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 A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.
- A.A. 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.

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Frequently Asked Questions
About A.A.
Questions and Answers
About Alcoholics Anonymous

Several million people have probably heard or read about Alcoholics Anonymous since its beginnings in 1935. Some are relatively familiar with the program of recovery from alcoholism that has helped more than 2,000,000 problem drinkers. Others have only a vague impression that A.A. is some sort of organization that somehow helps drunks stop drinking.

This pamphlet is designed for those who are interested in A.A. for themselves, for a friend or relative, or simply because they wish to be better informed about this unusual Fellowship. Included on the following pages are answers to many of the specific questions that have been asked about A.A. in the past. They add up to the story of a loosely knit society of men and women who have one great interest in common: the desire to stay sober themselves and to help other alcoholics who seek help for their drinking problem.

The thousands of men and women who have come into A.A. in recent years are not altruistic do-gooders. Their eagerness and willingness to help other alcoholics may be termed enlightened self-interest. Members of A.A. appreciate that their own sobriety is largely dependent on continuing contact with alcoholics.

After reading this pamphlet, you may have questions that do not seem to be answered fully in this brief summary. A.A. groups in many metropolitan areas have a central or intergroup office, listed in the telephone book under “Alcoholics Anonymous.” It can direct you to the nearest A.A. meeting, where members will be glad to give you additional information. In smaller communities, a single group may have a telephone listing. If there is no A.A. group near you, feel free to write direct to Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. You can be sure that your anonymity will be protected.
Alcoholism and Alcoholics

Not too long ago, alcoholism was viewed as a moral problem. Today, many regard it primarily as a health problem. To each problem drinker, it will always remain an intensely personal matter. Alcoholics who approach A.A. frequently ask questions that apply to their own experience, their own fears, and their own hopes for a better way of life.

What is alcoholism?
There are many different ideas about what alcoholism really is.

The explanation that seems to make sense to most A.A. members is that alcoholism is an illness, a progressive illness, which can never be cured but which, like some other diseases, can be arrested. Going one step further, many A.A.s feel that the illness represents the combination of a physical sensitivity to alcohol and a mental obsession with drinking, which, regardless of consequences, cannot be broken by willpower alone.

Before they are exposed to A.A., many alcoholics who are unable to stop drinking think of themselves as morally weak or, possibly, mentally unbalanced. The A.A. concept is that alcoholics are sick people who can recover if they will follow a simple program that has proved successful for more than two million men and women.

Once alcoholism has set in, there is nothing morally wrong about being ill. At this stage, free will is not involved, because the sufferer has lost the power of choice over alcohol. The important thing is to face the facts of one’s illness and to take advantage of the help that is available. There must also be a desire to get well. Experience shows that the A.A. program will work for all alcoholics who are sincere in their efforts to stop drinking; it usually will not work for those not absolutely certain that they want to stop.

How can I tell if I am really an alcoholic?
Only you can make that decision. Many who are now in A.A. have previously been told that they were not alcoholics, that all they needed was more willpower, a change of scenery, more rest, or a few new hobbies in order to straighten out. These same
people finally turned to A.A. because they felt, deep down inside, that alcohol had them licked and that they were ready to try anything that would free them from the compulsion to drink.

Some of these men and women went through terrifying experiences with alcohol before they were ready to admit that alcohol was not for them. They became derelicts, stole, lied, cheated, and even killed while they were drinking. They took advantage of their employers and abused their families. They were completely unreliable in their relations with others. They wasted their material, mental, and spiritual assets.

Many others with far less tragic records have turned to A.A., too. They have never been jailed or hospitalized. Their too-heavy drinking may not have been noticed by their closest relatives and friends. But they knew enough about alcoholism as a progressive illness to scare them. They joined A.A. before they had paid too heavy a price.

There is a saying in A.A. that there is no such thing as being a little bit alcoholic. Either you are, or you are not. And only the individual involved can say whether or not alcohol has become an unmanageable problem.

Can an alcoholic ever drink ‘normally’ again?

So far as can be determined, no one who has become an alcoholic has ever ceased to be an alcoholic. The mere fact of abstaining from alcohol for months or even years has never qualified an alcoholic to drink “normally” or socially. Once the individual has crossed the borderline from heavy drinking to irresponsible alcoholic drinking, there seems to be no retreat. Few alcoholics deliberately try to drink themselves into trouble, but trouble seems to be the inevitable consequence of an alcoholic’s drinking. After quitting for a period, the alcoholic may feel it is safe to try a few beers or a few glasses of light wine. This can mislead the person into drinking only with meals. But it is not too long before the alcoholic is back in the old pattern of too-heavy drinking — in spite of all efforts to set limits for only moderate, social drinking.

The answer, based on A.A. experience, is that if you are an alcoholic, you will never be able to control your drinking. It leaves two paths one can follow, or to quit the pattern of sober, controlled drinking.

Can’t an A.A. member take a drink now and then without risking his sobriety?

There are, of course, occasional checks up on members to see if not they are drinking alcohol in any form. The question is that being alcohol in any form is alcohol whether in beer and soda, a bottle of champagne — or even one drink of alcoholic liquor. And twenty-one drinks are twenty-one drinks.

To be sure of staying away from alcohol, one must never taste a drink. Obviously, few people can be convinced of this as well as the alcoholic who has taken two or three drinks and has decided that as long as he can “do a good job” on one drink a day, he is in control of his consumption of beer and liquor. And again, the alcoholic usually has no reason at all, he simply feels it is a pleasure.

I can stay sober until I need another drink.

Most A.A.s will tell you that the reason most alcoholics relapse is how often, that decreased, that they become an alcoholic. Most alcoholics have had their bouts with sobriety, then they relapse, then they think. With others, they are able to live a normal, sober life, they prefer to lead a normal life, but it is not long before they finally turn to A.A. because they felt, deep down inside, that alcohol had them licked and that they were ready to try anything that would free them from the compulsion to drink.
trol your drinking for any length of time. That leaves two paths open: to let your drinking become worse and worse with all the damaging results that follow, or to quit completely and to develop a new pattern of sober, constructive living.

Can’t an A.A. member drink even beer?

There are, of course, no musts in A.A., and no one checks up on members to determine whether or not they are drinking anything. The answer to this question is that if a person is an alcoholic, touching alcohol in any form cannot be risked. Alcohol is alcohol whether it is found in a martini, a Scotch and soda, a bourbon and branch water, a glass of champagne — or a short beer. For the alcoholic, one drink of alcohol in any form is likely to be too much, and twenty drinks are not enough.

To be sure of sobriety, alcoholics simply have to stay away from alcohol, regardless of the quantity, mixture, or concentration they think they can control.

Obviously, few persons are going to get drunk on one or two bottles of beer. The alcoholic knows this as well as the next person. But alcoholics may convince themselves that they are simply going to take two or three beers and then quit for the day. Occasionally, they may actually follow this program for a number of days or weeks, Eventually, they decide that as long as they are drinking, they may as well “do a good job.” So they increase their consumption of beer or wine. Or they switch to hard liquor. And again, they are back where they started.

I can stay sober quite a while between binges; how can I tell whether I need A.A.?

