



# Seeds of Service

VOL. XXX ISSUE 2  
SPRING 2015—THEME

Safety and Respect:  
Practicing the Principles  
Begins in our Home Group

PLEASE SHARE WITH  
YOUR GROUP!

## Is AA a Safe Haven For All?

Leslie E., Alternate DCM District 23

Is AA a safe haven for all? This is a question that has been rolling around since the fellowship alcoholics anonymous was founded.

It was suggested to me that men stick with men and women stick with women. This is a great practice with regards to sponsorship, coffee, dinner, hangin' out. I have found in the meetings before the meeting and the meeting after the meeting the opposite sex can and does have great experience strength and hope to offer. There is that occasion when those lines get blurred, when the sharing is no longer about our shared disease. So the question is what do we do when we see a potential dangerous situation



happening? Do you warn the individual? Do you remove either person or both from the situation? Do you confront the individual that perhaps their behavior was/is not kosher? Do you tell someone else? Yes, yes, yes, all of the above.

When I was in grade school there were all these signs all over the classroom. The one that has always stood out to me "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Then after I came to AA and the steps taught me the same thing. The steps tell me "to practice these principles in all our affairs". All my affairs. I know for me, sometimes

that is easier said than done. Whether it is before, during, or after a meeting when inappropriate or possibly predatory behavior is seen, who's responsibility is it to say something? Aren't we all responsible to the newcomer? Aren't we all equally responsible for male and female newcomers regardless of sexual orientation, sexual preference, the color of their skin, their religious or political affiliations? What if they are wearing a dress, women's panties, a pant suit? Does any of that really matter, or should we as grateful recovering alcoholics be grateful the newcomer found their way home, to us, to a safe haven?

During my research I found many, many articles about the horror's of AA.

*(Continued on page 10)*

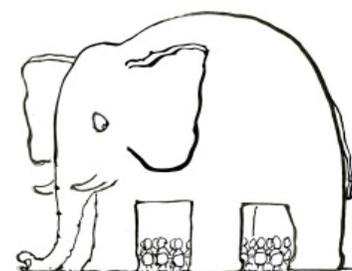
## When a Newcomer Feels Unsafe

Jody K., Area 60 Secretary

What do we do when a newcomer feels unsafe in the rooms of AA? What do we do when someone comes through the doors – or is here among us for years – acting on predatory behavior? Is this a matter of the close-second "individual welfare," or is it a matter of our common welfare? Perhaps it is both. If our groups are not safe places for others to find refuge and fellowship, they will wither just as surely as the individual deprived of the message.

While men are not at all exempt from suffering the harmful, sick behavior of others, and while women can be and often are manipulators prior to receiving a spiritual solution to their problem (*I was!*), most often what we think of when we talk of safety concerns is a woman, usually new, preyed upon by a man, most often not new. That's the

example I'll use here, though it could just as soon be two men or two women and often isn't about sexual predation at all – folks are manipulated out of money, preyed upon for influence, used for just about any resource they might possess. Ever hear of a sponsor who



### Tradition I:

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

insists that her sponsees cleaning her house or washing her car will build their character and teach them humility?

But I'll stick with the traditional idea of the Thirteenth Step – often quoted as,

*"My life is unmanageable; let me share it with you."*

Bill said in the essay on the First Tradition, "No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled." On the very next page, he says, "The A.A. member has to conform to the principles of recovery. His life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles. If he deviates too far, the penalty is sure and swift; he sickens and dies."

*(Continued on page 10)*

## ON MY BOOKSHELF

Jean M., Past Delegate, Panel 61 Area 60 WPA

In addition to The Big Book, The 12 & 12 and The Service Manual, there are two pamphlets that I consider *indispensable* to my program.

**P16** “The A.A. Group ... *Where It All Begins*” is subtitled “How a group functions. How to get started,” and it answers many questions that the newcomer, and sometimes the not-so-new-comer to the meetings may have.



It is included in both the GSR and the DCM kits that are sent out from G.S.O. when these positions are registered. It has a handy table of contents to make it easy to find a particular question, or perhaps one that hasn't been thought of, yet.

I refer to it often when someone questions me, if only to let them know how valuable it is. Just yesterday a question was asked that I referred to this pamphlet.



**P15** Are you a sponsor? Do you have a sponsor? If you answered yes to either of these questions, then the pamphlet “*Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*” is for you! It, too, has



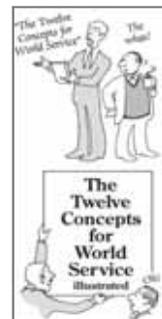
a handy table of contents to make it easy to use and contains information helpful to sponsors, sponsees and groups wanting to encourage sponsorship. It also addresses ‘service sponsorship.’ The Sponsorship

pamphlet reminds me that I have a responsibility to make sure that I am imparting the correct information.

**P43** A helpful compliment to my library are two other pamphlets, *The Twelve Traditions Illustrated* and *The Twelve Concepts Illustrated*. They are not intended to replace, but to increase the understanding of the Traditions and the Concepts. The *Twelve Traditions Illustrated* is based on a Grapevine series and presents practical applications of our Traditions.



