

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE

# Women in A.A.



This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature.

*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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## **Women in A.A.**



## **Do you have a drinking problem?**

It can be difficult for many of us to admit and accept that we have a problem with alcohol. Sometimes alcohol seems like the solution to our problems, the only thing making life bearable. But if, when we look honestly at our lives, we see that problems seem to occur when we drink — problems at home or on the job, problems with our health, with our families, even with our social lives — it is more than likely that we have a drinking problem.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, we have learned that anyone, anywhere, regardless of their personal circumstance, can suffer from the disease of alcoholism. We have also learned that anyone who wants to stop drinking can find help and recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **You are not alone**

The following stories relate the experiences of 12 women, all of whom are alcoholics who have found sobriety and a new way of life in Alcoholics Anonymous. These stories represent their experience, strength and hope.

It doesn't matter whether you are 16 or 60, rich or poor, college graduate or high school dropout, business executive or stay-at-home mom, a patient in a treatment facility, a prison inmate, or living on the street. Help is available, but you must make the decision to ask for it.

If you think you have a drinking problem, you may identify with the experiences shared in these stories. We hope you will discover, as these women did, that you are welcome in Alcoholics Anonymous, and that you, too, can find a new freedom and a new happiness in this spiritual way of life.

### ***“Despair settled in...”***

The police were at my door again, knocking to come inside. I was on my second bottle of wine, drunk and violating the orders of family court that required I have nothing to drink around the children. I had been a divorced mom for 12 years and the primary parent of three boys. Six months prior to this night, their father requested a change of primary custody, and our family was back in court and in a contentious child custody evaluation. Their father’s reasons were simple: I was an abusive drunk of a mom.

Shortly before the police arrived I had refilled my coffee cup with the cheap wine hidden in my closet, then wandered down the hall to check on the kids. I discovered that one of the boys, whom I’d sent to his room specifically to tackle his homework, had ignored me. How dare he sit on the floor playing with toys instead! When I started shouting at him in a drunken rage, he had had enough. He rose from the floor and pushed me out of his room. I fell backward across the hall, knocking one of the bi-fold doors of the laundry room off its hinges as I went down. All three boys left the house and waited outside, leaving me alone, bruised, sitting on the floor and wondering how I ended up in this state.

I don’t recall much of what the police officers said that night, but one statement rang loud and clear and is with me still today: “I’ve seen many a mother who would rather hug a bottle than hug her children. You don’t want to be that mom.” The officer was right. I didn’t want to be that mom, but yet, somehow, I was.

Sleep eluded me that night as despair settled in and those words ran over and over in my mind. In the morning, after taking the children to school, I reached out for help and called an acquaintance I’d heard had gotten sober with the help of A.A. She cleared her calendar, dropped what she was

doing and took me to my first A.A. meeting. The boys didn't return home after school that day — or any day after, for quite some time. My drinking had cost me custody of my children, and I knew if I had another drink that drink would cost me much more.

I did not know how to quit drinking, but the A.A. folks seemed to have found a solution. When it was suggested I go to 90 meetings in 90 days, I did 90 meetings in 90 days. It was suggested I get a sponsor and I did that, too. When I complained to other members after meetings that I'd lost my kids, I was reassured that it would turn out all right if I just didn't drink. I believed them and believed this program could work for me, too. So, I stuck around, washed coffee cups, stacked chairs, went to lots of meetings and, by the grace of God, haven't had a drink since that evening over seven years ago.

My first sober Christmas was spent with the boys under supervised visitation. That was my first step to rebuilding the relationships that had been chipped away by years of drinking.

Much has changed since then, and it's all good. Today the children are young men and we enjoy a warm, loving relationship. Where they once looked upon their drunken mother with disappointment and disgust, they can now see her in a new light: sober, happy, joyous and free! Thank you, Alcoholics Anonymous, for the gift of sobriety that has been given to me!

### ***"I used to be ashamed of my story."***

My parents came to the U.S. to escape the Vietnam War and started from nothing. Through hard work and determination, my father put himself through college and became a successful engineer, while my mother had a great career working for the county.

I grew up in a very strict Asian household and am part of the first generation of my family that was born in the United States. I wasn't allowed to spend the night at a friend's house, couldn't participate in sports and had to get straight As. I know now that my parents only wanted to prepare me for a good future in America. They loved me, wanted the best for me and did what they knew worked for them. A strong will, hard work,

education and discipline would get me the furthest, they believed. And do not ask for help, they'd say, as it is a sign of weakness. It was like a dictatorship in the house: my father was the provider and whatever he said was the law. Questions weren't allowed. I didn't understand at that age why all of my friends seemed to have such friendly, loving families, and I was stuck with parents who never talked to me or allowed me to do anything.

I was a defiant teen, doing everything in my power to go against my parents' rules. I was very angry at them for my childhood. However, I didn't drink alcohol until I was in college and I fell in love with it quickly. Alcohol made me "part of" — fun to be around, social and uninhibited — so I raged fast and hard. I got into a bit of drugs and the fun didn't last long. Using and drinking at my pace put me in very dangerous situations. At the age of 22, I was drugged and sexually assaulted. My world shattered. I hated myself, trusted nobody, and my drinking got out of control. My father disowned me for two years, saying that I was a disgrace to the family. I stopped using drugs, but alcohol became my only means to escape the excruciating self-loathing, shame, disgust and depression that I felt when I sobered up. This is the insanity of this disease: I drank to stop hating myself, but I hated myself the more I drank. I couldn't stop the endless cycle.

