

# About A.A.

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

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## A.A.'s “SINGLENESSE OF PURPOSE”

### ALSO INSIDE:

ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS TO CELEBRATE  
90 YEARS OF RECOVERY  
AT 2025 INTERNATIONAL  
CONVENTION IN  
VANCOUVER, CANADA,  
JULY 3-6

### THE FIFTH TRADITION — A BRIEF HISTORY

The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) fields inquiries from professionals who seek information on how A.A. can help the people they serve or treat. Occasionally, those people are seeking help with a variety of problems that are not alcohol related. We hope that we can explain a little bit more about how Alcoholics Anonymous offers help only for those who are looking for help with their drinking problem.

Alcoholics Anonymous is guided by a series of principles called [The Twelve Traditions](#). One of those Traditions, our Fifth Tradition, states that the primary purpose of an Alcoholics Anonymous group is to carry the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers.

A.A.'s Fifth Tradition established our singleness of purpose; it has guided Alcoholics Anonymous for nearly 90 years — preventing us from being distract-

ed or sending confused messaging in an attempt to help with problems that we can't handle.

Other Traditions help keep the A.A. Fellowship free from discussions of politics and sectarian religion, or guard us against accepting financial support or assistance from non-A.A. entities that might imply affiliation. More on how these Traditions developed can be found in the pamphlet [A.A. Tradition—How It Developed](#) (<https://www.aa.org/aa-tradition-how-it-developed>).

This Fifth Tradition suggests that A.A. sticks to the problem of alcoholism, recovery from alcoholism, and problems as they relate to alcohol. We are not professionals; we are amateurs helping one another. We are not professional medical experts. We don't offer treatment for any illnesses or maladies. Our only subject is Alcoholics Anonymous and recovery from alcoholism through [The Twelve Steps](#).

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## “Our Fifth Tradition, states that the primary purpose of an Alcoholics Anonymous group is to carry the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

We don't engage in advice on prescriptions, therapy, treatment for mental health issues, physical issues, or related problems. We are aware that many professionals currently refer to alcoholism as substance-use disorder or alcohol-use disorder. There are any number of descriptions or diagnoses. We do not engage in any debate about that. While professional terminology has changed over the years, our singleness of purpose has not. We do not oppose other recovery methods or treatment methods. We have no monopoly on recovery or spirituality. Our sole program is the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as outlined in our basic text, [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), commonly referred to as “The Big Book.”

### HOW PROFESSIONALS CAN HELP

At times, professionals ask questions, such as:

**Q:** “Well, what about the drug addict?”

**A:** Other Twelve Step fellowships deal specifically with narcotics addictions, gambling, and other addictions. However, if a drug addict or a gambling addict or any other addict is an alcoholic, they are still welcome to join Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the 90 years since Alcoholics Anonymous was founded, many alcoholics have also had addictions such as narcotics, opioids, and pills. This is not new. In 1958, A.A.'s co-founder Bill W. wrote an

oft-cited article that has been excerpted in the pamphlet [Problems Other Than Alcohol](https://www.aa.org/problems-other-alcohol) (<https://www.aa.org/problems-other-alcohol>):

*“I see no way of making nonalcoholic addicts into A.A. members. Experience says loudly that we can admit no exceptions, even though drug users and alcoholics happen to be first cousins of a sort. If we persist in trying this, I'm afraid it will be hard on the drug user himself, as well as on A.A. We must accept the fact that no nonalcoholic, whatever his affliction, can be converted into an alcoholic A.A. member.”*

**Q:** How do I convince my client that they are an alcoholic?

**A:** We welcome anyone who wants to treat their alcoholism, anyone who has a desire to stop drinking. There are no other requirements for A.A. membership.

One way a potential member can discover if they are an alcoholic is to attend an open meeting and learn if they identify with alcoholic experiences and emotions. By listening to A.A. members share their stories of recovery, they may learn that they also have this problem. Many alcoholics have other addictions but find that their problems began with alcohol.

The key word here is identification. As we attend A.A. meetings, we listen to others share and identify as an alcoholic by recognizing the similarities and not the differ-

ences in our stories. Many people have discovered while attending meetings and listening to others in A.A. share their stories, that they too identify. While alcohol may not have been their drug of choice, they have had an unhealthy relationship with alcohol that accompanied them along their journey with other substances.

People who identify as alcoholics and drug addicts often share that their problems with substances began with alcohol, progressed to include other substances, including hard drugs, and ended with alcohol. This is a very common story. We are not here to judge anyone based on their use of other substances. We are here to welcome anyone who wishes to do something about their drinking problem.

We have also heard experiences from members who identify as drug addicts joining Alcoholics Anonymous and hearing their stories told by others and how they identify as alcoholics. Understanding that the root of all their problems is alcoholism helps them identify as an alcoholic.