**P8** The *Twelve Concepts Illustrated* presents a brief, easy to read text and clever illustrations to make our Concepts clear and understandable. If you open these two publications out, you will discover that they are not pamphlets, but in fact are soft-cover booklets, like our pamphlet ‘It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell.’ All three were made in this format so that they would fit in our literature rack. ▲



**Check out the new format for the  
Newsletter Tab on the Area 60 Website!**

[www.wpaarea60.org](http://www.wpaarea60.org)

<b>Current Newsletter</b>	
Q2-2015	Safety & Respect: Practicing the Principles in our Home Groups
<b>Previous Newsletters</b>	
Q1-2015	Diversity in A.A. - Our Heritage of Inclusion
Q4-2014	Inventory – A Guiding Tool to Our Future
Q3-2014	Participating in Our Common Welfare through Contributions
Q2-2014	Passing it on Through Sponsorship
Q1-2014	Recovery, Unity, Service
Q4-2013	Rewards of Service
Q3-2013	The Spirit of Rotation
Q2-2013	Home Group: The Heart Beat of AA
Q1-2013	Our Solution in Action



"Since I came to AA, my laundry and my life is sober, not just dry."

Grapevine Cartoon Contest Winner  
March 2014—Peter G., Wisconsin Rapids, WI

## I Am Responsible — Practicing the Principles

Jean M. Area 60 Past Delegate, Panel 61

*“I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that: I am responsible.”*

I am grateful that I was sponsored into our program of recovery. One woman taught me to use the literature; another taught me about service; others taught me the manners, if you will, of the meetings. Only one of these people had the title of “sponsor.” All of these people functioned, in one way or another, as sponsors. They all practiced, and taught me to practice, responsibility.

Did you know Al S., editor of the Grapevine from 1948-1952 and General Service Trustee from 1958-1961, wrote the Responsibility Declaration for the 1965 International Convention in Toronto. The theme, and the statement, was repeated for the 2005 International Convention, also held in Toronto.

Bill W. expanded on the theme in an essay called “Responsibility Is Our Theme” for the July 1965 Grapevine:

*“Then we began to take our own inventories, rather than the other fellow’s. Getting into the swing of self-examination, we finally began to discover our real responsibilities toward ourselves and toward those around us. Though a tough assignment, it did by degrees get easier. We began to make restitution to those we had harmed, grudgingly at first, and then more willingly. Little by little, we found that all progress, material or spiritual, consisted of finding out what our responsibilities actually were and then proceeding to do something about them. These activities began to pay off. We found that we didn’t always have to be driven by our own discomforts as, more willingly, we picked up the burdens of living and growing.”*

*“Then, most surprisingly, we discovered that full acceptance and action upon any clear-cut responsibility almost*



*invariably made for true happiness and peace of mind. Moreover these durable satisfactions were redoubled when we realized that our now better quality of willingness made it possible in meditation to find God’s will. At last we discovered that we joyfully wanted to live responsibly.”*

*“Such has been the course of spiritual unfoldment in AA; our Pilgrim’s Progress, if you like”.*

*“As it has been with each AA member, so it has been with each group, and with AA as a whole. I have often seen our Society timid and fearful, angry and prideful, apathetic and indifferent. But I have also seen these negatives fade, as the lessons of experience were learned and gladly applied.”*

The full text of this article can be read on the AA Grapevine Story Archives or in The Language Of The Heart, page 328. Safety and respect in AA? “I am responsible” ▲

### Traditions Checklist

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These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

#### Practice These Principles....

**Tradition One:** *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.*

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members’ inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion,” plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship? ▲

## Taking Pause...Time To Understand Respect and Safety

Barb G., Area 60 Newsletter Editor

One of the first AA paradoxes I noticed was an upside down “*Think Think Think*” sign. It made absolutely no sense to me, because I was a BIG thinker—a perpetual college student for over a decade. Thinking was my life-line, or so it seemed early-on.

With time, and help from others in the fellowship I came to unravel that knot, to remember the importance of a middle path—of balance. Somewhere along the line, someone told me that with each year of sobriety, we get one-more second to “take pause.” So each year, on my anniversary, I take note of my extra second and make an effort to actually use it in my life.

Taking pause has recently become a new guide-light for me...like directing a plane down a runway, or a ship to port. It gives me time to inventory my actions, and my responses to other peoples actions. Without “pause” I am running in the dark – sometimes with scissors!

More importantly, taking pause gives me a window of inspiration to really study our traditions and reflect on what they mean; rather than indulging myself in a glib refrain. It gives me time to consider how my actions might affect others, to realize that I am NEVER in charge, no matter what my service position might be, to value working TOGETHER, to

seek input, consensus, and to respect the minority opinion. I do not want to inadvertently revisit “Middletown,” or impersonate “Ed” the member described in Tradition 3 of the 12 & 12.

My district has been dark or near dark for some time. Several of us continue to meet each month to talk about ways to give back; and be useful to our groups. We are not ready for the trash heap—or for another entity to take over what is left on our plates. Recently, we’ve been talking about hosting a series of meetings on respect, safety and general meeting decorum. Gratefully, we’re taking pause to be sure it fits our primary purpose—and to consider how it affects other groups and AA as a whole. Here is the list our group came up with as being related to respect, safety and meeting decorum.