I never knew alcoholism was a disease and thought I was just a very weak human being because I was unable to stop drinking. All I wanted was to have some peace. I chased after that for years, always overshooting the mark. I went through a failed suicide attempt, a DUI, multiple ER visits, rehab and being confined involuntarily in a psychiatric facility. I took lots of medication and underwent years of therapy. I developed acute pancreatitis from drinking, and one day my body went into septic shock, shutting down my kidneys and lungs. For 34 days in the hospital, I was on a walker and oxygen tank. That experience scared me away from picking up a drink for a while, but I am an alcoholic. After nine months without alcohol and without a program, my health improved — but the disease took over one more time. I was back in the ER within two weeks.

The doctor told me that because of my pancreatitis, I would die if I drank again. I finally came to understand that I am an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. So, I made the decision to surrender

to the program of A.A. I came to the meetings wanting only to stop drinking, but by working the Steps, I've gained so much more.

My relationship with my parents has been restored. This disease broke down all the walls and forced us to be honest with each other. It must be devastating to watch alcohol suck the life out of a daughter. Today, they are my biggest supporters, along with my nonalcoholic husband, who loves A.A. and has embraced the program with me.

I have a promising career doing what I love. I have a sense of self, peace in my soul, and joy in my heart. My world is no longer gray, without purpose. I've learned how to be a good employee, wife, daughter, sister and a useful member of society. Regret, fear, self-loathing and mental anguish no longer rule my life. The obsession to drink has been lifted. I know who I am at my core, what I stand for and what to value, and I love myself. My relationship with my Higher Power is unbreakable and I wouldn't change a thing about my past. I owe my life to the program of A.A.

I used to be ashamed of my story, and now I share it freely with the hope that my experience, strength and hope might help another person struggling to stay sober.

***"I could quit for a while, but always started back up again."***

As a young African-American girl, I'd sworn off liquor after watching my father become belligerent when he drank. But one night when I was 16, I decided to see what was so special about alcohol. A friend offered me a drink at a party and I hesitated before trying it. It tasted awful; I didn't understand why people enjoyed it so much. So, like any good drunk, I decided to keep drinking until its effects took over. And when they did, it suddenly became clear! Where I had been awkward and quiet before, I was now courageous and outgoing. I could suddenly talk to boys, and my problems didn't seem to matter.

I learned the consequences of my drinking quickly, when I was grounded the next morning. Still, I wanted more of how alcohol made me feel, so I started binge drinking on the weekends with friends. I'd become good at manipulating the world around me so I could get alcohol. Often, I'd rely on my friends' older boyfriends, who were

willing to buy booze.

High school graduation came and I was faced with big choices. My parents offered to pay for college. Yet, as much as I denied my drinking was a problem, my conscience wouldn't let me accept their money, knowing I'd likely continue my party-girl lifestyle. I declined their offer, deciding instead to make my own way.

After careful deliberation, I decided to join the United States Marine Corps. My parents weren't pleased about their youngest daughter enlisting, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, but I wanted to be a Marine. So, when I turned 18 I swore in as a recruit.

After basic training, I was stationed in Jacksonville, North Carolina. I looked forward to weekends when we'd attend parties off base and drink. I met someone and we dated a year before I learned he was deploying to Afghanistan. I was heartbroken. When he left, I used the only coping tool I knew — alcohol — eventually falling into a depression. I partied more often and my drinking got worse. One night, while leaving a party, some Marines from another unit abducted and raped me. Demoralized, I again turned to alcohol. But this time it was worse than ever. My depression became desperation. I'd frequently get drunk and contemplate suicide.

I was terrified when my command noticed my drinking. By the grace of God, they offered to send me to inpatient treatment. I prepared for the occasion by getting as drunk as possible. I checked into the facility in a daze and remained that way throughout my stay. I was defiant and still unconvinced I had a drinking problem.

After treatment, I was released from service with an honorable discharge. I returned home to Missouri, where I experienced periods of heavy drinking followed by attempts to control my drinking. I could quit for a while, but always started back up again.

I realized I needed to do something with my life, so I got a job and enrolled in college. Soon after, I was arrested for DWI and was so ashamed. "You're just like your father," I told myself. "I'll never do that again." And I didn't... until I did — receiving my second DWI within a five-year time-span. This time I found myself in some serious legal trouble.

Fluorescent lights shone overhead as I sat on

the cold metal bench in a smelly holding cell. But it was there that I took my first step toward recovery. I hung my head and offered a humble prayer for help to my Higher Power. That day, something in my spirit shifted. I remained in and out of court for a year before eventually getting sentenced to jail — but I didn't drink.

I remained dry for two years before feeling the familiar urging of my disease. This time I knew where to go. I found a women's A.A. meeting and made the long walk toward the room. When I got to the front door I panicked, momentarily thinking of turning back. That's when I saw a woman approaching and asked, "Do you know where the A.A. meeting is?" She smiled and said, "Yes, I'm going there, too. Follow me."

When I arrived, I listened to what people said and did what people did. I got a sponsor and formed relationships with other alcoholics. I read the literature and started working the Steps. I allowed myself to be known and, without even realizing it, life became happier and full of peace. My former life was a battlefield of alcoholic ruin. Today I choose to live one day at a time with the help of this simple program.

***"My biggest problem was  
the whole Higher Power concept."***

When I was 13, I was so filled with fear and desperation that I was actively considering suicide. I was going to church and wanted to believe, but I was not feeling the comfort and the hope that I heard others talk about. I just wanted so badly to die.

Then I started drinking and alcohol saved my life. Alcohol did for me what I could not do for myself. But it didn't do it for long.

By the time I was 26, I had left a son, two husbands, a bunch of jobs and several boyfriends in my wake. And I was right back to the same desperate place I'd been in as a teenager. I was perfectly OK with dying because my biggest fear was living for another 50 years feeling like this.