Most A.A.s will say that it’s how you drink, not how often, that determines whether or not you are an alcoholic. Many problem drinkers can go weeks, months, and occasionally years between their bouts with liquor. During their periods of sobriety, they may not give alcohol a second thought. Without mental or emotional effort, they are able to take it or leave it alone, and they prefer to leave it alone.

Then, for some unaccountable reason, or for no reason at all, they go off on a first-class binge.
They neglect job, family, and other civic and social responsibilities. The spree may last a single night, or it may be prolonged for days or weeks. When it is over, the drinker is usually weak and remorseful, determined never to let it happen again. But it does happen again.

This type of “periodic” drinking is baffling, not only to those around the drinker, but also to the person still drinking. He or she cannot understand why there should be so little interest in alcohol during the periods between binges, or so little control over it once the drinking starts.

The periodic drinker may or may not be an alcoholic. But if drinking has become unmanageable and if the periods between binges are becoming shorter, the chances are that one has come to face up to the problem. If the person is ready to admit to being an alcoholic, then the first step has been taken toward the continuing sobriety enjoyed by thousands upon thousands of A.A.s.

Others say I am not an alcoholic. But my drinking seems to be getting worse. Should I join A.A.?

Many members of A.A., during their drinking days, were assured by relatives, friends, and doctors that they were not alcoholics. The alcoholic usually adds to the problem by an unwillingness to realistically face the facts of drinking. By not being completely honest, the problem drinker makes it difficult for a doctor to provide any help. The amazing thing, in fact, is that so many doctors have been able to penetrate the typical problem drinker’s deceptions and diagnose the problem correctly.

It cannot be emphasized too often that the important decision — am I an alcoholic? — has to be made by the drinker. Only he or she — not the doctor, the family, or friends — can make it. But once it is made, half the battle for sobriety is won. If the question is left to others to decide, the alcoholic may be dragging out needlessly the dangers and misery of uncontrollable drinking.

Can a person achieve sobriety all alone by reading A.A. literature?

A few people have stopped drinking after reading Alcoholics Anonymous, the A.A. “Big Book,” which sets forth the basic program. But nearly everyone must do some preparation to find the right program and with whom to share it.

The A.A. program is what it is when it is recognized, involving other people, sobering up, and trying to handle it. The person or others who share similar problems, feelings of loneliness, and who are important factor in their

Won’t everyone laugh at me if I come into A.A.?

Anonymity is an important factor in the A.A. program. Many people have said I don’t come into A.A. until the word gets around that. The alcoholic's sobriety is what it is when it is recognized, involving other people, sobering up, and trying to handle it. The person or others who share similar problems, feelings of loneliness, and who are important factor in their

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A few people have stopped drinking after reading Alcoholics Anonymous, the A.A. “Big Book,” which
sets forth the basic principles of the recovery program. But nearly all of those who were in a position to do so promptly sought out other alcoholics with whom to share their experience and sobriety.

The A.A. program works best for the individual when it is recognized and accepted as a program involving other people. Working with other alcoholics in the local A.A. group, problem drinkers seem to learn more about their problem and how to handle it. They find themselves surrounded by others who share their past experiences, their present problems, and their hopes. They shed the feelings of loneliness that may have been an important factor in their compulsion to drink.

Won't everyone know I am an alcoholic if I come into A.A.?

Anonymity is and always has been the basis of the A.A. program. Most members, after they have been in A.A. awhile, have no particular objection if the word gets around that they have joined a fellowship that enables them to stay sober. Traditionally, A.A.s never disclose their association with the movement in print, on the air, or through any other public media. And no one has the right to break the anonymity of another member. This means that the newcomer can turn to A.A. with the assurance that no newfound friends will violate confidences relating to his or her drinking problem. The older members of the group appreciate how the newcomer feels. They can remember their own fears about being identified publicly with what seems to be a terrifying word — “alcoholic.”

Once in A.A., newcomers may be slightly amused at those past worries about its becoming generally known that they have stopped drinking. When alcoholics drink, news of their escapades travels with remarkable speed. Most alcoholics have made names for themselves as full-fledged drunks by the time they turn to A.A. Their drinking, with rare exceptions, is not likely to be a well-kept secret. Under these circumstances, it would be unusual indeed if the good news of the alcoholic’s continuing sobriety did not also cause comment.

Whatever the circumstances, no disclosure of the newcomer’s affiliation with A.A. can rightfully
always apparent. The alcoholic may then be helped by ingenuity, and controlled manners, to business success. 
undoubtedly help. Social drinking has become an accepted part of business enterprise in many fields these days. Many contacts with customers and prospective customers are timed to coincide with occasions when cocktails, highballs, or cordials seem the appropriate order of the day or night. Many now in A.A. would be the first to concede that they had often transacted important business in bars, cocktail lounges, or hotel rooms or even during parties in private homes.

It is surprising, however, how much of the world's work is accomplished without the benefit of alcohol. It is equally surprising to many alcoholics to discover how many recognized leaders in business, industry, professional life, and the arts have attained success without dependence on alcohol.

In fact, many who are now sober in A.A. admit that they used "business contacts" as one of several excuses for drinking. Now that they no longer drink, they find that they can actually accomplish more than they used to. Sobriety has proved no hindrance to their ability to win friends and influence people who might contribute to their economic success.

This does not mean that all A.A.'s suddenly avoid their friends or business associates who drink. If a friend wants a cocktail or two before lunch, the A.A. will usually take a soft drink, coffee, or one of the popular juices. If the A.A. is invited to a cocktail party being given for business reasons, there will generally be no hesitation about attending. The alcoholic knows from experience that most of the other guests are concerned with their own drinks, and are not likely to care particularly what anyone else happens to be drinking.

While beginning to take pride in the quality and quantity of work on the job, the newcomer to A.A. is likely to find that the payoff in most lines of business is still based on performance. This was not
always apparent in the drinking days. The alcoholic may then have been convinced that charm, ingenuity, and conviviality were the chief keys to business success. While these qualities are undoubtedly helpful to the person who drinks in a controlled manner, they are not enough for the alcoholic, if only because the latter, while drinking, is inclined to assign to them far more importance than they deserve.

Will A.A. work for the person who has really ‘hit bottom’?

The record shows that A.A. will work for almost anyone who really wants to stop drinking, no matter what the person’s economic or social background may be. A.A. today includes among its members many who have been on skid row, in jails, and in other public institutions.

The down-and-outer is at no disadvantage in coming to A.A. His or her basic problem, the thing that has made life unmanageable, is identical with the central problem of every other member of A.A. The worth of a member in A.A. is not judged on the basis of the clothes worn, the handling of language, or the size (or existence) of the bank balance. The only thing that counts in A.A. is whether or not the newcomer really wants to stop drinking. If the desire is there, the person will be welcomed. Chances are, the most rugged drinking story the new member could tell will be topped by an amazing number of people in the group, with similar backgrounds and experiences.

Do alcoholics who are already sober ever join A.A.?

Most men and women turn to A.A. when they hit the low point in their drinking careers. But this is not always the case. A number of persons have joined the Fellowship long after they have had what they hoped was their last drink. One person, recognizing that alcohol could not be controlled, had been dry for six or seven years before becoming a member. Self-enforced sobriety had not been a happy experience. Rising tension and a series of upsets over minor problems of daily living were about to lead to further experiments with alcohol, when a friend suggested that A.A. should be inves-
If the newcomer is an alcoholic and that number of statistics, structure, and his come up. Here are.