### Not using ...

- cell phones or texting or e-cigarettes
- foul language

### Not contributing to ...

- cross talk or chanting
- talking during the readings

### Practice gratitude and respect by ...

- dressing to chair or lead
- taking hats off during prayers
- greeting or shaking everyone’s hand
- welcoming newcomers
- thanking the speaker *and* the chair
- showing up early/staying to help clean up
- allowing others to serve by rotating out

### Think first before ...

- getting up during lead
- leaving a meeting when you don’t like the lead
- opening a new meeting (*check to see if your time/day and location would take members away from other meetings*)
- putting a dollar in the basket – when you can afford more
- agreeing to sponsor some one of the opposite gender
- rationalizing 13th stepping with quotes from the Big Book
- approaching newcomers socially

### Ask yourself ...

- what is my primary purpose?
- does my behavior affect more than just myself, does it affect other people, groups or AA as a whole? ▲

### FROM THE AA GRAPEVINE

www.aagrapevine.org—October 1945

Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.

## “TAKING PAUSE” ... Citations from AA Literature

1. ... **pause and count your blessings...** (BB To Wives, p.119). *When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings.*
2. ... **pause, ask for quiet, and in the ...** (12&12 Step Three, p.41). *In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done."*
3. ... **pause here to consider what humility is ...** (12&12 Step Seven, p.70). *Since this Step so specifically concerns itself with humility, we should pause here to consider what humility is and what the practice of it can mean to us.*
4. ... **pause in reading one of the forty-two ...** (BB Preface, p.xii). *If you have a drinking problem, we hope that you may pause in reading one of the forty-two personal stories and think: "Yes, that happened to me"; or, more important, "Yes, I've felt like that"; or, most important, "Yes, I believe this program can work for me too."*
5. ... **pause, saying, "Not my will, but Thine, ...** (12&12 Step Ten, p.93). *When in doubt we can always pause, saying, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."*
6. ... **pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask ...** (BB Into Action, p.87) *As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.*
7. ... **pause where situations must be met and ...** (12&12 Step Eleven, p.102). *As the day goes on, we can pause where situations must be met and decisions made, and renew the simple request: "Thy will, not mine, be done." ▲*

## Rules Dangerous, But Unity On Public Policies Vital To Future Of A.A.

September 1945 - By Bill W. Second in a series of articles presenting basic A.A. policies for discussion.

*Excerpted in part with Permission of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.*

I laughed at myself when I first realized that the long form of the Traditions came before the shortened version we all know so well. The traditions were initially thought of as the “tenets” to assure A.A.’s future—important principles intended to guide us through inevitable challenges to our unity and continued existence. Merriam Webster defines tenet as a principle, belief, or doctrine generally held to be true. Bill wrote about them in the Grapevine, and talked about them whenever he could.

In the beginning, there was considerable reluctance amongst the membership to hear this message. In fact, Bill would sometimes be invited to speak, but only if he didn’t talk about “those traditions.” He grudgingly agreed to the development of an abridged version—but I wonder what was lost in the translation. It’s too easy to rely on what could be called “*tradition short hand*,” to remember a prominent or catchy portion of a tradition, but not actually understand the full text. I’ve been enjoying conversations about this idea with my sponsor who pointed out the oh-so-human tendency. It motivated me to do a search on the digital AA Archives, and I found this gem. Certainly, it will give me pause the next time I hear the words “*there are no rules in A.A.*” Enjoy. Barb G. Newsletter Editor

### Unity Thus Far.

When, therefore, we A.A.s look to the future, we must always be asking ourselves if the spirit which now binds us together in our common cause will always be stronger than those personal ambitions and desires which tend to drive us apart. So long as the positive forces are greater we cannot fail. Happily, so far, the ties which bind us have been much stronger than those which might break us. Though the individual A.A. is under no human coercion, is at almost perfect personal liberty, we have, nevertheless, achieved a wonderful unity on vital essentials.

For example, "The 12 Steps" of our A.A. program are not crammed down anybody's throat. They are not sustained by any human authority. Yet we powerfully unite around them because the truth they contain has saved our lives, has opened the doors to a new world. Our experience tells us these universal truths work. The anarchy of the individual yields to their persuasion. He sobers up and is led, little by little, to complete agreement with our simple fundamentals.

Ultimately, these truths govern his life and he comes to live under their authority, the most powerful authority known, the authority of his full consent, willingly given. He is ruled, not by people, but by principles, by truths and, as most of us would say, he is ruled by God.

Now some might ask, "What has all this to do with an A.A. public relations policy?" An older A.A. would say,

"Plenty." While experience shows that in A.A. no policy can be created and announced full blown, much less effectively enforced by human authority, we are, nevertheless, faced with the problem of developing a public relations policy and securing for it the only authority we know - that of common understanding and widespread, if not universal, consent.

When this consent is secured we can then be sure of ourselves. A.A.s will everywhere put the policy into effect as a matter of course, automatically. But we must at first be clear on certain basic principles. And these must have been tried and tested in our crucible of experience.

In forthcoming articles I shall therefore try to trace the development of our public relations from the very first day we came to public notice. This will show what our experience has already taught us. Then every A.A. can have a real background for constructive thinking on this terribly vital matter - a matter on which we dare not make grave mistakes; upon which, over the years, we cannot afford to become unsound.

### Flexibility Is Vital

One qualification, however. A policy isn't quite like a fixed truth. A policy is something which can change to meet variable conditions, even though the basic underlying truths upon which it is founded do not change at all. Our policy might, for example, rest upon our 12 Steps for its undenyng truths; yet remain reasonably flexible so far as the means or method of its application is concerned.

Hence I earnestly hope thousands of A.A.s start thinking a great deal about these policy matters which are now becoming so important to us. It is out of our discussions, our differences of opinion, our daily experiences, and our general consent that the true answers must finally come.

