

# Using Psalms in Recovery

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[aasfmarin.org/using-psalms-in-recovery](https://aasfmarin.org/using-psalms-in-recovery)

The Point



## *Turn mourning into dancing*

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by Hal C.

Many alcoholics convince themselves that a painful moment will last forever and that we must go out and drink in order to relieve that suffering. As alcoholics we cannot get it through our heads that all moments of life are temporary. I cannot even begin to count the times that I experienced some pain and headed straight for the bar.





The writers of the psalms believed this pain was temporary

## *Songs traditionally attributed to King David*

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In fact, it is we ourselves who extend these moments of injury and suffering by turning to the bottle and continuing to wallow in self-pity or in misery. One of the most important things that we can remember as alcoholics is that when bad things happen in our lives they happen for only a short space of time, then they pass and they are over. The pain of endurance may seem unbearable, but the pain will at some point go away.

The writers of the psalms did not have a different view of this concept. They also believed that such pain and "exile" was only momentary. Turning back to a higher power would bless them and take away their agony, even restoring them to their natal lands.

### *The pain will go away*

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Now that I am sober, after 39 years of drinking in order to escape my pain, I regret that I could not see this truth. I could not see I was extending my misery through my own behavior thus giving me further reason to drink. I also could not see that because I wallowed in self-pity, every new moment of suffering simply added to the greater whole.

### *Because I didn't run to the bar I was there for her*

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Had I simply solved each issue as it came into my life I would not have had so much to run away. Now I find things are more easily solvable. Even though I have serious medical issues, and learned only yesterday that a dear friend has an untreatable, progressive, fatal disease, I now can find the strength and peace within myself to handle these difficult situations. Because I didn't run to the bar I was there for her to comfort her in her pain.



Because I didn't run to the bar ...

More importantly, due to the isolation caused by drinking I used to feel like I had to solve every problem alone. Today I spoke with a professional who is taking direct action in order to help me deal with a very difficult medical decision I must make. In the past I would have fretted and fretted, then headed for the bottle. In other words, due to this person's intervention this situation, too, will pass, and I have already gotten on with my life by writing this article.

*I meditate on these songs with my sponsor to find serenity*

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Following is the psalm I meditate on with my sponsor to find this sense of serenity: *Psalm 30, Verses 1-7, 10, 11. I will extol you, O God, for you have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto you and you healed me. You brought up my soul from the grave as water drawn from a well. You kept me alive that I should not go down to the realm of misery. Sing unto the Lord, O ye faithful, and remember God's holy name. God's anger endures but a moment, but in God's graciousness life exists. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy arrives with the morning. And when the morning came and I was comforted, I said, I shall never be moved ... Lord, you have made my mountain to stand strong. You hid your face, and I was troubled. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me. Be my helper. You have turned mourning into dancing. You have girded me with gladness. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto you forever.*



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# Propped Up

[aasfmarin.org/propped-up](https://aasfmarin.org/propped-up)

The Point



*A poem by J.W.*

Main Street in a Spaghetti Western  
Facades, store fronts only,  
Props and propped up, mere ideas  
Thoughts of a reality that was not

My life was this street  
A facade, a living prop, where  
Alcohol propped me up  
In the reality that was not

So as the real world crept in  
Bottoms up, the props fell  
One domino after another  
Main Street laid bare, empty, alone

Where to turn  
Everywhere, yet nowhere  
Or so it seemed until  
From somewhere came a voice

*Just be willing*, it whispered  
*I will be your prop now*  
*If you will let me*, it entreated  
"I'll try anything," my thought in reply

On Main Street. High Noon  
Face to face with a killer  
No longer an escape behind the facades  
No place to run, just him and me.

If I draw one this day,  
I will die, this is certain.  
But armed like never before,  
This duel I win—today.

# Concept IV: We're All Equal

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[aasfmarin.org/concept-iv-were-all-equal](https://aasfmarin.org/concept-iv-were-all-equal)

The Point



by Kathleen C.

Short Form: At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "Right of Participation," allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

*No members are "second class."*

I was surprised to discover that Concept IV is about equality, humility and inclusion: Voting members include not only delegates, but also the trustees, and the directors and staff members of A.A. World Services (i.e., G.S.O.) and the A.A. Grapevine.

The boards of these two operating entities include as voting members not only trustees, but also non-trustee directors and

paid administrators and staff members. New trustees on the General Service Board and new directors of the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine boards are sometimes surprised to see paid executives, staff members and outside accountants attending the board meetings. They are invited because of A.A.'s "Right of Participation."