**What is Alcoholics Anonymous?**

There are two primary reasons. The first is the family objectives that apply:

"'Alcoholics Anonymous' (A.A.) is a fellowship of men and women who have had a common experience of repeated failure in their efforts to control their drinking. While they believe alcoholics Anonymous is not allied with politics, organization, nor opposes any foe to stay sober and achieve sobriety.

The "common experience" of men and women members of A.A. are those who have finally received able to handle alcohol away from it or that they do not exhibit alone. They are open with other alcoholic members of A.A., who share them. Alcoholics Anonymous is the only practical way in which the individual's debt to A.A. can ever be repaid. The A.A. member knows that sobriety cannot be bought and that there is no long-term lease on it. The A.A. does know, however, that a new approach to living without alcohol may be had simply for the asking, if it is honestly wanted and willingly shared with those who follow.

Traditionally, A.A. never "recruits" members, never urges that anyone should become a member, and never solicits or accepts outside funds.

Members of A.A. have a selfish interest in offering a helping hand to other alcoholics who have not yet achieved sobriety. First, they know from experience that this type of activity, usually referred to as "Twelfth Step work," helps them to stay sober. Their lives now have a great and compelling interest. Very likely, reminders of their own previous experience with alcohol help them to avoid the overconfidence that could lead to a relapse. Whatever the explanation, A.A.s who give freely of their time and effort to help other alcoholics seldom have trouble preserving their own sobriety.

A.A.s are anxious to help problem drinkers for a second reason: It gives them an opportunity to square their debt to those who helped them. It is the only practical way in which the individual’s debt to A.A. can ever be repaid. The A.A. member knows that sobriety cannot be bought and that there is no long-term lease on it. The A.A. does know, however, that a new approach to living without alcohol may be had simply for the asking, if it is honestly wanted and willingly shared with those who follow.

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The Fellowship of A.A.

If the newcomer is satisfied that he or she is an alcoholic and that A.A. may be able to help, then a number of specific questions about the nature, structure, and history of the movement itself usually come up. Here are some of the most common ones.

What is Alcoholics Anonymous?

There are two practical ways to describe A.A. The first is the familiar description of purposes and objectives that appears earlier:

“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 A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. 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.”

The second way to describe Alcoholics Anonymous is to outline the structure of the Society. Numerically, A.A. consists of more than 2,000,000 men and women, in approximately 170 countries. These people meet in local groups that range in size from a handful of ex-drinkers in some localities to many hundreds in larger communities.
In the populous metropolitan areas, there may be scores of neighborhood groups, each holding its own regular meetings. Many A.A. meetings are open to the public; some groups also hold “closed meetings,” where members are encouraged to discuss problems that might not be fully appreciated by nonalcoholics.

The local group is the core of the A.A. Fellowship. Its open meetings welcome alcoholics and their families in an atmosphere of friendliness and helpfulness. There are now more than 114,000 groups throughout the world, including hundreds in hospitals, prisons, and other institutions.

How did A.A. get started?
Alcoholics Anonymous had its beginnings in Akron, Ohio, in 1935 when a New Yorker on business there and successfully sober for the first time in years sought out another alcoholic. During his few months of sobriety, the New Yorker had noticed that his desire to drink lessened when he tried to help other drunks to get sober. In Akron, he was directed to a local doctor with a drinking problem. Working together, the businessman and the doctor found that their ability to stay sober seemed closely related to the amount of help and encouragement they were able to give other alcoholics.

For four years, the new movement, nameless and without any organization or descriptive literature, grew slowly. Groups were established in Akron, New York, Cleveland, and a few other centers.

In 1939, with the publication of the book Alcoholics Anonymous, from which the Fellowship derived its name, and as the result of the help of a number of nonalcoholic friends, the Society began to attract national and international attention.

A service office was opened in New York City to handle the thousands of inquiries and requests for literature that pour in each year.

Are there any rules in A.A.?
The absence of rules, regulations, or musts is one of the unique features of A.A. as a local group and as a worldwide fellowship. There are no bylaws that say a member has to attend a certain number of meetings within a given period.

Understandably, a tradition that has the boisterous enough to be asked to leave; they can go back at any time. Meanwhile, they are doing their best to help and there is a sincere desire to stop drinking.

What does membership in A.A. mean?
Membership in A.A. is not a condition of any kind, but rather a desire to stop drinking. They broke or the possibility of breaking.

Most local groups defray the cost of refreshments, cakes, or other meeting expenses. The cost of snacks that contain a large majority of the money thus collected is used to help new and the many alcoholics with the word of the Fellowship.

The important fellowship is in A.A. is in the support of the fellowships, which have, in fact, produced an amount that can help new and the many alcoholics with the word of the Fellowship.

Who runs A.A.?
A.A. has no office or authority over an informal organization done. In the local group, it has to arrange for the meetings to be served. The responsibility of these meetings is to be nonalcoholic friends.
Understandably, most groups have an unwritten tradition that anyone who is still drinking, and boisterous enough to disturb a meeting, may be asked to leave; the same person will be welcomed back at any time when not likely to disrupt a meeting. Meanwhile, members of the group will do their best to help bring sobriety to the person if there is a sincere desire to stop drinking.

What does membership in A.A. cost?

Membership in A.A. involves no financial obligations of any kind. The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism is available to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking, whether he or she is flat broke or the possessor of millions.

Most local groups “pass the hat” at meetings to defray the cost of renting a meeting place and other meeting expenses, including coffee, sandwiches, cakes, or whatever else may be served. In a large majority of the groups, part of the money thus collected is voluntarily contributed to A.A.’s national and international services. These group funds are used exclusively for services designed to help new and established groups and to spread the word of the A.A. recovery program to “the many alcoholics who still don’t know.”

The important consideration is that membership in A.A. is in no way contingent upon financial support of the Fellowship. Many A.A. groups have, in fact, placed strict limitations on the amount that can be contributed by any member. A.A. is entirely self-supporting, and no outside contributions are accepted.

Who runs A.A.?

A.A. has no officers or executives who wield power or authority over the Fellowship. There is no “government” in A.A. It is obvious, however, that even in an informal organization, certain jobs have to be done. In the local group, for example, someone has to arrange for a suitable meeting place; meetings have to be scheduled and programmed; provision has to be made for serving the coffee and snacks that contribute so much to the informal comradeship of A.A. gatherings; many groups also consider it wise to assign to someone the responsibility of keeping in touch with the national areas, there may be A.A. groups also hold meetings in the open air, and the early gatherings in Akron, during the first time in the history of the Fellowship, the acoustics were sometimes so bad that the speaker had to shout. A.A. members are encouraged to take care of their own facilities, and are likely to be more than 11,400 members in such institutions.

A.A. began in the hometown of the Founder, nameless and undramatic, in a little book published in Akron, Ohio. Other centers.

The publication of the book by Mr. Bob Smith brought the Fellowship to the attention of the world. He was a local newspaperman and, in the help of a local doctor, he started in 1935, and the Society began to draw widespread attention.

A.A. is no longer confined to New York City and other large centers, but is spreading to small towns and villages.

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Is A.A. a religion?

A.A. is not a religion. A.A. has no definite religious affiliation. Although it is approved by many religious groups, its members are not members of other religions, cults, and atheists.