As an older member I may be able to marshal the facts and help analyze what has happened so far. Perhaps I can even make some suggestions of value for the future. But that is all. Whether we are going to have a clear-cut public relations policy will finally be determined by all of us together - not by me alone! (*To be continued in the October 1945 Grapevine*)

## GRAPEVINE Quote of the Day

September 1947

*"When we AAs look to the future, we must always ask ourselves if the spirit which now binds us together in our common cause will always be stronger than those personal ambitions and desires which tend to drive us apart. Though the individual AA is under no human coercion, is at almost perfect personal liberty, we have, nevertheless, achieved a wonderful unity on vital essentials.*

*For example, the Twelve Steps of our AA program are not crammed down anybody's throat. They are not sustained by any human authority. Yet we powerfully unite around them because the truth they contain has saved our lives, has opened the door to a new world."*

AA Co-Founder, Bill W.  
"Rules' Dangerous but Unity Vital"  
**The Language of the Heart**

## Safety and Respect Begins in Our Home Groups

Elaine G., GSR Aatheostics, District 20

Safety is something that I never really thought about in Alcoholics Anonymous. At my first few meetings, I was too sick to worry about safety. All I wanted was help staying sober and to have the awful shaking stop. When Peggy brought me to my initial meeting, I trusted her and really didn't worry about anything else.

When the fog started to lift and I was going to meetings by myself, I stuck to the meetings I had gone to with Peggy because I got to know some of the people and I was comfortable. Like it says in the Big Book, *"They knew they had a host of new friends; it seemed they had known these strangers always."*

It was like the end of my drinking – I stayed at the local bar because I knew the people, I was comfortable, and I knew no one would bother me. It was the same with meetings. But I started venturing to new meetings with a friend or by myself. *How*

*did these people make me feel so comfortable? What did they have and how did they get it?* Going to meetings and listening to the "long-timers," I realized they treated each other with respect as learned while working the Twelve Steps.

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It slowly dawned on me that the long-timers had also done these steps, but they had gone one step further ... they treated others as they wanted to be treated.

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I tried to emulate the long-timers, and asked them many questions. I realized my powerlessness over alcohol and found my Higher Power. I got rid of the wreckage of my past through the Fifth Step, and I found myself building my character with Steps Six through Nine.

It slowly dawned on me that the long-timers had also done these steps, but had gone one step further with what they had learned – they treated others as they wanted to be treated. It began in the most basic place – the home group. Now I knew why Peggy had treated me so kindly. When newcomers and not-so-newcomers walk into the doors of a meeting room, they are treated like we treat each other. Because of this they feel safe at meetings.

The safety we feel at meetings isn't because of protection from physical danger, but because we aren't going to be condemned or asked to leave because of what we have done in the past. We can be ourselves and be free to learn about Alcoholics Anonymous without condemnation or ridicule. We are not afraid that someone will know what we did and ask us to leave. As far as physical

*(Continued on page 10)*

## A Warm Safe Place and a Welcoming Hand

Meredith D., GSR New Beginning Big Book Meeting, District 20

In June of 2014, two of us with a combined total of over forty years in Alcoholics Anonymous, decided to form a new Sunday morning Big Book discussion meeting at a local club house. This facility is centrally located and is locally known as a popular drop-in spot for people looking for a warm place, a friendly face, safety, a good meal, and, most of all acceptance for who and what they are. There are many meetings there but the 9:30 Sunday morning slot was open. There aren't many open Big Book discussion meetings on the list.

Right from the start we knew we were taking a bit of a risk. There is a large, well attended A.A. meeting right before ours in the same room. The parking lot is packed with every space taken when I pull in early to set up. Would anyone show up for our group a half-hour after that meeting closes? I just didn't know.

I knew many of the folks leaving that meeting. I encouraged them to stay and have a "double-header" for the day. No one did. We had a few from other



meetings who came at first to support us. I went out in the dining room and went up to people I didn't know. A few looked a little lost and disheveled. I said to them *"want to go to a nice meeting?"* Some didn't answer, some just grunted. I smiled and assured them they were really welcome and there was free coffee and cookies.

You see, I love alcoholics or anyone wanting to change their lives of misery and despair. I was once one of those lost souls and had no place to go. I remember walking into a clubhouse in another city with terror in my eyes, shaking, and afraid I would be shown the door. Instead someone offered me

coffee and a donut with a smile and a warm hand on my shoulder. I told my man we would love it if he would come. He tilted his head down in embarrassment, like we all do at first, and shifted his weight from one foot to the other. I touched his arm and said we would really love to have him join us that day.

This Sunday morning meeting is often small. Sometimes it is four or five regulars. However, sometimes four or five or even more wander in because they are looking for a warm place and a cup of coffee. Some need a meeting and a slip signed. Some are passing through town because of work and our location is easy to find.

Whenever anyone anywhere reaches out, let the hand of A.A. always be there. For that I am responsible. We like to think our meeting provides safety for the lost and respect for the despairing and also plants a seed or two along the way. ▲

## Practicing the Principles in Our Groups

Teresa K., Area 60 Alternate Chairperson

When I first come into the rooms, I had zero trust in others. That takes time, but the first step was to get a sponsor. I learned to trust in small increments. I made friends in AA and learned to trust them. *Slowly*. I was taught that we are all equal in A.A. We are all drunks. So it doesn't matter where we come from. It doesn't matter if I am sitting next to a doctor or an ex-con. We are all the same. Our Traditions tell us that. They tell me that "If I have a desire not to drink I am welcomed to be there." As long as I behave myself.