About six weeks before I came to my first meeting, I briefly dated a man who was a member of A.A. He had left a Big Book on my coffee table. I figured that I should know something about the program he was involved in, so I picked up the book and started reading. I read the first

164 pages that day. I certainly didn't understand everything that would be asked of me if I went to A.A., but I did understand that, maybe, if I went and followed suggestions, things could be different. It was the first time I had any real hope in all my 26 years.

My biggest problem was the whole Higher Power concept. In order to drink the way I needed to drink and to do all the things that went with that, there was no room left in my life for all of the religious lessons I'd learned as a child. I was angry, bitter and resentful. I was also a militant atheist. I would argue about the non-existence of God with anyone I could corner in a bar. I still owe amends to those unknown bar patrons who had the misfortune to sit next to me.

But I needed to believe in A.A. I started attending meetings and working with a sponsor. As we worked the Steps, I struggled with the concept of God. She asked me very simply if I believed that A.A. had changed her life and the lives of the people I had met in meetings. I could see that it had.

Another member, a devout Catholic, told me it didn't matter if I believed in a God, but suggested that I keep my head up and eyes open when we closed the meeting so I could see all the people who had stayed sober that day because of A.A. That was empirical, tangible evidence of something greater than me.

I wanted to be sober more than anything, so I tried everything people suggested in meetings. I tried for quite a while. But much like when I attended church as a child, I never felt the relief and ease that others talked about. But I kept working the Steps.

By the time I got to Step Twelve, my life was very different. Through the Steps, I had made a fundamental psychic change. I had great faith that, as it says in the A.A. book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, "A.A.'s Twelve Steps ... if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."

I was still an atheist, but I was just not angry anymore. I found peace through service and working with others.

As I've stayed sober, I have had the privilege of knowing people of great faith, both inside and outside of A.A., and I've learned a great deal from them all.

I must remember that all of us have our own spiritual practice and beliefs and none of us has the “right” brand of spirituality. When I came to A.A., I was grateful to find a solution that worked for me. I no longer want to die. I don’t dread living until I’m old, and I want anyone who walks in the door of A.A. to find that, too.

My sobriety has been enriched by the diversity of spiritual experiences of the people around me. I have learned so much from my Catholic husband, my Wiccan sponsee and the priests, rabbis, Buddhists and Muslims I have known in recovery.

In our pamphlet “Many Paths to Spirituality,” there’s a quote by A.A. co-founder Bill W. from more than 50 years ago. It describes perfectly my view of hope today: “In A.A. we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering ... Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of A.A., so long as he or she so declares.”

### ***“This breaking of promises to my children . . .”***

My mother died when I was 12 years old, and I used to think that my life would have been different if she had lived. However, I now believe that my problem was already a part of me, even then. I was extremely shy and full of feelings of inferiority. My father did his best raising me and my two younger sisters, keeping the family together until I went to college. He sent both my sisters away to boarding school as well.

I can remember the overwhelming fear that gripped me as my father got ready to leave me at college. I just knew I was not going to be able to cope with getting to know all those people. I was a misfit from the beginning and I felt like one. So, my years at college were years of hurt feelings, rejection and anxiety.

I did finally get married. My husband was a very handsome man, and I thought I would lose my fears and no longer be so anxious with people. Unfortunately, this was not the case unless I had a

drink. I had learned at college that a drink or two made communication possible. And three drinks made me forget that I wasn't pretty!

Eventually, we had children, and they meant everything in the world to me. Yet I would awake horror-stricken to realize that I had been driving the car around the countryside in a blackout, the children with me.

Then my husband became ill. Lonely and frightened, I needed to drink, even though the children — and now my husband, too — were dependent upon me.

We moved to a small town in Massachusetts to live with my in-laws. I hoped that a brand-new social circle would solve the problem. It didn't.

I can guarantee that one way not to endear yourself to your mother-in-law is to get drunk publicly in a small community.

Our next move was to an old farmhouse, hard to heat and hard to take care of. My husband was away frequently, and my drinking accelerated.

One night, I went to a bar a few miles from our house, leaving my 11-year-old son in charge of his sisters. I took an elderly neighbor along. One of the men in the bar offered to drive my car home, but I argumentatively told him I could handle it. When I was close to home, I sped up a bit and crashed into a stanchion. Both of my neighbor's eyes were blackened.

Without my knowledge, the man who had offered to drive us home had followed us. He arranged to have the car hauled out of the ditch and put in the middle of our driveway. He didn't stay very long, but when he left, I went upstairs to find my son sitting beside the hot-air register with his BB gun aimed down through it.

"What in the world are you doing?" I asked. "I didn't know, Mommy," he said, "but I thought you might need help." I thought I had reached the depths at that point. I do believe that there has to be some motivating factor that makes us want to get sober, and I am sure that for me the motivating factor was my children.

I will never forget my little girl's fourth birthday party. When the day came, the mothers arrived with their children, took one look at me, and stayed for the party. I was so drunk that they dared not leave their children alone with me.

It was this breaking of promises to my children

that finally made me realize that I could no longer live with myself, and I turned to A.A. for help. Like most other people, I was full of the usual misconceptions about what I would find when I got there. I thought all alcoholics were Bowery characters. At my first meeting, I was surprised to meet people I knew as respectable church members.

More important, when I first walked into an A.A. meeting, I had that wonderful feeling of belonging. Talking with the people there, I discovered that I was not the only person in the world who had done the kind of things I had done, hurting the people I loved most. I had been afraid that I might be going out of my mind. I was grateful to learn that alcoholism is a threefold illness, that I had been ill mentally, physically and spiritually.

During my first few years, I had trouble getting to A.A. meetings regularly. The children were small, and it was not always easy to find someone to come and sit with them. Nonetheless, I fell in love with A.A. from the very first meeting and somehow knew that in this program I was going to find the answers.