The A.A. program is undeniably based upon spiritual values. The inter-group uses these values to think about the spiritual problems of their members.

Most members already admit they have a drinking problem. Alcoholics are called on to consider the A.A. program as a real solution, rather than themselves. "It is not only the A.A. group members who are called on to think about others who rely upon a Higher Power."

Some alcoholics have definite religious concepts of a Higher Power. Experience shows that as long as they maintain sobriety, they can try to think about the A.A. group members and are called on to think about those who rely on a Higher Power.

Is A.A. a temperance movement?

No. A.A. has not been a temperance movement. A.A. "neither promotes, opposes, nor has any手中 of causes." This phrase is included in the outline of the program. It applies to the programs of many movements. The A.A. movement is attempting to help alcoholics who have a drinking problem toward goldenrods and eventually toward sobriety.
Is A.A. a religious society?

A.A. is not a religious society, since it requires no definite religious belief as a condition of membership. Although it has been endorsed and approved by many religious leaders, it is not allied with any organization or sect. Included in its membership are Catholics, Protestants, Jews, members of other major religious bodies, agnostics, and atheists.

The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism is undeniably based on acceptance of certain spiritual values. The individual member is free to interpret those values as he or she thinks best, or not to think about them at all.

Most members, before turning to A.A., had already admitted that they could not control their drinking. Alcohol had become a power greater than themselves, and it had been accepted on those terms. A.A. suggests that to achieve and maintain sobriety, alcoholics need to accept and depend upon another Power recognized as greater than themselves. Some alcoholics choose to consider the A.A. group itself as the power greater than themselves; for many others, this Power is God — as they, individually, understand Him; still others rely upon entirely different concepts of a Higher Power.

Some alcoholics, when they first turn to A.A., have definite reservations about accepting any concept of a Power greater than themselves. Experience shows that, if they will keep an open mind on the subject and keep coming to A.A. meetings, they are not likely to have too difficult a time in working out an acceptable solution to this distinctly personal problem.

Is A.A. a temperance movement?

No. A.A. has no relation to temperance movements. A.A. "neither endorses nor opposes any causes." This phrase, from the widely accepted outline of the purpose of the Society, naturally applies to the question of so-called temperance movements. The alcoholic who has become sober and is attempting to follow the A.A. recovery program has an attitude toward alcohol that might be likened to the attitude of a hayfever sufferer toward goldenrod.
teens. The majority lies. Many have not been in institutions. But they are in the wall. They remain and they see no inevitable disaster.

Their need for opportunity to talk about their problem in A.A., both group and individual, is a milestone — their first step toward recovery. They seek an opportunity to talk to others who have the same problem, to share their experiences, and to learn from others who have been through similar situations.

Are there many women alcoholics in A.A.?

The number of women who are finding help in A.A. for their drinking problem increases daily. Approximately one-third of present-day members are women; among newcomers, the proportion has been rising steadily. Like the men in the Fellowship, they represent every conceivable social background and pattern of drinking.

The general feeling seems to be that a woman alcoholic faces special problems. Because society has tended to apply different standards to the behavior of women, some women may feel that a greater stigma is attached to their uncontrolled use of alcohol.

A.A. makes no distinctions of this type. Whatever her age, social standing, financial status, or education, the woman alcoholic, like her male counterpart, can find understanding and help in A.A. Within the local group setup, women A.A.s play the same significant roles that men do.

Are there many young people in A.A.?

One of the most heartening trends in the growth of A.A. is the fact that more and more young men and women are being attracted to the program before their drinking problem results in complete disaster. Now that the progressive nature of alcoholism is better appreciated, these young people recognize that, if one is an alcoholic, the best time to arrest the illness is in its early stages.

In the first days of the movement, it was commonly thought that the only logical candidates for A.A. were those men and women who had lost their jobs, had hit skid row, had completely disrupted their family lives, or had otherwise isolated themselves from normal social relationships over a period of years.

Today, many of the young people turning to A.A. are in their twenties. Some are still in their teens. The majority of young people have had no more than high school education. Many have married and have children. But they have found a way to control their drinking and they see no inevitability of disaster in the future.

Their need for an opportunity to talk about their problem in A.A., both group and individual, is a milestone — their first step toward recovery. They seek an opportunity to talk to others who have the same problem, to share their experiences, and to learn from others who have been through similar situations.
that alcohol may be the means by which he knows how it to be poison to himself. A woman’s desire to deprive him of the stuff, if properly handled, is a very compelling reason for acknowledging the need for help. Most alcoholics in A.A.?

Finding help in this manner is increasing daily. In 1970, 96 percent of the present-day members were newcomers. At that time, the proportion of the overall A.A. membership, the men in the fellowship, who are in the age category that recognizes alcoholism, are alcoholics, and they see no point in letting alcoholism run its inevitable disastrous course with them.

Their desire for recovery is just as compelling as that of the older men and women who had no opportunity to turn to A.A. in their youth. Once they are in A.A., the young people and the oldsters are rarely conscious of their age differentials. In A.A., both groups start a new life from the same milestone — their last drink.

Group Meetings

The local group meeting is the center and heart of the A.A. Fellowship. It is, in many ways, a unique type of gathering and one that is likely to seem strange to the newcomer. The questions and answers that follow suggest how the A.A. meeting functions and how the newcomer fits into the group picture.

How does a person join A.A.?

No one “joins” A.A. in the usual sense of the term. No application for membership has to be filled out. In fact, many groups do not even keep membership records. There are no initiation fees, no dues, no assessments of any kind.

Most people become associated with A.A. by attending the meetings of a particular local group. Their introduction to A.A. may have come about in one of several ways. Having come to the point in their drinking where they sincerely wanted to stop, they may have gotten in touch with A.A. voluntarily. They may have called the local A.A. office listed in the phone book, or they may have written to the General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

Others may have been guided to a local A.A. group by a friend, relative, doctor, or spiritual adviser.

Usually, a newcomer to A.A. has had an opportunity to talk to one or more local members before attending the first meeting. This provides an opportunity to learn how A.A. has helped these
people. The beginner gets facts about alcoholism and A.A. that help to determine whether he or she is honestly prepared to give up alcohol. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

There are no membership drives in A.A. If, after attending several meetings, the newcomer decides A.A. is not for him or for her, no one will urge continuation in the association. There may be suggestions about keeping an open mind on the subject, but no one in A.A. will try to make up newcomers’ minds for them. Only the alcoholic concerned can answer the question “Do I need Alcoholics Anonymous?”

What is an ‘open’ meeting?

An open meeting of A.A. is a group meeting that any member of the community, alcoholic or nonalcoholic, may attend. The only obligation is that of not disclosing the names of A.A. members outside the meeting.

A typical open meeting will usually have a “leader” and other speakers. The leader opens and closes the meeting and introduces each speaker. With rare exceptions, the speakers at an open meeting are A.A. members. Each, in turn, may review some individual drinking experiences that led to joining A.A. The speaker may also give his or her interpretation of the recovery program and suggest what sobriety has meant personally. All views expressed are purely personal, since all members of A.A. speak only for themselves.

Most open meetings conclude with a social period during which coffee, soft drinks, and cakes or cookies are served.

What is a ‘closed’ meeting?