Safety in the rooms of A.A. is paramount because, if I don't feel safe in sharing or attending meetings — I lose out on this life giving program. Our first tradition states "*our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon AA unity.*"

Gossip can work against unity, and can be so damaging. I have experienced this first hand. The painful part was that it led to the loss of friends whom I

considered as family. I left that group because of it and have not been back. Did I feel safe there? Not at all! At the time, it broke my heart and my trust in others. I still see them occasionally, it's a difficult reminder of what had happened. Gratefully, after applying the steps and traditions to the situation, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel!

*What do I do to keep my home group or meeting that I am attending safe?*

In my home group, we have regular group consciences, and address issues as they arise. For instance, my home group is a women's meeting; but if a man shows up we never ask them to leave. They are welcomed with open arms, well at least a hand shake. However, we had a local gentlemen attend our meeting for a while. He was welcomed initially until we discovered that he was taking supplies from the group, and bathing in the men's room. When he was attending the meeting, several of the regular women stopped coming.

*(Continued on page 8)*

### Examples of Respect in AA...

- Greeting everyone with a handshake.
- Helping to set up or clean up at any meeting you attend.
- Taking off your hat during prayers.
- Not getting up during the lead.
- Not talking to your neighbor during the readings or meeting.
- Not swearing from the podium or when sharing. We are here to change!
- Dressing appropriately when invited to speak at a meeting.
- Thanking the chair person and the speaker at every meeting.
- Not texting or using cell phone during meetings.
- Staying in your own "hula hoop" and not gossiping.
- Remembering our primary purpose ... to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

## Learning to Care About the Well-Being of Others

Fred W., SCI Fayette

When I first came to A.A., I had no idea what to expect. This was a new experience, but one that I knew I surely needed. I had to learn how to navigate safely though the perilous times, which are behind me, and may be ahead if I do not respect myself and others in the things that I am learning.

Respect is a complicated paradigm for those of us who are not willing to first respect ourselves and how different life can be. I can refuse to indulge in that first drink knowing that I will not be able to safely drive home. Taking that first drink would be disrespectful, irresponsible and dangerous to my self and others who would be in the car with me.

I often think about the times when I was drinking and how I used alcohol as a safety net. I used alcohol like a buffer against what I perceived as injustices toward me. However in reality, the safety net was frayed and fraught with

misconceptions. It kept me from realizing there was a better way to deal with life's everyday struggles. I am beginning to understand and truly respect the principles of the program. As a new member, I have seen the value one can derive from attending meetings, practicing the 12 steps and learning how to live them. We learn life's principles from those who are living them.

When I attend A.A., I feel a sense of relief. I know that I can speak about myself and get respect and understanding from other members. The group is a powerful tool in helping me overcome my addiction. Within the group I know I have people who understand me and have had similar experiences in life to help me in my quest to become and stay sober. Inside the A.A. group is a beautiful and enlightening experience for me.

The respect and safety I feel within the group is uplifting and it leads me to ask

myself this question – *What would I do with a sober and productive life?* I believe the answer to this question lies within the principles practiced in A.A. I would like to feel one day like a contributor to the people of A.A. who diligently try to help others such as myself. I take one day at a time and I learn from the experiences of others how to recognize the trigger points. How does a person learn to respect others when they do not respect themselves.

Attending A.A. has taught me that I am not alone in the world. People do care about me, so in turn, I am learning to care about the well being of others. I can safely say that there are answers to questions that have perplexed me throughout my life amidst the turmoil caused by my addiction. I respectfully wish you all a safe journey throughout your sobriety... Fred W. ▲

## Placing Principles Before Personalities

Scott, SCI Fayette

I've been in the rooms of AA for over five years now and I'm very happy with my life. For the first time, I am living with a clear head, good spirit and am in good health – despite being in prison. I am working Step 6 with a sponsor, looking through my character defects and I seem to have a few. Some defects seem like they could be easy to change on my own; but I must ask God's help to remove them. Others, seem impossible to me to change. This is where my faith in God and God's work comes into play. I am very hopeful at this stage.

This quarter's newsletter theme is "safety and respect." As I think about safety, I realize that if you are new to the rooms, or have been around a while, you can feel comfortable that we all share the same problem and want the same overall result — sobriety.

We can feel safe that what we say in meetings stays within the rooms. In the atmosphere where I live, gossip is a given; but within our fellowship we should not repeat what is said in meetings. Respect follows along those lines. We must respect our brothers in the rooms as well. We don't place personalities before principles. We don't have to conform to what a lot of people do...gossip.

I am thankful there is an A.A. group at this prison, and realize that this is the best choice in life I ever made – to join brothers who share the same disease and want the same clean life. I also thank volunteers for their time for all these years, making a sacrifice of their time for us following through the 12<sup>th</sup> Step to carry the message to others. ▲

## Respect ... As We Begin to Feel As One

Frank S., SCI Fayette

Safety and respect in Alcoholics Anonymous I believe intertwine themselves through out the steps and traditions of our program. The safety I feel from this program comes from the traditions — starting with Tradition One. It speaks of unity and continues through twelve, which speaks of anonymity. Our meetings bring me in contact with others who have similar problems and obstacles. And as I feel the commonalities, I begin to feel as one.

