

THE SOBER TIMES

A NEWSLETTER FOR TRIPLE CITIES INTERGROUP AND SURROUNDING AREAS



Mission Statement: To share and encourage unity amongst the Triple Cities Intergroup and surrounding AA fellowship, by providing access to upcoming events, activities and personal views that may be of interest to those who are affected by alcoholism. Nothing published herein should be construed as Statements of AA or Triple Cities Intergroup, Area 47, Al Anon, AlaTeen, District 10 or any Intergroup District, Group, or the Sober Times Committee members.

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Don't Quit Before the Miracle Happens

Before I realized it, I was already entrenched in cycles of behavior I hadn't been able to control for years. I didn't want to, but I began to give up. Slowly, steadily, my spirit drained. At times I fought, others not. Sure, there were still bouts worth fighting but I was tiring, bit by bit, day after day. I'd been worn down.



I wished it would come more quickly. I wanted it to be more painless. I tried to forget the ones I cared about. I couldn't. The insanity of

how it crept in, how it lurked, makes me cringe. It was on me and inside of me. Visible. Palpable. In a flurry of a thousand muted screams, I knew my life was ending.

Life used to be fun. An adventure. Exciting. Worth living. Then, one day, I could no longer see a way out. Ensnared, I was totally, completely, entirely trapped. I wondered what did to deserve this. What happened? How did I get to this point? What was wrong with me?

I couldn't see it then, but selfishness, inseparably fused with my love of alcohol became the parasitic relationship that ruled my life. The two were so tightly and inseparably linked that I couldn't tell which was which. Selfishness was too weak of a word for me. It doesn't even come close to describing what I had.

The disgust I began to feel when I looked in the mirror every day was appalling. My self-hatred, sprouting from every pore, grew quickly. Once my true nature was fully revealed, I wasn't shocked. I saw it approaching in the shadows and by the time I was close enough to see my death at the end of the road, I welcomed it.

One way or another, with or without my permission, whether I liked it or not, this decade-long committed relationship with my true love, was going to end.

When I started drinking at sixteen years old, the world changed. All of things I feared went away. My parents fighting, money troubles in my house and my social anxiety vanished. It was as though in one sip, I had the solution to my problems. All of them.

As you might guess, alcohol just seemed like the solution and over time became its own problem. I was doing lots of other drugs and drinking at times when my friends weren't. I always overdid it. I thought about it as a competition to see who could drink the most and stay up the longest. I was immediately hooked.

When I went away to college at seventeen years old, I quickly found my niche. Keg parties, doing drugs and at a fraternity was how I spent most of my time. College was awesome. I learned to manure my schedule around my behavior and do well enough in my classes so that they'd let me stay. I gravitated to the people who accepted my behavior, all of it. For a short while I managed well and enjoyed it.

After three years I went back to college for what was going to be my "Senior" year. There was no way I had enough credit to graduate but it was my fourth year there. My drinking and drug use has progressed significantly, and I had already managed to ostracize myself from many of the people who formerly accepted my behavior. I was a complete, piss pants, black-out, alcoholic wreck — at twenty years old.

I lived in a room with no windows above a bar in town. I slept all day and stayed up all night. I was good at getting people to give me some of theirs. I stole, mooched, and embarrassed myself on a regular basis. I pissed the cot I slept in, never washed my clothes and drank whatever I could get my hands on. Alcohol was my master.

At the end of semester, it was time to go home for Christmas break. I knew I wouldn't be returning to school. I was terribly depressed and defeated. It was the first time I thought I should probably kill myself. I didn't. I drank for eight more years after that.

For close to a decade, I stumbled in and out of bad situations and circumstances, all of which I created for myself. Every night I went out, I was rolling the dice. My well-being was a gamble and I'd always bet on the party. I'd skate without major consequences most of the time but occasionally, it would be really bad. I'd get in a fight, get arrested or wake up somewhere very strange.



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One night while out at a bar I finally made a decision. I decided this couldn't continue. I had to do something about my situation.

I wished I wouldn't wake up in the morning, but it kept happening. After drinking all night one night, I went out for an insane drive. I remember thinking there was no way out. Trapped, I couldn't continue. I had to escape. I floored the vehicle, screamed at the top of my lungs and drove it off the side of the road, on purpose.

I woke up still in the van. I was upside down. The vehicle was flattened, and I crawled out. My ribs were killing me, and I was bleeding in multiple places. I was broken, beaten, and battered. Then I was arrested and that's when my first spiritual experience happened. I was still alive, and I was grateful for that.

The first thing I did once they let me out of jail was ask for help.