A closed meeting is for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and have a desire to stop drinking. Closed meetings give members an opportunity to discuss particular phases of their alcoholic problem that can be understood best only by other alcoholics.

These meetings are usually conducted with maximum informality, and all members are encouraged to participate in the discussions. The closed meetings are for the newcomer, since the questions that may arise about the benefit of “openness” to the recovery program.

May I bring my wife to an A.A. meeting?

In most places, a member or not a member of an A.A. group.* Nevertheless, it is important for a wife to bring wives to A.A. meetings, since the recovery program may mean the alcoholic to his wife. Many wives and their spouses attend the activities of their local group. Others may still attend without meetings.

It will be returned to the traditional limit.

How often do A.A. members have to attend meetings?

Abraham Lincoln said, “Long enough to make a man’s legs shudder.”

A.A. members arrange the number of meetings based on the personal need of individuals and members arrange one or two days a week. They feel the problem can be understood best only by other alcoholics.

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22
closed meetings are of particular value to the newcomer, since they provide an opportunity to ask questions that may trouble a beginner, and to get the benefit of “older” members’ experience with the recovery program.

**May I bring relatives or friends to an A.A. meeting?**

In most places, anyone interested in A.A., whether a member or not, is welcome at open meetings of A.A. groups.* Newcomers, in particular, are invited to bring wives, husbands, or friends to these meetings, since their understanding of the recovery program may be an important factor in helping the alcoholic to achieve and maintain sobriety.

Many wives and husbands attend as frequently as their spouses and take an active part in the social activities of the local group.

*(It will be recalled that “closed” meetings are traditionally limited to alcoholics.)*

**How often do A.A. members have to attend meetings?**

Abraham Lincoln was once asked how long a man’s legs should be. The classic answer was: “Long enough to reach the ground.”

A.A. members don’t have to attend any set number of meetings in a given period. It is purely a matter of individual preference and need. Most members arrange to attend at least one meeting a week. They feel that is enough to satisfy their personal need for contact with the program through a local group. Others attend a meeting nearly every night, in areas where such opportunities are available. Still others may go for relatively long periods without meetings.

The friendly injunction “Keep coming to meetings,” so frequently heard by the newcomer, is based on the experience of the great majority of A.A.s, who find that the quality of their sobriety suffers when they stay away from meetings for too long. Many know from experience that if they do not come to meetings, they may get drunk and that if they are regular in attendance, they seem to have no trouble staying sober.

*Consult the group for local custom.*
Newcomers particularly seem to benefit from exposure to a relatively large number of meetings (or other A.A. contacts) during their first weeks and months in a group. By multiplying their opportunities to meet and hear other A.A.s whose drinking experience parallels their own, they seem to be able to strengthen their own understanding of the program and what it can give them.

Nearly all alcoholics, at one time or another, have tried to stay sober on their own. For most, the experience has not been particularly enjoyable— or successful. So long as attendance at meetings helps the alcoholic to maintain sobriety, and to have fun at the same time, it seems to be good sense to be guided by the experience of those who “keep coming to meetings.”

Do A.A.s have to attend meetings for the rest of their lives?

Not necessarily, but— as one member has suggested— “Most of us want to, and some of us may need to.”

Most alcoholics don’t like to be told that they have to do anything for any extended period of time. At first glance, the prospect of having to attend A.A. meetings for all the years of the foreseeable future may seem a heavy load.

The answer, again, is that no one has to do anything in A.A. There is always a choice between doing and not doing a thing— including the crucial choice of whether or not to seek sobriety through A.A.

The primary reason an alcoholic has for attending meetings of an A.A. group is to get help in staying sober today— not tomorrow or next week or ten years from now. Today, the immediate present, is the only period in life that the A.A. can do something about. A.A.s do not worry about tomorrow, or about “the rest of their lives.” The important thing for them is to maintain their sobriety now. They will take care of the future when it arrives.

So the A.A. who wants to do everything possible to insure sobriety today will probably keep going to meetings. But attendance will always be on the basis of taking care of present sobriety. As long as the approach to A.A. is on this basis, no activity, including attendance at meetings, can ever resemble a long-term obligation.

How will I be treated at A.A. meetings, and other A.A. activities?

During our drinking days we managed to minimize or deny that there was alcoholism. A new comer to A.A. is soon impressed that sobriety will not come too. If the beginning alcoholic is to be an urge to manage to work diligently at the demands of a homelife too, the prospect of a church or civic activity. For the new member, the attack on habitual life, great change.

A.A., however, taken like a pill. The program has been successful in nearly all alcoholics, at one time or another, have tried to stay sober on their own. For most, the experience has not been particularly enjoyable— or successful. So long as attendance at meetings helps the alcoholic to maintain sobriety, and to have fun at the same time, it seems to be good sense to be guided by the experience of those who “keep coming to meetings.”

Can newcomers meet outside their own experiences?

This question is asked by those who seem to have perceived A.A. as a means of gaining control of their neighbors and employers who are not part of the program and possibly admit the existence of A.A. as a means of desperation. But they may help him.

The answer to the question is free to join an A.A.
How will I be able to find the time for A.A. meetings, work with other alcoholics, and other A.A. activities?

During our drinking days, most of us somehow managed to minimize the importance of time when there was alcohol to be consumed. Yet the newcomer to A.A. is occasionally dismayed to learn that sobriety will make some demands on time, too. If the beginner is a typical alcoholic, there will be an urge to make up “lost time” in a hurry — to work diligently at a job, to indulge in the pleasures of a homelife too long neglected, to devote time to church or civic affairs. What else is sobriety for, the new member may ask, but to lead a full, normal life, great chunks of it at a time?

A.A., however, is not something that can be taken like a pill. The experience of those who have been successful in the recovery program is worth considering. Almost without exception, the men and women who find their sobriety most satisfying are those who attend meetings regularly, never hesitate to work with other alcoholics seeking help, and take more than a casual interest in the other activities of their groups. They are men and women who recall realistically and honestly the aimless hours spent in bars, the days lost from work, the decreased efficiency, and the remorse that accompanied hangovers on the morning after.

Balanced against such memories as these, the few hours spent in underwriting and strengthening their sobriety add up to a small price indeed.

Can new comers join A.A. outside their own community?

This question is sometimes raised by persons who seem to have perfectly valid reasons for not wanting to risk identification as alcoholics by any of their neighbors. They may, for example, have employers who are totally unfamiliar with the A.A. program and potentially hostile to anyone who admits the existence of a drinking problem. They may wish desperately to be associated with A.A. as a means of gaining and maintaining sobriety. But they may hesitate to turn to a group in their own community.

The answer to the question is that a person is free to join an A.A. group anywhere he or she may
Upon attending a meeting, you are sure to hear references to the "Twelve Steps," "The Big Book," and other works of A.A. The following excerpts are intended to explain and suggest why A.A. is recommended by A.A. speakers.

What are the "Twelve Steps"?

The "Twelve Steps" are a program of personal change. These steps are not abstract ideals, but practical, trial-and-error experiences. They describe the values that these early members found helpful in helping them to stop drinking and to apply the program of A.A. to their lives.

Experience suggests that these early members found it very helpful to help each other in following the "Twelve Steps." It is virtually impossible for anyone who makes an effort to follow the "Twelve Steps" to come to the conclusion that it is of no value to them. Experience is perhaps the best guide in this area.