Even though I didn't find my answers all at once, I have found them slowly. At the beginning, I was still so shy, so self-conscious, so wrapped up in myself that it was very hard to reach out and grasp the hand of friendship generously extended to me.

In time, through A.A.'s Twelve Steps, I realized that if I would accept the love that was being offered to me so freely and try to share it with others, I could learn through A.A. to be comfortable with people. To me this was a wonderful step forward. And it led to one of the greatest gifts that A.A. has given me: no longer being afraid. My life had always been dominated by fear — fear of people, of situations, of my own inadequacies. In A.A., I learned to have faith and so to live without fear.

***"I was insatiable, empty inside,  
looking for happiness at the  
bottom of the bottle."***

My name is Cathy and I am an alcoholic. Thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous and God's grace, I have not had to take a drink of alcohol in 21 years.

I took my first drink when I was 16 years old, which happens to be the day that I got married.

I immediately liked the effect that alcohol had on me. I am naturally a quiet, shy person, but the alcohol let me do things I wouldn't dream of doing sober.

Growing up in Queens, New York, in an integrated neighborhood, the realization that I was indeed a black woman became apparent when I moved to Chicago. Not that I could change the fact, it only made me more determined to be somebody.

I drank for only five years, but looking back, I drank alcoholically from the start. When I drank, another person took over — a person that I didn't like very much. I have three children. One was born during the latter stages of my disease, and I can see the difference today in her personality.

I was unfaithful to my husband during my drinking years. I blamed my unhappiness on him or on the fact that I had married too young. I was insatiable, empty inside, looking for happiness at the bottom of the bottle.

I didn't drink in bars. Most of my drinking took place at home. My husband's job took him out of town a great deal, and I would give him approximately half an hour, then go to the liquor store, buy my supply and drink continuously until I passed out. I would get in what I later learned to be a "self-pity bag," call my drinking partners over and have a party. However, the party feeling only lasted a short while before the remorse and guilt took over. I had no idea that I was an alcoholic. I didn't know what an alcoholic was. Again, I thought all my problems were caused by my husband, and at that point I made up my mind that I was going to divorce him.

One afternoon, while I was sitting on the sofa listening to the radio or the TV, I don't remember which, I heard a voice say, "If you have a problem with alcohol, call this number." I had been told that I drank too much, so why not? If the announcer had said, "If you are an alcoholic..." I would never have called. Out of curiosity I called. A lady, who was very polite, asked me if I needed help with a drinking problem; she also asked me if I could stay sober for 24 hours. I said no. She said that anyone could stay sober for 24 hours. I felt insulted and hung up the phone.

I was also one of those "crying drunks," so naturally I cried some more. The next day, I got up, started to drink again and remembered that

I had called A.A. the day before. I decided to call again. I spoke with the same lady; she offered to have someone call me and take me to a meeting. I refused to go, hung up, cried and drank some more.

I called again, and she asked if she could mail me some material. She did, and I read the material, called her back again, and she told me where a meeting was.

It was an open meeting. I asked a neighbor to go with me that night. There was a gentleman speaking. I don't remember anything that was said, except a lady gave me a "beginners kit" with names on it and asked me to call someone before I took my next drink. She also told me to "keep coming back."

That was 21 years ago.

Today, I go to meetings to remind myself that although I have been sober a number of years, I am still only one drink away from a drunk. Alcoholics Anonymous allowed me the opportunity to go back to school, something I have always wanted to do. In a few months, I will have my master's degree in psychology. That can only happen in A.A. The tools are there; I only had to stay sober, reach out and get them.

Today, again, as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am responsible. I have a good job that allows me to share a part of myself with the recovered as well as the still-suffering alcoholic. For me it still works — one day at a time.

***"I tried to drink myself to death...  
to block out the misery and pain I felt."***

One of the promises in the Big Book talks about not regretting the past nor wishing to shut the door on it. My past was filled with shame, degradation and terrible losses because of my alcoholism. But when a loving sponsor guided me through the Steps, I experienced both divine and human forgiveness.

The greatest pain that resulted from my alcoholism came from losing my baby daughter. I made a decision to give her up for adoption before she was born. My drinking was out of control prior to my pregnancy, and the only reason I didn't drink while pregnant was because alcohol made me sick.

I went through the nine months dry and filled with self-hatred, shame, depression and terrible guilt. I used an adoption agency that, in those days, offered no counseling to me. Every day I woke up with a sense of total uncertainty. I did not feel capable of raising a child by myself, and deep down I didn't feel as though I deserved a child because I was so very bad. When she was born, I held her briefly before she left for her new world. A piece of my soul died when they took her away.

For the next eight years, I tried to drink myself to death, tried to block out the misery and pain I felt. I was unable to maintain relationships, jobs, dreams, plans and, eventually, unable to maintain anything.

My disease progressed quickly and I became totally immersed in a vodka bottle. My family offered me money to get rid of me. I was arrested; my friends sat on barstools in dark, seedy places; and I whirled through the lives of many innocent people, leaving wreckage wherever I went.

I became hopeless. I thought about my daughter whenever I saw a child. I worried about her safety and wallowed in self-pity over my decision to give her up. I was a drunken martyr and not a pretty sight. It seemed that I had lost everything important.

It is only by God's grace that I am sober today, and I am grateful to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. In A.A., I found the opportunity to face the truth in every area of my life.

When I came into the program, I knew in my heart that I was finally home. I felt safe for the first time in my life. I desperately wanted to stay sober and was willing to do whatever I was told. However, being an egomaniac with no self-worth, I balked at doing an inventory.

Finally, the day came. I was either going to drink or I was going to write a Fourth Step and share it with my sponsor.