After about six months of white knuckling, I went to drug & alcohol counseling as a proactive attempt to make sure I could keep my driver's license. It turns out, they sent me to AA. I came, I listened, and I saw that other people were getting sober and staying that way even though they were dealing with situations that were much more dire than mine.

I went to meetings and rehab. I did what they said when I heard, "Keep coming back." But after a couple of years sitting in the second to back row before something strange started happening. At two years without a drink, I started having suicidal thoughts again.

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ESCYPAA Bridge to Shore AA Convention

ESCYPAA VII was a rousing success!! We had approximately 500 AA members/Alanon members attend throughout the weekend.

This host committee worked day and night to put on a conference that would help Carry the Message to the next sick and suffering.

We believe that Goal was accomplished.

The ESCYPAA VII Host Committee would like to thank everyone who helped throughout the years to support us in our endeavors to bring this life-saving convention to our area after a 26-year absence.

In Service,

Jeff T

ESCYPAA VII Co-Chair

ESCYPAA stands for Empire State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous

Attendee report:

This was my first experience attending a convention hosted by YPAA and I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. From start to finish the event was well planned as every hour literally had several meeting options available.

Upon entering the hotel there were several local members of AA there to greet you and point you in the right direction. Down the hall there was a room with all of our literature available for purchase as well as several t-shirts and other merchandise.

The Friday night speaker was Morgan H from the Rochester area and she kicked the convention off with her story of strength through the program. She has been through so many situations that could have shaken her resolve to stay sober. But instead, her story inspired the listener to believe that we can stay sober through literally any circumstance.

In between the main speaker events there was an array of panels on topics ranging from "relationships" to "dealing with grief" and each of the 12 steps as well. I caught bits and pieces of as many as I could. It was fun to hear from people in my area whose stories I had never heard before and also get to know people from other areas of our state and way further than that.

The main event speaker on Saturday night was Adam T from California and he was very entertaining as well as encouraging. He humorously shared his experience with years and years of collecting white chips but always continuing to come back which can be a lesson to so many of us that don't get this thing our first time around.

Finally, on Sunday morning the convention came to a close with our very own Steve H. His share was moving and touched on how "God is either everything or He is nothing". One of the themes of Steve's share was the later steps (particularly step 11) and it was the perfect ending to a wonderful weekend of our life-saving program.

In service,

Beth O



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You see, my experience was that just going to meetings wasn't enough. Without actually doing the program outlined in the Big Book Alcoholics Anonymous, although still without a drink, I was right back where I started. I heard someone say, "Meeting makers don't make it!" I knew what they meant.

But...because I kept coming back, before I drank or drive off the road again, I had a place where I could finally muster up enough courage to get honest and tell someone about that.

The man I told suggested I do the steps. He said they were not done, just because I read them on the wall, like I thought. He could help. He showed me a path that I've since shown many other men and right after I got into action, a series of many more spiritual experiences began.

My life was saved, and guess what? I had very little to do with it. I took the suggestions, made decisions, took the actions and now I get the results which I share that with others. I waited far longer and kept far more inside than I would suggest, but that's my experience.

KEEP COMING BACK

Today, I share my experience with as much openness as honesty as I can, in the hopes that others can see that they need not throw away the gift of life. I almost quit AA and life, again, all without a drink.

When I look at my three of my kids and all the other people, I've had the pleasure to know since I decided to surrender, I realize that none of it would have been there had I gotten my way. I see that the alcohol was never the problem. I just saw the world through closed, self-centered eyes. They were the only eyes I had. It took me a while before my new eyes and my mind could be opened.

I used to look down on alcoholics, addicts and people who attempted or committed suicide. I don't do that anymore. I am one of the fortunate ones. Something bigger than me took care of me in the past, it has me now, and I believe it always will. I kept coming back, until that happened.

If you think there's a chance you might need help, please, just ask for it.

AA Triple Cities Intergroup | Binghamton, NY

607-722-5983

In service,

Dave D

Rediscovering Life:

How Sober People Have Fun



What do we enjoy doing that doesn't include getting drunk or high? Based on the conversations I've had and my own experience, there isn't one thing that works for everybody. But the consensus is that we've tried to get back to the interests we had before drugs and alcohol sort of changed the trajectory of our lives.

I talked to people and here are some of their experiences...

Sandi S (Arts and action)

"I started knitting in sobriety. It was about 15 years ago and at that time there were more brick & mortar yarn stores than online. It was at one such store that I was able to take a class and gained the skills to be able to knit better. With each class I fell more in love with knitting. And while finishing a piece is wonderful I've found it's really the process of knitting that helps me. It helps me to pay attention better when I'm in a meeting because it gives my hands something to do. I attend knitting retreats at least once a year and have made friends that I get to spend time with at these retreats. This has helped me to have a social life outside of AA. There aren't nearly as many brick and mortar stores around anymore but when I come across something I need help with I have the option of looking it up online or asking someone I've met at a retreat.

