA for a while. Not only did he have the experience of seeing others make it through this step, he also shared the same faith. With these many tools he was confident I would get through this step. So grabbing my teddy bear for courage and comfort, I began to write and write, and more writing. My sponsor and I attended the same church. Each Sunday, he would ask "How's it going?" My reply was always the same, "Umm." He would smile, pat me on the back and chuckle. His reply was, "You'll get through it, I've got faith in you." I finally did get through it.

Finding on the other side of step 4, was the Willingness to face myself, the Honesty to accept my defects, and the Open-mindedness to a spiritual future. I no longer needed King Alcohol to hide behind.

Step Four

by Mike B. from Portland, OR

Wow, this one seems to be the big hurdle. The make or break one. The "am I really serious about saving my life" one. That's what it was like for me, and from what I hear in meetings, for a lot of other people too. I mean really, you can do the first three steps bang, bang, bang, just like that, and you MIGHT even really mean it. But when you get to step four, you have to get brutally honest with yourself, about yourself. If you're serious about this and you know it's time to walk the walk, this is where a good sponsor comes in.

A good sponsor can help you see the value in being honest with yourself, help you know when your disease is wanting you to take the easy way out, take shortcuts, half measures. A fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves. Personally, when I was a kid in the confessional telling my sins to the priest, that screen between us stopped a lot of sins from getting through, and I had this little deal where I told some penny-ante sins and then said " please forgive me for these sins, and all the ones I can't remember right now", and YOU KNOW those were the juicy ones that I would burn in hell for!

So yes step four is serious business, and it's really where the rubber meets the road. This where you'll make your commitment, and choose to save your own life. Sounds dramatic huh? Well it

is pal, it's your life. But I will say this, once you do this step as well and as honestly as you can, a big weight will be lifted from your shoulders and the way forward will be easier.

RELAPSE: HOW TO PREVENT IT... PART ONE: THE FIRST 40 YEARS OF AA

by Luke F. from Portland, OR

When I arrived in AA in 1972, I was beaten, but I was also very arrogant with the stupidity of the very young – a guy who just didn't know how fragile and vulnerable he was. In my first group, the Radford Group in North Hollywood, California, I don't think they thought very much of my chances long-term. I loved to challenge people on their "Program" and tell them how and why they weren't working it according to the "Book." And the Old Timers didn't scare me. I believed they were often not the best examples of Living Sober, and I would tell them so if I discovered some salacious gossip or if I saw them doing something "against the Program." I was the head-cop on the AA Police force.

If you do the math, in 1972, long term sobriety was usually less than 30 years. In 1939 there were 94 people actually sober at the time the book was published. A great salesman (with AA credentials) convinced Bill to round off that number to 100. He assured Bill that by the time the book came out there would be well over a hundred. Now during the first ten or so years, relapse was quite common, just as it is now. Big Sobriety numbers starting building about that time and by the time 1960 rolled around, a few people probably had 20 years, but it was pretty rare due to how long it took to get going. In 1972, 25 years of sobriety was about as big as the number got-- although I did meet some folk who claimed they were sober in the early 1940's and had 30 years. But that was almost un-achievable then and those folk were in great demand on the Speaker's Circuit all over the country.

Relapse has always been a part of our history – but what was pretty rare then was the relapse of people with over ten years. Those first 40 years involved mostly alcoholics. A handful of addicts were showing up but they were discouraged unless they could identify their PRIMARY addiction as alcoholism. This is a whole other issue, not for now, but I bring it up mostly to mention that the addition of drugs to alcoholism accelerates a 20 year process into sometimes a few years or for some – months. Obviously people today are arriving much younger for two reasons: First, they are simply burning out quicker due to drugs and secondly, they are being sent to AA from the courts and as part of post-care through Treatment Centers.