My biggest secret was the loss of my daughter. I finally got everything out, but the wound took years to heal. I thought I had forgiven myself many times, but the shame and guilt seemed to linger. I felt an empty place in my heart that nothing could fill.

My biggest problem was resolving the conflict within myself. I could not understand how anyone, including me, would give up a child. My husband and I never had children because I did

not think I deserved to have another baby. My selfishness was costly to a lot of people.

One night I was sitting in a meeting on the Eighth Step when someone said they continued to add to their amends list over time in an attempt to become more honest in their recovery. I immediately thought of my daughter and how I had not known how to make amends, since I had no idea where she was.

The action I took was to call the adoption agency and ask to place information about myself on file. I did not want to search for her, but I wanted her to be able to know who I was if she ever decided to look for me. They sent me a legal form to complete, which I held for several years. My fear that she would hate me was very great for a long time.

Finally, I filled out the form, wrote a letter to my daughter about myself, and enclosed some photographs.

Two years later, I received a telephone call from the adoption agency.

"Pat, this is a wonderful day," the woman said. "Your daughter wants to talk with you, and she wants to meet you."

We set up a call time for that very night; I cried for the rest of the day. My A.A. sponsor and my sponsor from another program came to my apartment to support me. I prayed for guidance and strength.

The phone rang and I heard her voice, which sounded a lot like my own. I answered her questions and began a relationship that is absolutely awesome. She is a beautiful woman with a forgiving heart and soul.

My perception of her feelings was completely wrong. She had never felt anything except love and curiosity about me. Her adoptive mother and I have a wonderful relationship and have spent time together. She did a beautiful job raising my daughter, and I owe her a huge debt of gratitude. The hole in my heart is filled and overflows with love today.

None of this would have been possible without the other gift in my life: sobriety and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I feel divine forgiveness and sometimes believe I'm the luckiest mom in the world. Recently, I got a card from her that said, "I am so lucky because I have two wonderful mothers."

***"I was unable to stay sober because I wasn't ready to be honest."***

I first came to A.A. 22 years ago, when I was 19. I was a scared young woman, at war with herself and the world. The anger fed the war and covered my fears. When I tried to get sober, the anger made it hard as I fought the suggestions given me — sometimes outright and sometimes with subtlety.

I knew my life was unmanageable yet still couldn't see the powerlessness. I couldn't give up my will. My relationship with the God of my understanding was strained. I had tried the way of religion before coming to A.A., but I continued to drink. While in A.A. I listened to others' concepts of a higher power. I struggled to believe that God cared and loved me. I had been angry at God for a long time and all the shame I felt further blocked me from God. In the early days of my recovery, I kept a lot inside and wore a mask. I was in denial and unable to see things about myself.

One of the easiest ways for me to avoid looking at myself was to get into a relationship. I dated and married a recovering alcoholic. When I had about five years sober, I drank again. I was unable to stay sober because I wasn't ready to be honest. I had replaced my obsession with alcohol with a relationship.

I've come to learn in sobriety that relationships involve communication, honesty, love, giving and receiving. They aren't meant to be a distraction to life.

The backdrop to all of this was my chronic depression. Since coming into A.A., I've had many psychiatric hospital stays, disability leaves and ECT treatments. As a depressant, alcohol had only worsened my already severe depression. It took me many years to be honest about this. I have had to accept that I will always have to take medication.

Acceptance of this and other aspects of my life was critical in sobriety. I needed to get honest about the depression and also my sexual orientation.

At some point, I told my husband that I thought I was gay. I knew I was, but I was trying to soft-pedal it. The truth was that we were both miserable. I became suicidal and had homicidal thoughts. As a result, I had another stay at a psy-

chiatric hospital. My husband and I separated and divorced.

I've had to grow up in this program. At one point, I told someone that I was "constitutionally incapable of being honest." She flat-out told me I wasn't. Each week she would ask me how I was and I would go into a long list of woes. She would respond, "Did you drink today?" I would say "No." And she'd remind me, "Then it's a good day."

Acceptance of my powerlessness over alcohol, my depression and my sexual orientation remains. But today, I can be comfortable in my own skin. I've realized that God was always there and continues to be there to guide my way. God loves me no matter what I've done, and today I try to do His will. The God of my understanding loves me as a lesbian. I'm not that alone, unique, scared woman I used to be.

Today, with nine years of continuous sobriety, I can share my experience, strength and hope with others. I can be an example that recovery is possible no matter what life throws in our way.

***"I felt that my luck would soon run out...  
I didn't want to go to prison."***

My father was born in Mexico. My mother was born in Laredo, Texas. My parents were married and I was born in San Antonio three months later. Almost annually, my mother gave birth, to six children in all.

When I was a toddler, my dad took me with him to the bar in town. He gave me a drink from his mug. He explained that I had to be very still so that I wouldn't fall off the barstool, and then he went to the restroom. While he was gone, I picked up his beer mug and drank from it. Since that first drink, I couldn't get enough to satisfy the incredible compulsion for more that set in once I started to drink.

When I was 7 years old, my parents decided we had to move. They'd been talking about it for a while, and then one night some people showed up at our house. They said they had jobs waiting for them in Garrison. My parents called and spoke to the prospective employer who said he'd be glad to give my father a job, too. Our whole family was welcomed, so we moved.

Neither one of my parents had mastered the

English language, but most of the time they made themselves understood; however, I didn't know one word of English. Due to the language barrier, I found it truly difficult to learn.

When I was 8 years old, our family moved again — to Houston, where I was placed in an ESL (English as a second language) class. Many kids ridiculed me. They called me names and constantly picked on me.

When I got to junior high, I met a friend who taught me how to dress "cool." I began to get suspended from school for fighting and truancy. I also started drinking beer, smoking cigarettes and using inhalants.