Since being sober I've also gained my motorcycle license, I attend arts such as ballet, opera and musicals. *Wicked* is my favorite!! I've gone to the Sterling Renaissance festival quite a few times and of course I love going to the beach."

Winnie B (Doing it all)

"Running and working out are things I've become interested in since being sober. I've always sort of wanted the result without the work but the process is something I've learned to enjoy in recent years.

I've also always wanted to be a painter. My grandfather was a painter and I have early memories of being in grade school wanting to do that myself but I never could get into it. Since being sober I've found the patience and commitment necessary to further explore this hobby.

I've always loved to read and am an avid book collector (if not always a book finisher). And I really enjoy window shopping as well today. Sobriety has allowed me to enjoy the simple things and on the occasion that I want something I see today I have the means to purchase it as well."

We all have these things or interests that go back to our very core. Sobriety allows us to explore these things and rediscover what we used to love about life.

In service,

Beth O

Remembering our Friends

Paul B

In Paul's early sobriety, as he was holding the Big Book in a meeting, an old(er) timer asked him whether or not he'd actually read it. His reply was, "I'm gonna wait for the movie."

Over many years, Paul's dedication to the program and to the newcomer was exceptional. He brought calm joy to every meeting.

The last time I talked to Paul was after the 9am meeting on Floral Ave. Paul B and Paul G were two key people keeping the 9am meeting open through the pandemic. For that I am extremely grateful. During the pandemic I became much closer with Paul and I would talk to him after the meetings. Paul had a dry sense of humor and he was always able to cheer me up with a joke or a funny story about his mom. A few days before he passed away, I was chatting with him after the 9am. He pointed at all of the people sanitizing the room and said to me something like "Isn't this a great thing, we are people who normally wouldn't mix and here we are coming together and staying sober". I won't forget that simple message Paul recited that morning and I hope AA never loses the unity and hope we find when we gather simply for sobriety. — shared by Nick B

Our thoughts and prayers go out to family and friends.

– The Editors



TINY REASSURANCES

The warm styrofoam cup
 The smooth center of the white chip
 The worn edges of the printed schedule
 Turned over and over
 In my hand
 And held close while peering out
 At a new world.



One Man's Strategy: How to Fight Depression

I am no stranger to depression, especially during the upstate New York winter weather, when it is difficult and sometimes impossible to be outside in a wheelchair. I have been in a wheelchair for most of my life. When depression seeps in I try to think about all the positive that I have in my life, and all the blessings that I didn't have before I became sober. The most important blessing that I have in my life is that I am a successfully recovering alcoholic. I can make my own emotions positive, but it takes a lot of work. The idea is not to let myself get depressed, but sometimes that is not easy.

I know that people often tire of hearing advice from others, but in case someone might be interested, I would like to share what has worked for me, (akin to the 12th Step of Alcoholics anonymous). When I go through depression, I hear a voice in the back of my head. It's not a crazy psychotic voice. It is God saying "Hello? This is God. Did you forget about me? I am here for you Bob. All you have to do is ask." Sometimes we are so involved in our depression we don't think about anything else. At these times God has a tendency to smack me in the back of my head and say "Hello!"

Of course, not everyone is open to the experience of a higher power, for a variety of reasons. And for some people, it takes a lot of creativity to find a comfortable connection with something greater than oneself. In my case God is not a father figure for me. For me, and maybe a lot of other people, we're too scared to go to a dad or a mom — they are authority figures. For me, God is more like my brother; somebody that I can talk to. I relate to God better that way. I still say the 'Our Father' - the Lord's Prayer — but I still see God as an older brother - a mentor.

As I said, I understand how difficult it can be when depression takes hold of a person. For example, during Binghamton's famous September 2011 flood I had to be evacuated from my apartment, first to a crowded shelter at Binghamton University, and then had to wait five months at a remote group home until my apartment complex was repaired. The group home was boring as hell, way out in the middle of nowhere, and I was separated from my family. I was depressed most of the time and it cost me \$94 one-way using a medivan to visit my AA friends in Binghamton.

When I am depressed, my mind is clouded. I can't think of anything else. Then my brain checks in. I ask myself, "Why am I depressed? Look at all the positive things that I have!" To lift my spirits during my time away from meetings and my apartment I said to myself, "At least I am alive, I have food in my belly, and a roof over my head". It also helped to talk to the home's provider, and the woman who helped her — when they had the time.