Through anonymity, I can share my experiences freely without feeling that I may be betrayed or gossiped about with others. I've been told that I can't do this alone and that there is strength in numbers. The people at the meetings who have common problems and share the same goal as I do – sobriety – make me feel safe at the meetings.

Respect, for me, begins as I work the steps and begin to practice spiritual principles in

my life. When I came into these rooms, I was loved by others until I began to love myself. Therefore, I began to feel. I began to regain emotions that had been hidden from me by my alcoholism. I began to feel empathy and sympathy for others and I could share my demons knowing that they could empathize and sympathize with me.

As I work my program, with the direction of my sponsor, I begin to clean up the wreckage I left in my alcoholic stupor. As I find a God of my understanding, work on my defects and promptly admitting my failures and shortcomings, I gain respect by my actions. The respect of my family and my group. However, more importantly, I begin to respect myself. Safety and respect as it pertains to the A.A. group comes with one alcoholic helping another alcoholic get one day sober. Gratefully sober, Frank S. ▲

## Practicing the Principles

Teresa K. Alt. Chair (*Continued from Page 7*)

So we had a group conscience, and asked him the following week to not return until he bathed, and was willing not to take things. Our regular members did not feel safe with him there. It was a hard thing to do, but was necessary for the good of all.

Respect for AA is also not using swear words from the podium or when sharing. We are here to change! not bring the street into the meeting. I have been guilty of this myself, and it was a kind old timer that said "*Teresa you don't need to make your point by using the F-bomb when you're sharing.*" I learned from that mistake and made my amends the following week to the group; and have not done it since. When I hear it now in a meeting, my brain turns off to what the person is saying. I could be missing out on something important, but the message is lost.

In this digital age of cell phones and social media, I see a real lack of respect for AA. It didn't take long in our home group to ask folks to stop texting during the meeting. It actually only took once. A woman texted throughout the entire meeting—not realizing how rude and self absorbed she was being. The meeting was interrupted by the constant clicking of the phone. No one knew what she was texting about, was it about them? Or simply, what were they saying? Could our anonymities possibly be broken?

We have to ask ourselves "*Are we that important?*" Isn't it a lack of courtesy and respect for AA, the meeting and the folks attending it? I also see people before meetings on their phones talking and texting, and I have to ask myself, "*How much are they missing out on the fellowship of AA?*" However, I realize that everyone may not be here for the same reason.

I admit that I don't love everybody in AA; but I *do* respect them for what they are doing. If someone is, for the lack of a better word, misbehaving - you don't have to sit back and watch. You can quietly and kindly inform them that their actions are disruptive in the meeting. I have been given the gift of sobriety and have had my obsession lifted. I need AA. I want to have it here for the people I care about when they need it. ▲

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## CONFRONTATION IN AA — IS IT NECESSARY SOMETIMES?

Reprinted from the 2013 Q2 Seeds of Service

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Excerpted from 2008 SE Regional Forum Final Report, Knoxville, TN. In response to the question, "*How far do we go in being confrontational?*" the moderator suggested the following guidelines:

Does it have to be said? Does it have to be said right now? Can I say it with love? Just because I'm right, does it mean that I'm the one to give the lesson?

## Respecting the Freedom to Share

Larry R. L., Jr., SCI Fayette

Hello again fellow AA's! Have a sober and blessed wonderful summer 2015! At age 52 after stumbling in and out of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, I've finally got 6 ½ years sober in recovery from alcohol, and yes drugs too. I give credit to my higher power, my sponsor and working all twelve steps for the new found freedoms I now enjoy – even in prison!

I still like to be a little crazy – all in good fun, yet I live life on life's terms today, respecting the opinions of others in the safety of our fellowship here at SCI Fayette.

I feel that we should feel free to express our own opinions in meetings as long as they're recovery related. There's an increasing number of people who find our fellowship — who also have problems other than alcoholism. They should feel free to share these problems of addiction of whatever particular chemicals have done to their lives in combination with alcohol. There are a few old timers who may feel offended by such sharing since this is "alcoholics anonymous." I feel we should respect such sharing as long as they also include what the disease of alcoholism has done to their lives.

Whenever we learn something new, it changes ever so slightly how we view everything in our lives. Nothing we hold dear and true is unaffected by the incorporation of a new idea. In our active alcoholism, the ego strengthened our selfishness and we focused our attention on judgment and blame; thus fear predominated. Our actions didn't nurture our companions or ourselves.

In recovery we unlearn how to act out in our wrongs. We can be of paramount use to the newcomer who will see that not drinking alone does not equal

recovery, or that using other chemicals instead — is not a loophole to stop drinking.

In my own experiences, I've found this only leads to further destruction and degradation of jails, institutions and possible death as a result of doing such insanities. In recovery we

learn to change our old ways of thinking and I feel we all should feel safe to share our own story no matter what has caused us pain and landed us a seat in A.A. The world is changing more and more, and we must learn how to adapt. Yet alcoholism is such a cunning enemy of life, it can

warp our ways of thinking by using other chemicals so we can mask our feelings and still not drink – which even further warps our minds in resentment and fear. Many of us still have these defects of character even in recovery.

The word "fellowship" has an important meaning to me today. We have a group of recovering men and woman who teach us that they can love us enough until we learn to love ourselves—hopefully while respecting opposing opinions of those who "may" have problems or addictions other than alcohol alone.