Photos from Unsplash

### *All of us desire to belong*

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Bill warns against the possibility of new delegates or trustees trying to “weaken, modify or toss out” the Right of Participation. He cites arguments by delegates to take away the trustees’, directors’ and staff members’ vote at the Conference. “Certainly,” he says, “our trustees and service workers are not less conscientious, experienced and wise than the delegates. It is vital,” he continues, “to preserve the traditional ‘Right of Participation,’ in the face of every tendency to whittle it down.”

Finally, there is a spiritual reason for the Right of Participation. All of us desire to belong. In A.A., no members are second class. We perform our service tasks better “when we are sure we belong-when our ‘participation’ assures us we are truly the ‘trusted servants’ described in Tradition Two.”

Office personnel voting? In A.A.  
we’re all equal.

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## Step 4 : Change is the One Essential

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[aasfmarin.org/step-4-change-is-the-one-essential](https://aasfmarin.org/step-4-change-is-the-one-essential)

The Point



by John W.

cerebral Mr. Spock tells Captain James Kirk, in a story clothed in the fantasy of the future, "Change is the one essential principle of the universe." Of course, this Vulcan character did not consume alcohol. To one blessed with neither that insight nor that physical constraint, change came hard. This was so even when the circumstances of change were in a doctor's medical warning and a divorce court's "Kick Out Order."

### *A tsunami of changes broke*

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Undaunted, I would lie in my tub of blissful denial, tell myself the test was a false positive and the doc has simply misread it, imagining legalities that would prevent me from being thrown out of the residence I alone owned (just check the deed).

When the tsunami of changes

broke upon me, I finally stopped drinking and started trudging the road of Happy Destiny. I began to accept all the changes and the new reality that had come with them ... almost. Of course there had been the admission followed swiftly with a coming to believe. I had become convinced of my insanity and knew I had no defense against it, mental or otherwise.

The decision had made sense. Only then did my sponsor begin to discuss the real change I had to confront. My old way wasn't working and hadn't been for a long, long time.

### *My old way wasn't working*

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It seemed like my sponsor had the easy task of convincing me of the obvious, pretty simple proposition: Be prepared to change or it is likely you will drink again. If you drink, you will die. Simple, straightforward — his laughter, as I seemed to actually be pondering this proposition, was the douse of reality I needed to accept as well. With decision made and inventory done, these admissions opened the door to a new way of thinking. I hoped for a new way of living, too, and was admonished that only time would tell. As the days went by, I found out time passed for A.A.s in a very wonderful way. It passed one day at a time.

As more days passed,  
most of the things I had been so worried about never even happened. Those that did sometimes struck with harsh consequences and cruel efficiency, but the Steps I had taken prepared me. I dealt with each obstacle as best I could, with all the honesty and integrity I could muster, for I was no longer alone.

### *I was no longer alone*

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I found to my surprise and comfort that with each disaster, someone at my meetings had been there before and weathered that storm. They told me they had done it sober and I could, too, if I didn't drink and went to meetings.

But those who are not busy living are often busy dying. I discovered that life being lived, sober, was still living on life's terms, not mine. I found that even in sobriety, the floor upon which you are so comfortably standing one minute can suddenly vanish and leave only an abyss. Where then does one turn? What rope does one grasp for safety? As my newest abyss loomed, my sponsor's words began to ring in my ears: "With any problem I must confront, I first ask myself: Which step applies?" How do I work the steps to address this new disaster?

Step 4 was the answer. I was so prepared to exhaustively take the inventory of other people when my relationships were souring. Yet I had to ask myself where my part was in all of this. The difficulty of asking these questions quickly became dwarfed by the answers honesty compelled me to give to them. Then the kicker: I had to forgive these ill-doers also. An echo of this step once taken so many years before now began to reverberate: Forgiveness, better to give it than to seek it. But I had not done so then and was not ready to do so now over a decade later, so the anger had lingered.