My life's mission today is to show other people that just because a person is in a wheelchair, life does not end. There's a lot of things that a person can do in a wheelchair. The key is to not give up. You've got to WANT to do things, and you CAN help someone else. An example is that I can share my depression fighting technique with others.

A note of caution: Sometimes it works, and there are times when it doesn't, and you need to talk to someone. The last thing that I want to say is: Don't ever try to do this alone! We need each other to stay sober, emotionally as well as physically.

In service,
Bob

TCI ACCESSIBILITY

For questions on local accessibility
 please contact
accessibility@aabinghamton.org

UNITY

As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole Society, and under which we may grow and work in unity.

Triple Cities Intergroup Service

Part 1 of 4

Recovery, Unity, and Service. AA members have found involvement in each of these is necessary for happy, permanent sobriety. The Triple Cities Intergroup (TCI) is an important element of service to groups in Binghamton, Endicott, Johnson City, Vestal, and beyond! TCI provides key services directly supporting these groups. I have found that TCI offers AA members a way to get involved in service to directly help their home group and other meetings they regularly attend.

In the first part of this 4-part series, I will focus on how the TCI maintains the key channels for reaching people interested in AA. These include the Public Information Committee with a 24/7 Answering Service and the aabinghamton.org website.

Public Information

The Public Information committee is responsible for carrying information on AA to the public. AA is based on attraction, but people have to have awareness that AA is available and can help with their drinking problem. This could include distributing information or speaking at public locations and events. Public Information also includes broader awareness of AA in the community through TV and radio advertisements. These two forms of service ensure broad awareness of AA for those seeking help. So those who may be inclined to marketing and are not shy in the public may find a great fit for service in the Public Information committee.

Answering Service

Public Information also includes connecting alcoholics to the fellowship. TCI maintains a 24/7 answering service for those seeking help. The answering service connects alcoholics to available meetings and to other alcoholics that can help them real-time. Getting involved in the answering service means maintaining phone lists and signing up to answer the phone when the hotline calls to connect a prospective AA to the program. Are you willing answer calls from a newcomer?

Website

The main way people connect today is through the internet. TCI connects alcoholics with information through the website aabinghamton.org. First, the website contains general information on AA and links for the community and newcomers. Often this is the initial information the newcomer will see before deciding to go to a meeting. The website contains the official list of local meetings. Maintaining an up-to-date and accurate meeting list is a critical service of TCI as this is the main way newcomers and visitors find the fellowship where they can receive the message of AA. During the pandemic many groups setup virtual meetings. To meet the need and ensure members could find virtual meetings, TCI took action to create a "Virtual Clubhouse" that offered a one-stop location for links to virtual meetings in the triple cities. Finally, the website is a great tool that is used for communication of upcoming events to further enhance the fellowship of local groups.

My personal experience shows it is critical to maintain quality public information for the newcomer in search of a solution. When I first tried to find AA I called the hotline and looked online. With the information provided I had trouble finding a meeting (I was an active alcoholic after all!) so I gave up and made up my mind I would try myself to stay sober. It was another year of desperate drinking before I found another bottom to try again. If I found a meeting the first time around I might have saved myself a year of digging a deeper bottom! Therefore, I believe these committees have a direct impact on the newcomer. We need qualified AA members to serve on these committees and ensure the newcomer can find the message of hope they desperately need.

I hope you will join us at the next TCI monthly meeting, it is a great way to serve in AA! Yours in Service,

Nick B

Triple Cities Intergroup (TCI) Chairperson, NY

TCI MEETING SCHEDULE

listings can be found at

aabinghamton.org

Virtual meetings are listed on the Virtual Clubhouse page.

In-person meetings are listed on the Meetings page.

Groups, please advise TCI once you know of a meeting status change. It is the only way we can keep the listings current – a critical tool, especially for newcomers. Contact:

schedule@aabinghamton.org

When you're a general service representative (G.S.R.)

You are linking your home group with the whole of A.A. In 1950, a new type of trusted servant, "group representative," was suggested to help in the selection of delegates to the newly formed General Service Conference. By 1953, the job of group representative was also seen as a good means of exchanging up-to-date information between individual groups and "Headquarters" (now the General Service Office). That's still an important side of your work. But now, as general service representative, you have an even bigger responsibility: You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of "the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship," as expressed in the General Service Conference. Like everything else in A.A., it works through a series of simple steps.

excerpt from: p-19 - G.S.O. General Service Representative

For the complete pamphlet, visit:

https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/p-19_gsr.pdf



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TCI MONTHLY MEETING

Triple Cities Intergroup meetings are held the last Sunday of each month

at 12:30 PM

East Side Congregational Church, 284 Robinson Street, Binghamton, NY

All AA members are invited to submit content for this publication.

sobertimes@aabinghamton.org