I hope "we" as a fellowship in the spirit of God never judge nor shun away the newcomer or long timer who may share this experience, as long as it includes what alcohol did to their lives as well.

I hope that Alcoholics Anonymous continues to grow and welcomes all who suffer in the spirit who guides us all – one day at a time. May you trudge the road to a happy destiny – a vision for us all to seek in the spirit of God. Stay sober and safe out there and try to respect the opinions of others in recovery. Our fellowship depends on unity to keep us alive, joyous and free! God bless. ▲



## Practicing the Principles In Everything I Do

Mike L., SCI Fayette

Hi My name is Mike L. and I am an alcoholic. I've been coming to the rooms for over three years now and I honestly never knew what a principle was when I got here.

Today, I am practicing them in everything I do - or anywhere I go. Being in prison can really be a tough place to practice principles like honesty, trust and acceptance. But this is where I'm at today, so I'm trying to live the right way. To me that starts by practicing these principles daily. And where else would be a better place to start than in our home group!

*With acceptance*, I'm learning what it is that we can and cannot do...what we can change and cannot change or control, and exactly what we are powerless over. Acceptance requires being willing, courageous – rather than running away from something that is difficult or painful. We learn to stay and deal with whatever it is we used to avoid.

*With trust*, we learn to trust others again, and also rebuild the trust we lost with family and loved ones as a result of our disease.

*And patience* – this is a big one for me. The more my patience grows, the more I thank my Higher Power. I need patience in almost anything I do. When I first came to the rooms, I needed patience to just listen to others share. Back then I was all about me. Thankfully, today, it's all about others.

After a while my need for patience transformed to having empathy for another member sharing! I realize today how blessed we are to have each other in the rooms. And we are all truly miracles to be clean, sober, alive and free. That's the way I see it - *thanks for listening...* Mike L., ▲



## Is AA a Safe Haven...?

Leslie E. Alt. DCM District 23  
(Continued from page 1)

I am sure that if we all thought about it long enough that we too could recall a person or five that gave us the willies. Taking the alcohol out of the alcoholic does not make any of us beyond sin, beyond error, we are human. We make mistakes most of which we can be forgiven, if an amends is made, and we do "practice these principles in all our affairs."

There is one story that really touched me about a guy who struggled for many years in and out of the rooms. Many arrests mostly for assault, of course while drinking. He comes back into the rooms, seem to be getting it, is doing all the right things. Along comes a woman, they meet, they date, after sometime they move in together. Although the fellowship was aware of his past, no one saw the need to warn her of his violent nature.

Long story short, he relapsed — and she attempted to help him and stand by him. One night while he was drunk he lost control and killed her.

This is an extreme story of what could happen, of what has happened. So I ask you again ... who's responsibility is it to protect the newcomer? ▲

## When a Newcomer Feels Unsafe

Jody K., Area 60 Secretary (Continued from page 1)

So, if we have a predator in our midst, I suppose we could just wait around for him to get drunk and good riddance. I will admit I've found my thoughts drifting in that direction, and that's not living by spiritual principles, is it? No, as my first sponsor reminded me, I have to learn to love everyone in a god-like way. I don't have to like a person's actions, but I have to remember that a *Child of God* lives in every heart, and actions of the ego stem from pain and fear. But just what are we to do?

We've had this conversation in my home group and in my district as a whole. A "Live and Let Live" attitude works in many situations, but a woman coming through our doors, devastated by alcohol, should be free to give her whole self to recovery rather than having to devote a large part of her time and attention to warding off sexual harassment. And here's another thing many of us women know too well: we wear out those around us, and when someone turns attention our way when we are at our lowest point, that attention feels good. That attention feels like a higher power. Let's be clear: I'm not talking about a couple of newcomers flirting with each other, hooking up, and maybe even getting drunk together, bouncing in and out of the rooms a few

times until the light bulb comes on and they get why we caution against jumping into relationships. That happens a lot. Where do they think we got the suggestion in the first place?

No, this issue we've discussed in my group and in my district deals with the guy who's been around awhile, maybe a long while, who gives just a little too much attention to the woman who's in those first very vulnerable months or years of sobriety and repeats the process with the next young woman coming through the door. *What do we do about him? What do we do for her?*

This is what we do, to the best of our ability: We women surround her. We explain the spiritual program of A.A., and we encourage fellowship among ourselves. We talk and we share, not only our gratitude and our blessings, but our missteps, too. We let her know we are available, and when we don't hear from her for a little while, we check in with her.

We don't ignore the men. To paraphrase Bill, we acknowledge that we're dealing with a sick man, and our mission is to be helpful. The men surround the man, talk with him honestly and straightforwardly. If he's not open to help and guidance, is not willing to look at his behavior, they do what I think is called "running interference." They don't let him alone with the women, especially the new women. Hopefully, this gives new women a chance to decide if they want what we have to offer and begin the process of receiving it. With a strong foundation, she will likely find she can stand tall. ▲

# HEARD AT MEETINGS



### HUMOR

Just because some folks are fueled by drama, it doesn't mean you have to attend the performance.

### INSIGHTS

Before I came into AA, I was dead, but I did not know enough to lie down.

### SLIPS

The worst of all deceptions is self deception.

### THOUGHTS

God doesn't give us ability until we have stability... first things first!

## Safety and Respect ...

Elaine G., (Continued from page 6)

danger goes, it is a rare occasion an event will happen that would hurt us. And we would be protected by other members.