At the age of 12, I read a newspaper advice column with a letter from another 12-year-old who said that her father was coming into her bedroom in the middle of the night and fondling her. I could hardly believe it because the exact same thing was going on in our house. The column suggested that the girl tell a school counselor, her mother or the police. I felt that I couldn't tell my mother, so I went to the school counselor. She called in the authorities. I was asked to identify my father and he was taken into custody. Since he'd never been in trouble before this, he received only five years' probation. He was also ordered to move out of the household immediately. My mother kept asking me if it were true, while my father insisted that he hadn't done anything wrong. I couldn't understand how she could possibly doubt that I was telling the truth. Naturally, the word of what had happened was all over school and in the general area where we lived. Engulfed with guilt, shame and confusion, I drank more and more. I wanted to forget that it had ever happened. Boys, supposedly friends before this, tried to make advances. My mother didn't help. When she became so overwhelmed with having to do everything for us herself, she would say, "If you hadn't opened your big mouth, your father would still be here helping me!" These words, from my own mother, haunted me for the longest time.

I began to run away from home, the first time with my 23-year-old boyfriend. We lived in Galveston with his sister, and drank and drugged together. We got into terrible fights. He beat the living hell out of me.

After about eight months, I went back home

and returned to school. Two years later, I worked as an exotic dancer. I became pregnant out of wedlock when I was 18.

By this time, I was really into going out and staying gone. Either I would pass out somewhere or get locked up for being under the influence. I felt that my luck would soon run out and I'd get locked up for a lot longer time than a few days. I didn't want to go to prison.

Like my first sexual relationship, all the significant ones that followed were basically the same. I had a knack for picking real losers just like my dad. They were all convicted felons, alcoholics, drug addicts and abusers. Needless to say, I thought very little of myself.

After the birth of my three other children, I found sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous. I have struggled through plenty of hard times in sobriety, with my children and with all the responsibilities that go with trying to live life on life's terms. My oldest daughter still lives with my mother, but she's very proud of me. My life today is truly very good compared to the way it was. My landlord is not threatening to evict me. When I go into a pawn shop, I am there to shop, not to pawn my stuff to get drunk. When I was pulled over by a cop, he actually gave me a traffic ticket and allowed me to get back into my own car. What a big, big difference! Just the fact that I have a car amazes me. In my drinking days, I sold my car, because drinking was much more important. Thank God I found A.A.

***“By the end of my drinking . . .  
I had threatened patients, been drunk  
on duty, contemplated murder . . . ”***

I'm an alcoholic. I am also a registered nurse, a single woman who enjoys many activities. But this was not always the case.

I have been sober in Alcoholics Anonymous for a little more than five years now, and they have been the happiest years of my life. Prior to seeking A.A., I was "dry" for a year, out of fear of another bout with the DTs. I had sworn I'd never take another drink because I couldn't again come off a drunk the way I did the week between Christmas and New Year's many years ago.

Early on that Christmas morning, driving

drunk and under the influence of narcotics, I snapped off a telephone pole and demolished my car, not for the first time. Abusive and uncooperative in the emergency room (I was still in uniform), I refused care until the following morning, when I could be admitted free of alcohol and other mood-changing drugs.

At that time, as well as I can remember, I was a day drinker and user of whatever chemicals I could obtain with or without prescription. After I was discharged, my increasing irritability, nervousness and tremors went to full-blown hallucinations accompanied by a growing horror of what I was experiencing.

I couldn't go back to the hospital that employed me and my family could no longer tolerate my antisocial behavior. For another full year I continued to hit successive bottoms, one substance at a time, but there was no change in my essential outlook on life. Recovery for me began when I stopped taking drugs and began to make active efforts to get better. It began with attendance at my first A.A. meeting.

I had been a bashful child — oversensitive, overweight and unsure of myself. I sought solace in books and in the role of "little mother." I remember feeling important when Dad let me beg sips of his drinks. I liked the effect. My first real blackout/pass-out drunk occurred when I was 13. It felt as though the only way I could shut off my sense of inferiority and nagging conscience was to be drunk.

In school I was considered a good-natured partner who would give anyone "the shirt off her back." People-pleasing caused me much grief, especially in my profession, until I learned to say no to the first drink.

For me, putting on that white uniform and cap meant unleashing Wonder Nurse. Out of uniform, I was heavily into a counterculture scene. To offset that, I needed to be Florence Nightingale. I was always angry at the incompetence all around me, convinced that I was the only one doing the work.

With all that anger and martyrdom, I had to get drunk after work to let off steam. I needed my job to support my habit, and nursing was the only respectable thing I had.

By the end of my drinking, which lasted 12 years, I had threatened patients, been drunk on

duty, contemplated murder, dealt drugs to children, overdosed, had two abortions and passed out in bars in my uniform. I smelled bad and had cheated on my most loyal — and last — friend, with her husband. I'd drive when I was too drunk to walk. I demolished several vehicles and was stopped many times by the police, without having any memory of it.

I loathed drunks because they were visible proof of what I was beneath my facade — manipulative, dishonest, fearful and lonely. I've spent most of my life pretending to be something I'm not.

In A.A., I have been shown how to really change — from within, not just the externals — by people who now laugh at their troubles, cry in their joy, and enjoy life.

Today, I'm working as a flight nurse on a helicopter transport team, an opportunity for professional growth that I wouldn't be able to handle without sobriety. I have a reputation for honesty, although I'm not always diplomatic about it. The beauty of sobriety is the ability to admit my wrong if I've harmed someone by an unthinking word or deed, and then go on from there. While drinking, I had a horrible fear of anyone finding out I made mistakes. Therefore, I was unable to learn by my errors and continued doing the same things that didn't work, over and over again.