This is for each individual member to explore; maybe they will consult with a sponsor or other members they meet in A.A. A sponsor is someone who has experience in Alcoholics Anonymous, has experience with the Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, and guides

a newer member through their sobriety journey. A sponsor is someone with whom a member will stay in touch to help navigate early sobriety, to provide examples of things they can do to stay sober; but together they work on the Twelve Steps and their program of recovery. By consulting honestly with the sponsor, they recognize that they, too, are an alcoholic.

**Q:** What is an "open meeting"?

**A:** Anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous may attend open A.A. meetings as an observer, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed meetings. For more on the different types of A.A. meetings, please visit our website [What to Expect at an A.A. Meeting](#).

**Q:** Why singleness of purpose? Doesn't A.A. work for anyone?

**A:** Our experience has shown that A.A. only works for those who admit that they are alcoholics and who honestly want to stop drinking. We have found through experience that it does not work for people who have reservations, who might say..."Well, my problem is drugs. I don't have a problem with alcohol. I can have a few glasses of wine with dinner safely."

That is not the experience with most alcoholics; most alcoholics didn't want a glass or two of wine with dinner. Most alcoholics have an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, so those people who come in with reservations about drinking may start drinking again. They then may develop into alcoholics. If so, they will at least have been aware of Alcoholics Anonymous

and may return when they realize that they have a drinking problem and want to do something about it.

And as stated before, Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on medical advice, medication, or any other treatment. These matters are for physicians or health care practitioners and the individual. These are not determined by members of A.A. or by a sponsor.

**Q:** Where can my patient or client learn more?

**A:** A simple set of questions to help them recognize they have a problem can be found in the pamphlet [Is A.A. for Me?](#) We also offer a Meeting Guide App <https://www.aa.org/meeting-guide> that lists the closest locations for face-to-face A.A. meetings with text, map features, and local inter-group/central offices. These local offices can also provide information about getting started in A.A. with Professionals Can Help

### MORE ON THE A.A. PROGRAM

Recently, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services (AAWS) published a companion to our Big Book called [The Plain Language Big Book](#), which is a tool for accessing the

book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Many other publications are available, such as the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, members' personal reflections in our Daily Reflections, and other A.A. and AA Grapevine literature in which members share their stories on how they apply the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to recover from alcoholism.

### HOW CAN A.A. HELP PROFESSIONALS?

For more information on Alcoholics Anonymous, please reach out to the Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) desk, at [cpc@aa.org](mailto:cpc@aa.org). Our office can connect you with local A.A. volunteers who can provide A.A. materials, inform your clients and staff on how to find A.A. in your community, and arrange to give a presentation to staff or clients in your facility. Helping professionals help alcoholics who seek recovery from alcoholism is our purpose. We welcome your questions, comments and requests.

To sign up for digital delivery of this newsletter, or to download past issues, please visit: <https://www.aa.org/about-aa>.



## HIGHLIGHT

# Alcoholics Anonymous to Celebrate 90 Years of Recovery at 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, Canada, July 3–6



### UPDATE — COUNTDOWN TO VANCOUVER!

There's still time to [register](#) for the 2025 A.A. International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, July 3–6, 2025.

Alcoholics Anonymous will bring together tens of thousands of members and guests from around the world, July 3–6, 2025, for its International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, to mark the Fellowship's 90th anniversary.

Held every five years, the event celebrates the founding of A.A. in 1935, when one alcoholic reached out to another with a message of hope — and a new way of life. Since then, A.A. has grown to a global community of more than 1.6 million members in more than 180 countries, helping individuals from all walks of life recover from alcoholism through one-on-one support and shared experience.

The International Convention promises to be one of the largest-ever conventions hosted by the city of Vancouver. Events will take place at the Vancouver Convention Centre and BC Place Stadium. They include:

- ▶ A huge Block Party on Thursday night to kick off the festivities, featuring music, dancing, and joyful fellowship.
- ▶ An opening ceremony in which A.A. members from more than 80 countries carry flags that represent A.A.'s presence within their borders.
- ▶ Three Big Meetings that will fill BC Place Stadium, as all attendees gather for some of the largest A.A. meetings in the world.
- ▶ An Oldtimers Meeting where A.A. members with long-term sobriety are invited to share their experience, strength and hope.
- ▶ More than 250 meetings, panels and workshops in a variety of languages.
- ▶ Hospitality Suites hosted by groups from around the world.

Volunteer opportunities are still available! Get the latest information on volunteering [here](#).

Register for the convention today [here](#)! Housing options are still available — check out our Housing Resources information [here](#).

Learn more at [aa.org/international-convention](https://aa.org/international-convention) and listen to [Our Primary Purpose: GSO Podcast — Bonus Episode: Countdown to Vancouver!](#)