Treating each other with respect breeds respect. That's how I learned – from the example of others. I hope I treat others with the same respect I was treated with. It's a big part of being sober and setting an example. It's also a part of "passing it on." ▲

## How Do Safety, Respect and Principles Go Together?

Jan H., Past Delegate Panel 57

There have been many different articles written about virtues pertaining to AA's 12 Steps. Here are some that have been mentioned:

Honesty, Faith, Surrender, Soul Searching, Integrity, Acceptance, Humility, Willingness, Forgiveness, Perseverance, Spiritual Awareness, Service and others:  
Hope, Commitment, Courage, Truth, Reflection, Amendment, Discipline, Fearlessness, Vigilance, Maintenance, Brotherly Love, Attunement, Justice, and Spirituality

That is quite a description of behavior, certainly not what mine was when I walked into the rooms of AA. Using the

Twelve Steps as our code of conduct, our Principles, practicing them in all of our affairs, we actually grow from people who were hopeless and lost into those whose intrinsic nature is to behave as these words above suggest.

If we are honest with ourselves, change really happens as we learn to live the Principles in our daily lives gaining respect as the people we have become through the miracle of the Program. Can we do this change alone? God knows that I spent many hours alone reading self-help books with a large glass of wine in my hand trying to figure out what was wrong with me.

I was greeted at my first meeting; welcomed with handshakes, smiles, assurances that I was in the right place. These people seemed to know what was wrong with me. Hmm! I felt **safe** in their presence. They treated me kindly which I will always remember. I knew that they cared. This is definitely a "WE" process!

That is where our Home Groups come into the picture. When the greeter extends his/her hand to the new member and smiles with kindness, it helps them to feel important and safe as I did. "Meetings run by a group

*that has a regular group conscience and which practices the Twelve Traditions are generally safe."*...

Unity (Tradition One) and primary purpose (Tradition Five) are key.

*"The Group's Conscience should fully empower meeting chairs and make them aware of their responsibilities to maintain order and safety in meetings so that the group as a whole will benefit."*

When our Primary Purpose is first in our focus, imperfections are kept to a minimum. "Newcomers are vulnerable" and need to be guided to someone that can match their experience and keep them safe.

We should not be afraid to advise newcomers about inappropriate behavior.

SPONSORSHIP can help in keeping our meetings safe. "The sponsor's responsibility is to provide information and guidance; discuss customs and norms with sponsees; and help recognize or be aware of potential problems before they get out of hand."

When I did get a sponsor, she shared her experience, strength, and hope. She guided me through the steps setting a good example of how to be respectful, set boundaries that were healthy, and learn about responsibility in AA. I was eventually gently guided and instructed about what was appropriate and what was not. Through the years, we have become close friends, and I am so grateful that she is in my life.

Finally, "Ask, *Would I be willing to have this group meet in my home?*" If the answer is "no," then work on addressing the issues of concern. Solutions need to originate at the group level, not at G.S.O." ▲

*Quotes are excerpts from a summary of the sharing during the 62<sup>nd</sup> General Service Workshop, "Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare."*

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**Newsletter Themes & Submission Dates:** The SOS follows the General Service Conference annual theme. For 2015, this is "Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity and Service – The Foundation for Our Future."

**Due Theme:**

- May 1** Q2. Safety and Respect – Practicing the Principles Begins in our Home Group
- July 31** Q3. Safeguarding our Traditions through the Evolution of Technology
- Nov 20** Q4. Inventory – Looking Back to Move Ahead

**Website:** There are a variety of resources for you and your group on the Area 60 website, including: back issues of the newsletter, flyers for Days of Sharing, the Area 60 calendar, pamphlets, service documentation, and more. Direct questions or suggestions the Website Coordinator at [website@wpaarea60.org](mailto:website@wpaarea60.org)

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Support from groups and individuals is always welcome and appreciated!

Make check payable to:

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**2015 Calendar of Events**

*Area 60 meetings are held at the  
 Comfort Inn, 699 Rodi Road Penn Hills, PA*

DATE	TIME	EVENT
<b>Sunday May 17</b>	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>AREA 60 2ND QUARTERLY MEETING</b>
May 29-31	All Day	Northeast Regional Forum (NERF) Albany, NY
Sunday June 7	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator & GAW Wrap-up Meeting
<b>Sunday June 28</b>	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>POST-CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY</b> Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
July 2-5, 2015		2015 International AA Convention Atlanta, Georgia
Sunday July. 19	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator Meeting
Friday—Sunday July 31—August 2		AA PA State Convention Holiday Inn East, Harrisburg
<b>Sunday August 16</b>	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>AREA 60 3RD QUARTERLY MEETING</b>
Sunday Sept. 13	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator Meeting
Saturday Sept. 19	8:30-3:00PM	Dist. 65 Day of Sharing 218 E. Main St., Worthington, PA \$7.00 Includes Lunch
Saturday Oct. 10	9:00-3:30PM	Dist. 15 Day of Sharing 875 Sunflower Dr., DuBois, PA \$7.00 Includes Lunch
<b>Sunday Oct. 18</b>	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	<b>FALL ASSEMBLY</b> Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Sunday Nov. 8	9:00 AM	Area 60 Officer Coordinator & GAW Planning Meeting

**Seeds of Service.** The WPA Area 60 newsletter is published quarterly by the Area Committee. It is for A. A. members only. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily that of the Area Committee or AA as a whole. The newsletter is a useful reference for GSRs reports.

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