If I come into A.A., won't I miss a lot of friends and a lot of fun?

The best answer to this is the experience of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who have already come into A.A. In general, their attitude is that they did not enjoy real friendships or real fun until they joined A.A. Their point of view on both has changed.

Many alcoholics discover that their best friends are delighted to see them face up to the fact that they cannot handle alcohol. No one wants to see a friend continue to hurt.

Naturally, it is important to distinguish between friendships and casual barroom acquaintanceships. The alcoholic is likely to have many acquaintances whose conviviality may be missed for a while. But their place will be taken by the hundreds of A.A.'s the newcomer will meet — men and women who offer understanding acceptance, and help in sustaining sobriety at all times.

Few members of A.A. would trade the fun that comes with sobriety for what seemed to be fun while they were drinking.

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Few members of A.A. would trade the fun that comes with sobriety for what seemed to be fun while they were drinking.
The Recovery Program

Upon attending only a few meetings, the newcomer is sure to hear references to such things as “the Twelve Steps,” “the Twelve Traditions,” “slips,” “the Big Book,” and other expressions characteristic of A.A. The following paragraphs describe these factors and suggest why they are mentioned frequently by A.A. speakers.

What are the ‘Twelve Steps’?

The “Twelve Steps” are the core of the A.A. program of personal recovery from alcoholism. They are not abstract theories; they are based on the trial-and-error experience of early members of A.A. They describe the attitudes and activities that these early members believe were important in helping them to achieve sobriety. Acceptance of the “Twelve Steps” is not mandatory in any sense.

Experience suggests, however, that members who make an earnest effort to follow these Steps and to apply them in daily living seem to get more out of A.A. than do those members who seem to regard the Steps casually. It has been said that it is virtually impossible to follow all the Steps literally, day in and day out. While this may be true, in the sense that the Twelve Steps represent an approach to living that is totally new for most alcoholics, many A.A. members feel that the Steps are a practical necessity if they are to maintain their sobriety.

Here is the text of the Twelve Steps, which first appeared in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the A.A. book of experience:

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.

What are the 'Twelve Traditions'?
The “Twelve Traditions” of A.A. are suggested principles to insure the survival and growth of the thousands of groups that make up the Fellowship. They are based on the experience of the groups themselves during the critical early years of the movement.

The Traditions are important to both oldtimers and newcomers as reminders of the true foundations of A.A. as a society of men and women whose primary concern is to maintain their own sobriety and help others to achieve sobriety:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. 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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

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

5. Each group carries its message.

6. An A.A. group should never seek or lend the A.A. name outside enterprise, influence, and prestige.

7. Every A.A. group一定要 support, decline to support, or resign from any organization or individual enterprise, influence, and prestige.

8. Alcoholics arerecover non-professionals, and we employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, should neither seek nor accept nor administer outside issues; hence, we may create no socie directly responsible.

10. Alcoholics should outside issues; hence, we be drawn into public.

11. Our publicattraction rather than maintain personal, radio, and films.

12. Anonymity is one of our traditions, especially before people.

What are ‘slips’?
Occasionally a member of A.A. will lapse through A.A. will lapses. This type is commonly occur during the first years of sobriety or after the number of years.

Nearly all A.A. experience say these lapses have causes. They admit they were not ready to stop drinking. They stayed away from A.A. association with other alcoholics, and defenses down.

In other words,
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; 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 A.A. 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.

What are 'slips'?

Occasionally a man or woman who has been sober through A.A. will get drunk. In A.A. a relapse of this type is commonly known as a “slip.” It may occur during the first few weeks or months of sobriety or after the alcoholic has been dry a number of years.

Nearly all A.A.s who have been through this experience say that slips can be traced to specific causes. They deliberately forgot that they had admitted they were alcoholics and got overconfident about their ability to handle alcohol. Or they stayed away from A.A. meetings or from informal association with other A.A.s. Or they let themselves become too involved with business or social affairs to remember the importance of being sober. Or they let themselves become tired and were caught with their mental and emotional defenses down.

In other words, most “slips” don’t just happen.
**Does A.A. have a basic ‘textbook’?**

The Fellowship has four books that are generally accepted as “textbooks.” The first is *Alcoholics Anonymous*, also known as “the Big Book,” originally published in 1939, revised in 1955, 1976 and 2001. It records the personal stories of 42 representative problem drinkers who achieved stable sobriety for the first time through A.A. It also records the suggested steps and principles that early members believed were responsible for their ability to overcome the compulsion to drink.

The second book is *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, published in 1953. It is an interpretation, by Bill W., a co-founder, of the principles that have thus far assured the continuing survival of individuals and groups within A.A.


The fourth is *As Bill Sees It* (formerly titled *The A.A. Way of Life*, a reader by Bill). This is a selection of Bill W.’s writings.

*These books may be purchased through local A.A. groups or ordered direct from Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.*

**What is the 24-hour program?**

“The 24-hour program” is a phrase used to describe a basic A.A. approach to the problem of staying sober. A.A. s never swear off alcohol for life, never take pledges committing themselves not to take a drink “tomorrow.” By the time they turned to A.A. for help, they had discovered that, no matter how sincere they may have been in promising themselves to abstain from alcohol “in the future,” somehow they forgot the pledge and got drunk. The compulsion to drink proved more powerful than the best intentions not to drink.

The A.A. member recognizes that the biggest problem is to stay sober now! The current 24 hours is the only period the A.A. can do anything about as far as drinking is concerned. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow never comes. “But today,” the A.A. says, “today, I will not take a drink. I may be tempted to take a drink tomorrow — and perhaps I will. But tomorrow is something to worry about when it comes. I do not drink during this hour.”

Along with this realization, the program recognizes the importance of the A.A. usually has been helpful in overcoming the compulsion to drink before joining A.A. It includes such slogans as “Live and Let Live.” By making these changes in attitude toward problem drinking, A.A. is usually helpful to others.

**What is the A.A. Grapevine?**

The Grapevine is a printed historical and current literature journal of the A.A. Fellowship. It is published for members and former members of A.A. and is freely shared with members of other groups and individuals with a common purpose. It is written and edited by a staff made up of volunteers.

Single copies are available each month, a full subscription is usually purchased by a group or by an individual. A.A. in Canada; single copies are available.

**Why doesn’t A.A. work for some people?**

The answer is that those who admit that they want to stop drinking do not follow those facts uppermost in their minds. A.A. usually works for those who admit that they want to stop drinking. And usually those who have admitted that they want to stop drinking have told someone that they want to stop drinking. Coupled with this is often the desire to stop drinking.

After they have admitted to themselves and others that they want to stop drinking, A.A. becomes progressively more effective.
When it comes. My big problem is not to take a drink during this 24 hours. Along with the 24-hour program, A.A. emphasizes the importance of three slogans that have probably been heard many times by the newcomer before joining A.A. These slogans are: "Easy Does It," "Live and Let Live," and "First Things First." By making these slogans a basic part of the attitude toward problems of daily living, the average A.A. is usually helped substantially in the attempt to live successfully without alcohol.