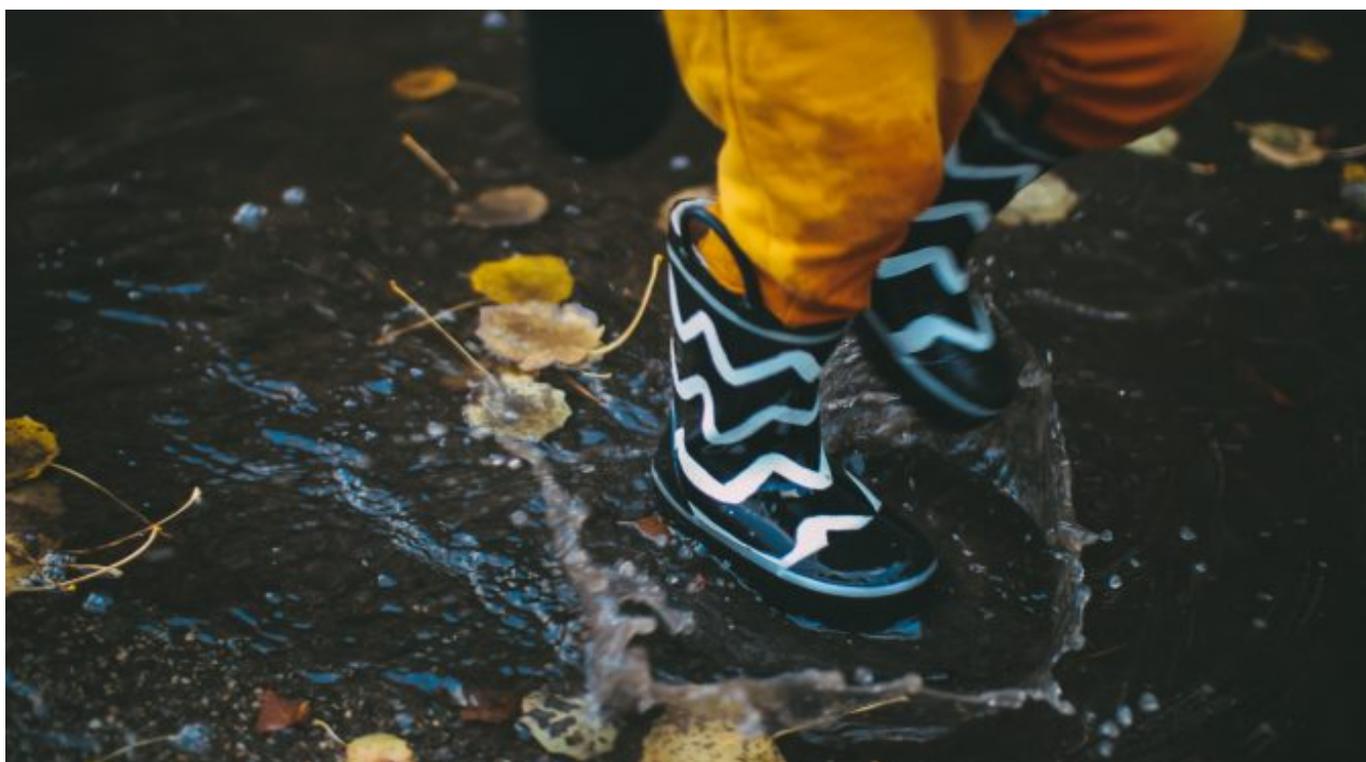
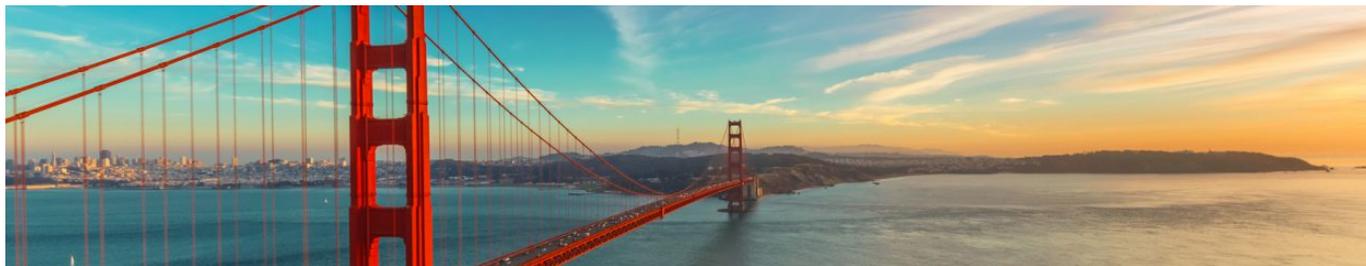
Where was this change I had been so confident about and so proud? Taking my inventory today about new problems revealed the omissions of my prior efforts. Before I had been not completely thorough, despite my best intentions. "Do not be discouraged," a good friend extolled. So I was not. I asked to be shown the next right thing and be given the courage to do it. More will surely be revealed if I just don't drink, go to the meetings (and do the work).

## Tradition 4 + Rule #62

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[aasfmarin.org/tradition-4-rule-62](https://aasfmarin.org/tradition-4-rule-62)

The Point



by Claire A.