Being sent to AA was not something the Old Timers in the 1970's were in favor of. They pointed out how the Book (and members) actually DISCOURAGED people from joining until they had "hit bottom." And from what I have personally witnessed, the lack of hope and feeling of desperation which comes from losing everything in your life, is certainly a great motivator and for those folk who come to AA with that blessing, tend to think twice before they go back to drinking.

Many of those I have personally known who were sent to AA, and who were young when they arrived – or those over 30 who come to AA and hear the final days of drinking from the mouths of others who often have horror stories to tell, those people are at greater peril since they can easily compare themselves to the WORST and think themselves different. When they go out

after ten years, often they never get back to us and wind up dying or living in ways they never dreamed possible. Alcohol and drugs, often easily mastered the first time around, become a nightmare of debauchery they thought impossible for them – but now they feel hopeless and lost and cannot get beyond that endless revolving door in AA, becoming known as constant “relapsers”, or they build a life around their addiction and simply give in to it.

I had a friend go out when we were both around 20 years sober. I maintained a friendship with him over the years, urging, but subtly, that he return to the fold and try again. For a long time he was not convinced. At eleven years of downhill drinking, he wound up in a treatment center in Long Beach California. I picked him up that day and cried when I saw him. He was almost unrecognizable. But he was ready and he wanted back into the Program. I helped him find some local treatment (which didn't take) and he had another 6 month run of multiple bottoms until he did get back. When I asked him what finally happened he simply said: “I couldn't do it one more ***** day.” He had finally achieved desperation. But just coming back was not enough. He immersed himself and surrounded his new life with new guys and endless AA involvement. That was the magic elixir for him and he recently celebrated 9 years. The second time around.

In the 80 years AA has been here, there are some obvious sure-fire ways of NOT making the Program work for you:

- Try to figure out how many meetings a week you need and subtract half that number.
- Don't get to meetings on time and always leave early.
- Don't get a sponsor.
- Avoid any kind of Service commitments.
- Avoid the literature.
- Don't make friendships.
- When they talk about the STEPS, take out your cellphone and start texting.
- When someone shares, listen for all the things he says that is different from you.
- Figure out all the reasons you can't possibly be an alcoholic/addict.
- Be sure to tell them you're a committed atheist.

Tradition Four

by Riley S, Portland, OR

An upside-down triangle represents our service structure, with the groups at the top of the triangle. As you move down the triangle we have the GSRs, the area and district, and on to General Service in New York. They all serve the groups, not the other way around. I've heard that some business schools study AA as an example of a functioning corporation, one with far less trouble than most corporations with a traditional top down leadership structure. I like the simplicity of this structure and since learning how it functions, I have wanted to be a part of it, which is why it's important for me to be in a group with a GSR. When there is a vote at the district, area, or General Service level, I can have my voice heard. This happened recently. Our group's GSR brought an issue to our group; we discussed it, and decided our position, and our GSR cast our vote at the area conference. As a side note, this is why we ought to only have one home group, so that our vote only gets counted once.

Now I do frequent a group without a GSR. Tradition four says groups should be autonomous. It's

their choice whether they want a GSR, and it's not affecting other groups or AA as a whole. I do feel grateful to be a part of a group with a GSR, but I also recognize that it's a lot of work. There's an AA pamphlet that refers to the GSR as "the most important service position," and although I would never tell our GSR this, I do agree. The GSR is our point of contact to the rest of AA, otherwise we'd be floating without any connection. It's also a big commitment and I get why groups would forgo this position. The group I mentioned earlier is thriving without one. One of the old timers—of which there are a lot—says we ought to be a GSR once in our sobriety to see what it's all about, but that once is plenty since we're essentially signing up to sit through the longest business meetings imaginable. I do wonder where this group's 7th tradition money goes, but that's a different issue; plus, tradition four says groups can be autonomous in what they do with their money also.

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, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Center, 21907 SW Sherwood Blvd., Sherwood

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 May issue: May 1st.

Step Four

“Made a search and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Tradition Four

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

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.”

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