What is the A.A. Grapevine?
The Grapevine is a monthly pocket-size magazine published for members and friends who seek further sharing of A.A. experience. The only international journal of the Society, the Grapevine is edited by a staff made up entirely of A.A.s. Single copies of the magazine are usually available each month at meetings of local groups, but most readers prefer to receive their copies on a regular subscription basis. In the U.S. the cost of annual subscription is $27.00, slightly more in Canada; single copies are $2.50.

Why doesn’t A.A. seem to work for some people?
The answer is that A.A. will work only for those who admit that they are alcoholics, who honestly want to stop drinking — and who are able to keep those facts uppermost in their minds at all times.

A.A. usually will not work for the man or woman who has reservations about whether or not he or she is an alcoholic, or who clings to the hope of being able to drink normally again.

Most medical authorities say no one who is an alcoholic can ever drink normally again. The alcoholic must admit and accept this cardinal fact. Coupled with this admission and acceptance must be the desire to stop drinking.

After they have been sober a while in A.A., some people tend to forget that they are alcoholics, with all that this diagnosis implies. Their sobriety makes them overconfident, and they decide to experiment with alcohol again. The results of such experiments are, for the alcoholic, completely predictable. Their drinking invariably becomes progressively worse.
Newcomers’ Questions

A.A. has but one primary purpose, although it may indirectly be responsible for other benefits. The following are questions that are occasionally asked by newcomers to the Fellowship.

Will A.A. help me financially?

Many alcoholics, by the time they turn to A.A. for help with their drinking problems, have also accumulated substantial financial problems. Not unnaturally, some may cherish the hope that A.A. may in some way be able to help them with more pressing financial obligations.

Very early in A.A. experience as a society, it was discovered that money or the lack of it had nothing to do with the newcomer’s ability to achieve sobriety and work his or her way out of the many problems that had been complicated by excessive use of alcohol.

The absence of money — even with a heavy burden of debts — seemed to prove no hindrance to the alcoholic who honestly and sincerely wanted to face up to the realities of a life without alcohol. Once the big problem of alcohol had been cleared away, the other problems, including those related to finances, seemed to work out, too. Some A.A.s have made sensational financial comebacks in relatively brief periods. For others, the road has been hard and long. The basic answer to this question is that A.A. exists for just one purpose, and that purpose is in no way related to material prosperity or the lack thereof.

There is nothing to prevent any member of a group from staking a newcomer to a meal, a suit of clothes, or even a cash loan. That is a matter for individual decision and discretion. It would, however, be misleading if an alcoholic gets the impression that A.A. is any sort of moneyed charity organization.

Will A.A. help me straighten out my family troubles?

Alcohol is frequently a complicating factor in family life, magnifying petty irritations, exposing character defects, and contributing to financial problems. Many men and women, by the time they turn to A.A., have a mess of their family lives.

Some newcomers, their own contrition and enthusiasm about normal patterns, are successful in teaching them. Others, who feel bitter resentment.

Almost without exception, alcoholics sincere in their a program are successful in teaching their families of origin. The bonds may have been broken with family members before. Sometimes the work has been done, and sober life has to be done all over again with a happy family.

Experience shows some comes to A.A. sober, and not because of going, may have developed a sincere desire for sobriety, the alcoholic problems of daily living, and with very purpose.

Does A.A. operate or rest homes for alcoholics?

There are no “A.A. homes.” Traditionally, no alcoholics are ever offered an institution. By adhering to the services that others, avoids any possible puratory purpose, which is a way of life with A.A.

In some areas, individual A.A. meets with local hospitals who are sponsor representatives of A.A.

In other areas, A.A.s have established primarily to newcomers. Because of their problems confronting sitters of these houses...
Some newcomers to A.A., suddenly aware of their own contributions to chaos, are eager and enthusiastic about making amends and resuming normal patterns of living with those closest to them. Others, with or without cause, continue to feel bitter resentments toward their families.

Almost without exception, newcomers who are sincere in their approach to the A.A. recovery program are successful in mending broken family lives. The bonds that reunite the honest alcoholic with family members are often stronger than ever before. Sometimes, of course, irreparable damage has been done, and a totally new approach to family life has to be developed. But generally, the story is one with a happy ending.

Experience suggests that the alcoholic who comes to A.A. solely to keep peace in the family, and not because of an honest desire to stop drinking, may have difficulty achieving sobriety. The sincere desire for sobriety should come first. Once sober, the alcoholic will find that many of the other problems of daily living can be approached realistically and with very good chance of success.

Does A.A. operate hospitals or rest homes for alcoholics?

There are no “A.A. rest homes or hospitals.” Traditionally, no professional services or facilities are ever offered or performed under A.A. sponsorship. By adhering to the tradition of avoiding services that others are prepared to render, A.A. thus avoids any possible misunderstanding of its primary purpose, which is to help alcoholics searching for a way of life without alcohol.

In some areas, service committees made up of individual A.A. members have made arrangements with local hospitals for the admission of alcoholics who are sponsored by A.A.s as individuals, not as representatives of the Fellowship as a whole.

In other areas, individual A.A. s or groups of A.A.s have established rest homes that cater primarily to newcomers to the recovery program. Because of their special understanding of problems confronting the alcoholic, the owners or managers of these homes are often able to help the
newcomer during the first crucial period of sobriety. But these homes have no connection with A.A. beyond the fact that they may be operated by persons who achieved their own sobriety through A.A. As a movement, A.A. is never affiliated with business enterprises of any description.

**Does A.A. sponsor any social activity for members?**

Most A.A.s are sociable people, a factor that may have been partially responsible for their becoming alcoholics in the first place. As a consequence, meetings of local A.A. groups tend to be lively affairs.

A.A. as a fellowship has never developed any formal program of social activities for members, since the sole purpose of the movement is to help alcoholics get sober. In some areas, members, entirely on their own individual responsibility, have opened clubrooms or other facilities for members of the local group. These clubs are traditionally independent of A.A., and great care is usually taken to avoid direct identification with the movement.

Even where no club exists, it is not uncommon for local groups to arrange anniversary dinners, picnics, parties on New Year’s Eve and other special occasions, and similar affairs. In some large cities, A.A.s meet regularly for lunch and sponsor informal get-togethers over weekends.

**What do medical authorities think of A.A.?**

*Also see pamphlet: “A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional”*

From its earliest days, A.A. has enjoyed the friendship and support of doctors who were familiar with its program of recovery from alcoholism. Doctors, perhaps better than any other group, are in a position to appreciate how unreliable other approaches to the problem of alcoholism have been in the past. A.A. has never been advanced as the only answer to the problem, but the A.A. recovery program has worked so often, after other methods have failed, that doctors today are frequently the most outspoken boosters for the program in their communities.

Some measure of the medical profession’s attitude toward A.A. was suggested in 1951 when the American Public Health Association awarded the famed Lasker Award to A.A. in recognition of A.A.’s success in reducing the demand for alcohol and in blotting out the opportunities, and not a recovery program, for alcoholics. The following are some comments on A.A. by medical authorities in that year:

In 1967, the American Medical Association polled 1,272 members of its council on alcoholism and the council’s executive committee published Dr. Ruth F. Holcomb’s findings in January 1968. Dr. Holcomb had interviewed physicians and their patients in 12 communities, and 400 patients were interviewed [now upwards of 4,000]. The results suggested that alcoholic patients had successfully overcome their problems. Dr. Holcomb stressed the importance of treating the whole person, not just the disease. A.A. was described as a form of therapy that could be beneficial in treating alcoholics.