There is much that resonates with me in this chapter. Most of all I can relate to the promoter, who ignores the advice from the A.A. Foundation and plows ahead, organizing and promoting and earnestly spearheading a gigantic mess. This is exactly what I would do when I was drinking. I meant well.

*I meant well—Earnestly spearheading a gigantic mess*

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It's not explicitly stated, but humility is at the core of this tradition. We are allowed by this tradition to run A.A. groups with a massive amount of leeway. We can meet where and when we want, run the show how we want, build a massive three-story A.A. shrine if we want. There is freedom

to go about this however we want, as long as we don't harm other groups or A.A. as a whole. And whether we know it or not, we will learn humility through this process – we will, eventually, learn we are not running the show and we don't have all the answers.



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*“Don't take yourself too damn seriously.”*

I think for a bunch of drunks, for me anyway, this freedom is critical. I have heard many people say, and it's true for me, too, that if they had been forced to do things a certain way (believing in a certain conception of God is one big example), they wouldn't have stayed. And it's not just that we're stubborn, though I certainly am. It's that we learn through making mistakes what works and what doesn't. There is nothing like a colossal screw-up to teach me what I don't know. I wish I didn't have to make mistakes, but ultimately, sometimes grouchy, I am grateful for them.

Every now and then I actually have the humility to ask for guidance. It's usually when I am totally overwhelmed or confused or both, so I am forced to ask. And that's when I see how much experience there already is out there. This happened to me recently with a non-A.A. group I'm in. I'd been

asked to serve as parliamentarian for the group. Having no clue what this meant, I was forced to reach out to other parliamentarians and the school district to find out more. Little did I know, I would find a trove of information and kind people who want to help. I just had to have the humility to ask.

### *For a bunch of drunks, this freedom is critical*

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I love the fourth tradition, too, because it reminds me to have a sense of humor. What's the saying, "If you want to make God laugh, tell her your plans?" I can get so wrapped up in what I'm doing that I lose all perspective. Sure, I can mean well. My efforts can be for a good cause. But I have to remember that I'm in God's world, not my world, and I have to remember there are other people here, too, who also care deeply about things, and may not – shocker – always agree with me.

So I need to tread lightly, remember to enjoy what I'm doing, and not take myself too damn seriously. And, as the Tradition points out: Being able to laugh at myself *is* humility. I am a human. By definition, I am bound to make mistakes, many of them. Knowing that, my big challenge to is remember that at all times.

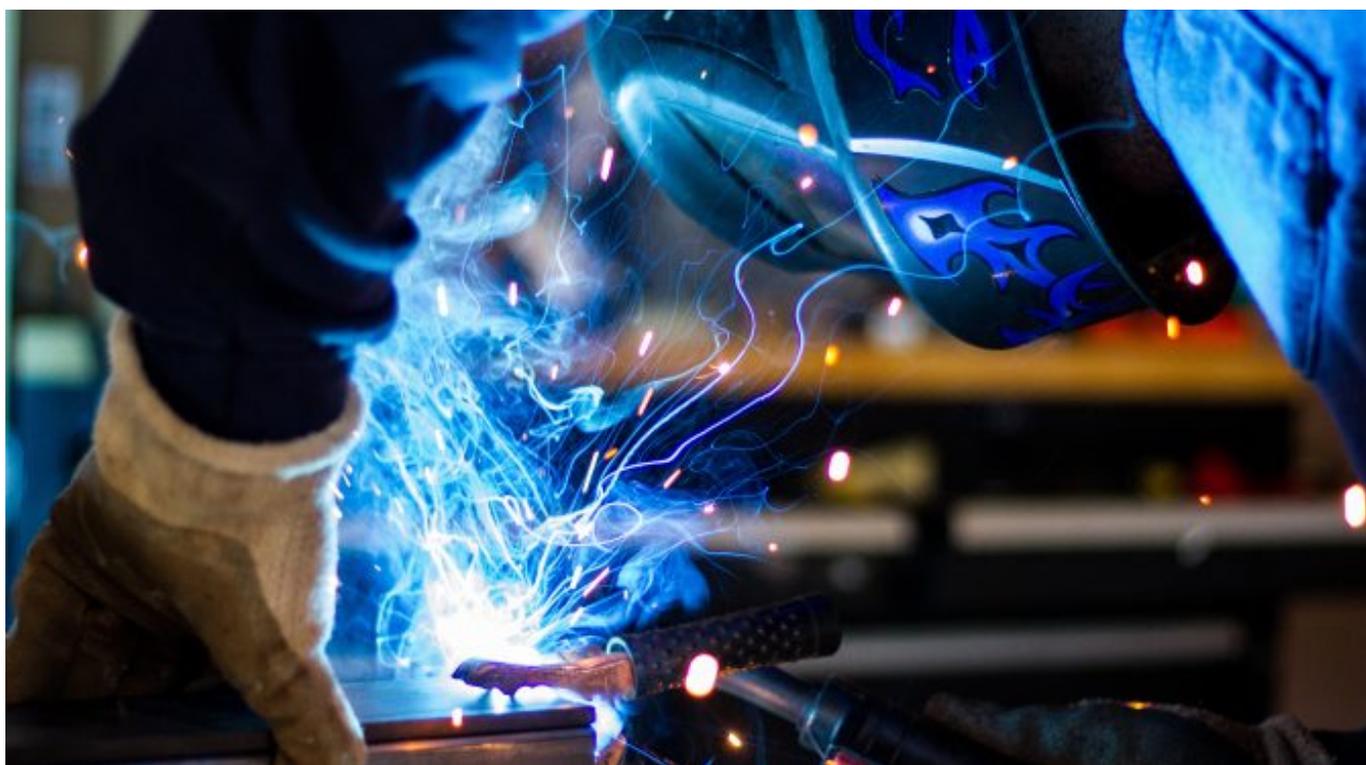
Can I bring that sense of being human into my work? Into my parenting? Can I have humility while I am presenting what I think is a great idea to other people? Maybe I can and maybe I can't, but I do know I have a better chance when I'm sober, and practicing in A.A.