I can now learn and grow with the people placed in my life, without putting unrealistic expectations on them or myself. I've gone back to my childhood church with an adult faith, and I'm active in A.A. service as well as other community and professional affairs.

One area of continued struggle for me in the program is the ability to see myself realistically in relation to those around me. Acquiring self-esteem and self-acceptance have probably been the hardest tasks I have faced. Out of adversity, in many uncomfortable living situations, I have found some self-respect and peace of mind, whether or not I've received approval.

I appreciate so much the gift of an honest self-love. I've always wanted to be able to help others and be useful but was incapable due to my crippling addictive needs. Now free, I am living the life I never dreamed possible and realize more fully each day that I am only limited in life by my lack of faith. Once a walking zombie, a capable, complete, caring woman is emerging.

***“My shame and remorse and guilt  
were weighing me down.”***

One woman's journey to Alcoholics Anonymous began like this: The telephone call was made to the A.A. phone number and two lovely, clean, sane, sober women were sent to a middle-class suburb on a Saturday night. I'm sure they wondered what they would encounter. They rang the bell.

The door was opened by an apparition in a wine-stained robe, wearing orange juice cans for hair rollers, walking on tiptoes because her heels were greased with petroleum jelly and she'd fall if she walked flat-footed. The explanation this apparition gave for her charming appearance was that the next day was Sunday and she had to look good for her Sunday school class.

The visitors could tell from the wine stains on the robe and the carpet that this greased apparition had a problem keeping the alcohol on the inside. They could also tell she had a few other problems!

At one time I was ashamed to admit I was that apparition. Today I know this experience can be used to save another life.

How those two women kept straight faces as they began to share their experience, strength and hope, I'll never know. One talked about how her drinking had led her to A.A. The other talked about how her drinking affected her family life. Both said they were finding hope and recovery in meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Of course, I cried — a lot — as I listened to them. My shame, remorse and guilt were weighing me down (to say nothing of the orange juice cans). We talked about drinking. I tried to tell them about me — what a terrible person I was. And then the most beautiful words that I hope I never forget were said to me: “You don't have to tell us anything about yourself that feels bad. We only want to help you stop drinking.”

I was doubtful. How could anyone like me? I didn't like me. I wasn't sure you would accept this woman. The mother of four children and stepmother to two who broke up two families and two homes surely wouldn't be judged appropriate to come into this group, if these women were any example. Also, I was not a “pure alcoholic” — I was dually addicted, although at that time I couldn't see how prescription drugs were also

causing me monumental depression and anxiety. Although I had never heard of or read the "Twelve and Twelve," I was sure I could be classified as a "fallen woman."

Two nights later, minus orange juice cans and slippery heels, I was taken to a meeting. Still sure you would judge my outsides, I wore a brand new white winter coat, fabulous straw hat, white gloves — the works. After the meeting was over, I looked for my white coat and couldn't find it. Someone needed it more than I did. (They left me the hat.) I was too frightened to show my outrage at such an act. I was still afraid you wouldn't accept me. But not one single person ever told me I didn't qualify or that I wasn't acceptable.

Three weeks later I heard a talk that broke my dammed-up tears. A man had done what I had done — walked out on a family and home for the only lover that was important: booze. He was sober six years and I heard him say, "Everything will be okay, if you don't drink."

In my home group there are 15 to 25 men and women. There are several dually addicted people. There are people who have pilfered from the till. There is a man who gets the Steps mixed up since he had a stroke. There is a woman whose husband has been unable to speak or function for over 10 years.

We range in age from 23 to about 67. We have a new member with six days of sobriety and an "oldtimer" of 14 years. We are predominantly white, but often have a few black men or women attend. We are single, married, divorced, widow and widower. We are doctors, lawyers, homemakers, computer operators, stable hands, salespeople and retirees. We have slippers and staunch members who didn't touch another drop from the day they walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are believers, doubters and atheists. We all have problems other than alcohol.

But we are all there for one reason and one reason alone — we each have a desire to stop drinking. No one who comes through the doors of our little brick meetinghouse leaves without knowing that, or without knowing that we not only want them to come back, we need them back.

In my home group, we come together to share our experience, strength and hope with every suffering alcoholic that comes our way — or is already there. And we never ask questions — so no one has to tell us anything they don't want to.

***"I ran the streets for 10 years and became a hard, mean, clueless alcoholic."***

I pretty much raised myself from the age of 9 until 13. My mom died and my father was a drunk who was over his head when it came to raising my sister and me all by himself. He went to work, and I did whatever I felt like doing. At the age of 13 my dad remarried, but by then I was a wild child. I knew all the answers. I was sneaky and a pretty good liar. Rules were there to be broken.

I ran away from a reform school at the age of 16 and made my way to New York City from Dallas, Texas. I was free. I thought I was smart, but I was really an amateur and extremely gullible. I started drinking like there was no tomorrow. I drank large quantities from the very start, blacking out and suffering the consequences of being very stupid, very young and very drunk.

It only took a few years to find out that the people I came in contact with did not have my best interests at heart. I kept trying to believe what they said and I kept getting hurt, manipulated and used. I ran the streets for 10 years and became a hard, mean, clueless alcoholic — though I didn't know it at the time. Cheap wine gave me courage to walk the streets and act tough to keep the predators away, and it helped me justify my lifestyle so that I could live with myself. The worst cheap wines made me sick and insane. Wine became a poison that sent me to jails, hospitals and abandoned houses. Although my life was a complete drunken mess, I thought booze was not my problem but my savior. Living life drunk fit my lifestyle and enabled me to be the sleaze I had become.