A.A. is still new compared with other such self-help movements, and not a social activity or a recovery program. It is a movement, a fellowship, with some comments on A.A. by medical authorities in that year:

Perhaps the most potent element in this rehabilitation is the self-help principle, living which is the same as the principle of the twelve steps and his family, friends, most of whom come to understand him, and, in some cases, treat him with others who are in the same position as himself. The primary purpose of A.A., Alcohols Anonymous, is to provide a fellowship of these things for alcoholics.

M. E. Miller

American Medical Association

**What do religious authorities think of A.A.?**

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M. E. Miller

American Medical Association
American Public Health Association named Alcoholics Anonymous as one of the recipients of the famed Lasker Awards in "formal recognition of A.A.'s success in treating alcoholism as an illness and in blotting out its social stigma."

A.A. is still new (or unknown) in some communities, and not all doctors are familiar with the recovery program. But here are excerpts from comments on A.A. by leading medical authorities:

In 1967, the American Medical Association stated that membership in A.A. was still the most effective means of treating alcoholism and quoted Dr. Ruth Fox, an eminent authority on alcoholism and then medical director of the National Council on Alcoholism: "With its thousands of groups and its 300,000 recovered alcoholics [now upwards of 2,000,000], A.A. has undoubtedly reached more cases than all the rest of us together. For patients who can and will accept it, A.A. may be the only form of therapy needed."

"I have the utmost respect for the work A.A. is doing, for its spirit, for its essential philosophy of mutual helpfulness. I lose no opportunity to express my endorsement publicly and privately where it is of any concern."

Karl Menninger, M.D.
Menninger Foundation

"Perhaps the most effective treatment in the rehabilitation of the alcoholic is a philosophy of living which is compatible with the individual and his family, an absorbing faith in himself which comes only after he has learned to understand himself, and a close association with others whose experiences parallel his own. The physician's cooperation with Alcoholics Anonymous is one way of obtaining these things for his patient."

Marvin A. Block, M.D., member of the American Medical Association's Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

What do religious leaders think of A.A.?

Also see pamphlet:
"Members of the Clergy Ask About A.A."

Probably no lay movement of modern times has been more richly endowed than A.A. with the sup-
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tory of the clergy of all the great faiths. Like the
doctors, mankind’s spiritual advisers have long
been troubled by the problem of alcoholism. Many
of these advisers have heard honest people make
sincere pledges to abstain from alcohol they could
not control — only to see them break those
pledges within hours, days, or weeks. Sympathy,
understanding, and appeals to conscience have
been of little avail to the clergy in their attempts to
help the alcoholic.

Thus it is perhaps not surprising that A.A. —
although it offers a way of life rather than a way of
formal religion — should be embraced so warmly
by representatives of many different denominations.
Here is how some of them have referred to
A.A. in the past:

*The Directors Bulletin*, a Jesuit periodical
published at St. Louis, Mo.

“Father Dowling of *The Queen’s Work* staff
had exceptional opportunity to observe the
Alcoholics Anonymous movement.

“He found that the keystone of the A.A. ther-
apy includes self-denial, humility, charity, good
example, and opportunities for a new pattern of
social recreation. All denominations are repre-
sented in the movement. Readers can be
assured that no article or book on the move-
ment is one-tenth so convincing as personal
contact with an individual or group of A.A.’s
whose personalities and homes and businesses
have been transformed from chaos into sound
achievement.”

*The Living Church (Episcopal)*

“Basis of the technique of Alcoholics
Anonymous is the truly Christian principle that
a man cannot help himself except by helping
others. The A.A. plan is described by the mem-
bers themselves as ‘self-insurance.’ This
self-insurance has resulted in the restoration of
physical, mental, and spiritual health and
self-respect to hundreds of men and women
who would be hopelessly down-and-out without
its unique but effective therapy.”

**Who is responsible for the publicity about A.A.?**
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**Who is responsible for the publicity about A.A.?**
The A.A. tradition of public relations has always
been keyed to attraction rather than promotion. A.A. never seeks publicity but always cooperates fully with responsible representatives of press, radio, television, motion pictures, and other media that seek information about the recovery program.

At national and international levels, news of A.A. is made available by the Public Information Committee of the General Service Board. Local committees have also been organized to provide the media with facts about A.A. as a resource for alcoholics in their communities.

A.A. is deeply grateful to all its friends who have been responsible for the recognition accorded the movement. It is also deeply aware of the fact that the anonymity of members, upon which the program is so dependent, has been respected so faithfully by all media.

It should also be noted that within A.A., at A.A. meetings and among themselves, A.A. members are not anonymous.

A New Way of Life

A way of life cannot truly be described; it must be lived. Descriptive literature that relies upon broad, inspirational generalities is bound to leave many questions unanswered and many readers not fully satisfied that they have come upon the thing they need and seek. At the other extreme, a catalog of the mechanics and details of a program for living can portray only part of the value of such a program.

A.A. is a program for a new way of life without alcohol, a program that is working successfully for hundreds of thousands of men and women who approach it and apply it with honesty and sincerity. It is working throughout the world and for men and women in all stations and walks of life.

Perhaps this pamphlet has answered the main questions, spoken and unspoken, that you may have concerning A.A. Perhaps there are other questions that can be answered, as those in this pamphlet have been, solely on the basis of A.A. experience with the problem of alcoholism. If you have such questions, feel free to get in touch with an A.A. group in or near your community. Or write to General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.
A. A. PUBLICATIONS  Complete order forms available from
General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS,
Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

BOOKS
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (regular, portable, large-print and abridged pocket editions)
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
PASS IT ON
DAILY REFLECTIONS

BOOKLETS
CAME TO BELIEVE
LIVING SOBER
A.A. IN PRISON: INMATE TO INMATE

PAMPHLETS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY ASK ABOUT A.A.
THREE TALKS TO MEDICAL SOCIETIES BY BILL W.
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE FOR
THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
IS A.A. FOR YOU?
IS A.A. FOR ME?
THIS IS A.A.
A NEWCOMER ASKS
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN THE WORKPLACE?
DO YOU THINK YOU`RE DIFFERENT?
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY
A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
A.A. FOR THE WOMAN
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN
A.A. AND THE GAY/LESBIAN ALCOHOLIC
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC—NEVER TOO LATE
THE JACK ALEXANDER ARTICLE
YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?
INSIDE A.A.
THE A.A. GROUP
G.S.R.
MEMO TO AN INMATE
TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED
LETS BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
HOW A.A. MEMBERS CooperATE
A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
A MEMBER'S EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY
THE CO-FOUNDRERS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
SPEAKING AT NON-A.A. MEETINGS
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
A NEWCOMER ASKS
WHAT HAPPENED TO JOE; IT HAPPENED TO ALICE
(Two full-color, comic-book style pamphlets)
TOO YOUNG? (A cartoon pamphlet for teenagers)
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
(A illustrated pamphlet for inmates)

VIDEOS
A.A.—AN INSIDE VIEW
A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS
YOUR A.A. GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE,
THE GRAPEVINE AND THE GENERAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

PERIODICALS
A.A. GRAPEVINE (monthly)
LA VIDA (bimonthly)
A Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.’s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.