# The Deal Is: Meetings are Tools

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[aasfmarin.org/the-deal-is-meetings-are-tools](https://aasfmarin.org/the-deal-is-meetings-are-tools)

The Point



by Bree L.

The deal is, I don't identify as an alcoholic unless I am in a meeting, with a sponsee or doing A.A. related service. Those are like alcoholic islands in my day. The rest of the time I work to fit in with the rest of the world as a pretend normie. I want to get along with others, play well. I can't announce my alcoholism and expect non-A.A. peers to understand why I might be less than charming.

*I fit in with the rest of the world as a pretend normie*

The deal is those A.A. meeting things I do are a support throughout the rest of my day. For me, I start a day with a morning meeting. Yesterday we talked about tolerance and members shared how they dealt with challenging incidents such as a wife who continues to enjoy a glass of wine, or

another described butting heads with a two-year-old. A couple of times I remembered that concept of tolerance and what I'd heard along with love. It made my day a bit more tolerable.



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Meetings have turned out to be a mainstay of my program. Thirty years ago, I went to one meeting a week, whether I needed it or not. I wasn't much in touch with my emotions and once a week seemed more than adequate. Now I try for at least four or five meetings and have a good sense when I need a meeting. There's always a gem I take home with me for later use.

### *Overwhelmed is under-surrendered*

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The first gem I heard early on was from a person who described "A hole in his gut that the wind blew through." I knew that hole because I had the same thing and I couldn't fill it no matter what. I had an emptiness that wouldn't quit, but realized at least I wasn't alone.

Another gem I heard at a meeting confronted my feelings of being overwhelmed. Sarah, from Chicago, said it was the same as being under-surrendered. That was a shock after all my years of telling myself and others how very busy, overworked and smothered in tasks I was. I seemed to

be the only person who could remedy all those demands. My humble bragging translated into under surrendered.

A favorite gem I heard a few years ago was. "An alcoholic is the only person who believes the cure for loneliness is isolation." That was a zinger for this alcoholic who spent a lifetime, fighting to be alone and figure life out. I knew if I could only weed out all the outside stimuli, I'd be just fine. (Thank you very much). Now I know life doesn't work that way and hitting a meeting is a far better solution.

The joy of a meeting is that no one interrupts, and no one is putting the lean on me to do anything. I'm absolutely as alone as I want to be, surrounded by a bunch of fellow alcoholics. What could be more supportive?

Awhile back I realized the relationship between acceptance and Step 1. They're closely related, in the same family—fraternal twins but not identical. Once I accept something, I can then make plans or decisions about what to do. It's getting down that hallway to acceptance that is the challenge.

One dear friend calls those words of wisdom "verbal Frisbees." Sometimes I catch them and sometimes I don't. The deal is they're readily available and free at just about every meeting.

*Verbal Frisbees: Sometimes I catch them,  
sometimes I don't*

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I'm not an alcoholic in other parts of my life, but I need to hear about the honesty of my disease in meetings to maintain my second step balance. Those gems from fellow alcoholics have given me a life. The deal is, you'll see me regularly at meetings because I want to hang onto this sober life I have today.