Through a series of events I found my family in Tucson, Arizona, and I made the move. I was ready to get a job, pay taxes and live like normal folk, but I hadn't a clue that alcohol was my problem. I thought I just needed to get off the streets and stop getting arrested.

After seven more years of pitiful, incomprehensible demoralization, I surrendered and came to my first A.A. meeting. I fell in love with the Fellowship. I had no idea what I was doing and did not trust a soul, but the people in the meetings encouraged me to keep coming back. I hated men, and often when I shared in meetings I'd say, "All men are dogs." Some of the guys in my home group would start barking. Secretly, I loved it.

The first person I started to trust was my spon-

sor, Pat. I didn't know what to think about her because she was always hurting my feelings. I started to trust her one day when she told me she didn't care about my feelings but about my life. My trust in her grew when — between sobs — I shared with her that I was ashamed I had sold my body for money. She looked at me and without batting an eye said, "Well, honey, at least you got paid for it." Those few words took away my shame, and I've loved her ever since.

The first man I trusted in A.A. was her husband, Luther. I watched him work with newcomers when I was at their house. I saw how he treated Pat and the other women. I never saw him disrespect anyone, and he was very nice to me. It actually seemed like he liked me even after he knew about my past.

A couple of years into sobriety I started trusting other men in my home group, but I didn't realize it until one hot summer day in Tucson. Two members of my home group, Tim and Tony, loved to fish. There were not many places to fish in Tucson, but Tony knew them all. I really don't like fishing, but I loved hanging out with these guys. You have to know that there was no hanky-panky going on here. I cussed like a sailor, smoked without a pause, was about 280 pounds soaking wet, and didn't care about sparing peoples' feelings.

I don't remember if they asked me if I wanted to go with them, or if I ingratiated myself into their outing, but either way I went. This was the day I knew A.A. had changed my life and enabled me to believe in and trust people again. We had finished fishing and were on our way home. I was sitting in the back seat by myself. The soft sound of their voices drifted over me. The warm fresh air from an open window kissed my face. I closed my eyes and I felt at peace. I was in the car with two men who wanted nothing from me but to be my friends. We had spent three hours together; respect was given and shared. We laughed, fished and shared sobriety. I was happy, joyous and free for the first time in my adult life. Just as A.A. had promised, my life had been recreated.

That beautiful hot Tucson day was the first time I knew I could believe in and love people once more. It's been that way ever since. I'm grateful to God and A.A. for taking this jaded alcoholic woman and giving her sobriety, life and the ability to trust again.

## **How it works**

A.A. provides a proven pathway that can lead to recovery. By listening to the many men and women in A.A. share frankly and openly about their alcoholism, we come to recognize that we, too, are suffering from the same disease. Utilizing the Twelve Steps of A.A. and the A.A. principles we come to rely on, we discover new ways of living. If we are willing to be honest about our drinking and earnestly apply what we learn about ourselves in A.A., our chances at recovery are good.

While A.A. may not have the solution to all our problems, by following the simple suggestions of the A.A. program, we can find a solution to our drinking problem and a way to live life one day at a time without alcohol.

## **Where to find A.A.**

There are A.A. groups in large cities, rural areas and villages throughout the world. Many A.A. intergroup or central offices have websites where information about local A.A. meetings can be found, and almost anywhere in the United States or Canada you will find a telephone number for A.A. These resources can help direct you to a meeting in your community. Additionally, information about local meetings can often be obtained from doctors and nurses, from the clergy, media outlets, police officials, hospitals and alcoholism facilities that are familiar with our program.

Each A.A. group endeavors to provide a safe meeting place for all attendees and to encourage a secure and nurturing environment. In A.A., the shared experience, strength and hope of sober alcoholics is the lifeline to sobriety; our common suffering and our common solution transcend most difficulties, helping us to create the conditions in which to carry A.A.'s message of hope and recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Most women alcoholics feel quite comfortable in any A.A. group. Yet, many A.A. communities also have special interest women's meetings where it may be easier for a woman to identify as an alcoholic or to be open about certain personal issues.

If you cannot locate a group in your area, please contact the A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, (212) 870-3400, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). They will put you in touch with the group nearest you.

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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.

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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 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 nonprofessional, 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.



**A.A. PUBLICATIONS** Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400; Website: aa.org.

**BOOKS**

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS  
DAILY REFLECTIONS  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE  
AS BILL SEES IT  
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS  
'PASS IT ON'

**BOOKLETS**

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LIVING SOBER  
CAME TO BELIEVE  
A.A. IN PRISON: INMATE TO INMATE  
VOICES OF WOMEN IN AA (from AA Grapevine)

**PAMPHLETS**

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**Experience, Strength and Hope:**

A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC  
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN  
YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.  
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE  
LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.  
THE "GOD" WORD: ATHEIST AND AGNOSTIC MEMBERS IN A.A.  
A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES —  
AND THEIR SPONSORS  
ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS  
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES  
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?  
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY  
MEMO TO AN INMATE  
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL  
(An illustrated pamphlet for inmates)

**About A.A.:**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.  
IS A.A. FOR ME?  
IS A.A. FOR YOU?  
A NEWCOMER ASKS  
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?  
THIS IS A.A.  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP  
THE A.A. GROUP  
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL  
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS  
SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX  
THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED  
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED  
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED  
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

**For Professionals:**

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY  
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.  
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE  
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL  
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS  
IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?  
MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY ASK ABOUT A.A.  
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY  
A MEMBER'S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**VIDEOS** (available on aa.org)

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A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
A NEW FREEDOM  
CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS

**For Professionals:**

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS  
A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

**PERIODICALS**

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AA GRAPEVINE (monthly)  
LA VINA (bimonthly, in Spanish)

## 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.**

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