



THE POINT IS

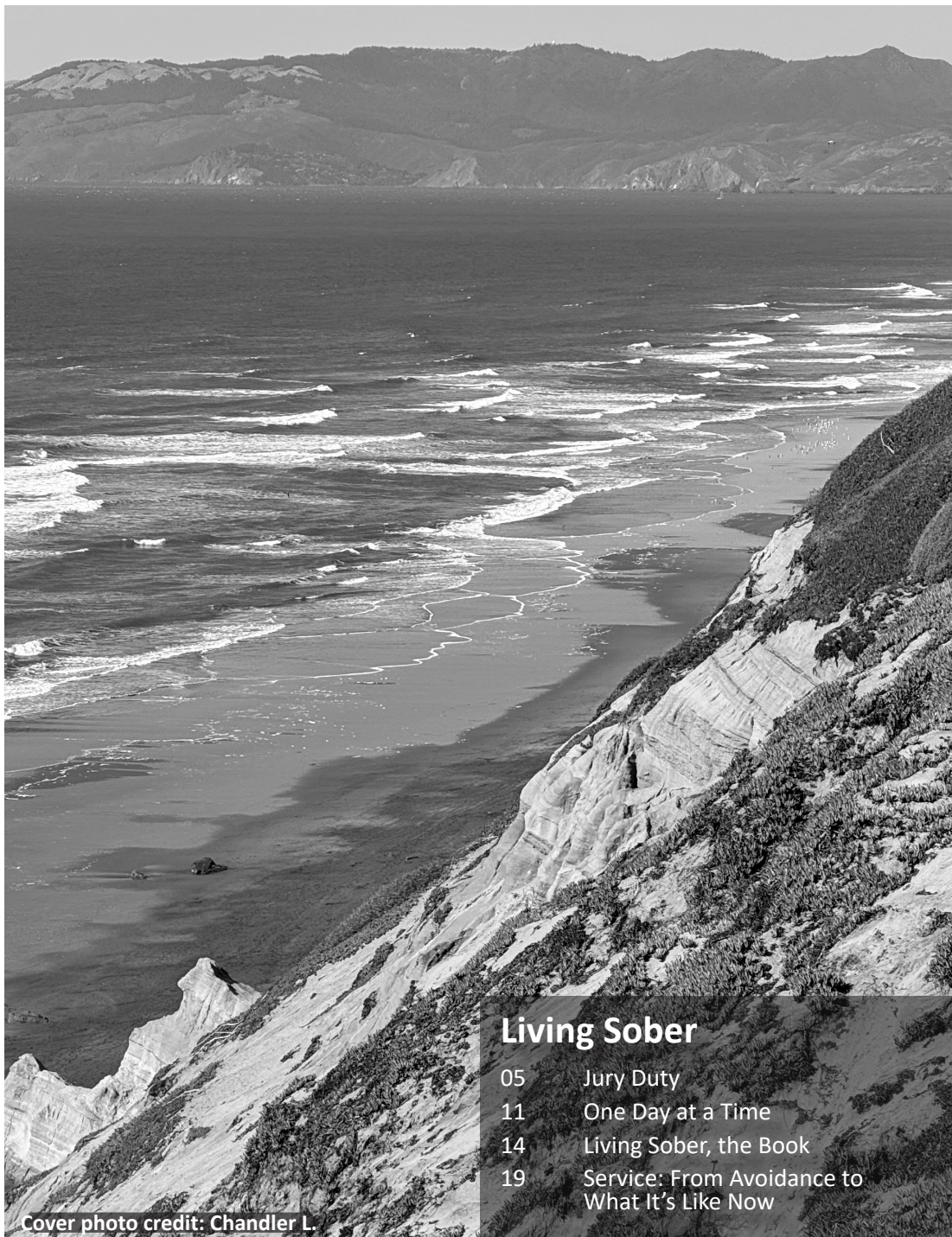
that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.

2026

SUMMER

A Publication of
San Francisco and
Marin Intergroup
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The Point is a newsletter for San Francisco and Marin members to share their experience, strength and hope. We welcome personal stories of recovery, letters, poems and artwork to carry the message. The committee reviews content in observance of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Publication does not constitute endorsement by A.A., San Francisco and Marin Intergroup, or the Communications Committee.



Cover photo credit: Chandler L.

Living Sober

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“True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the profound desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 124-25

What can I say?

David R.

What can I say
to a heart I split open,
not with a single blow
but with small, haunting fractures
that spread when I would make
the same mistake time and again?

What can I say
to a heart that learned
to flinch at my footsteps,
because the truth kept changing shape
every time I touched it?

What can I say
to a heart I tried to mend
with promises that evaporated
the moment my craving became unbearable,
promises that left us both
more exhausted than united?

Maybe nothing.
Maybe my words are just frigid air
until they've lived long enough
to mean something again.

But if there is still a place in you
that hasn't frozen shut,
a quiet corner that remembers us
before all this catastrophe—
then let that place choose its own pace.
Let it watch me change without asking
whether it should follow.

And if one day it wants to open,
I'll be here—
ready to learn how to deserve
whatever light it gives.

From the Editor



Living Sober

“Above all, take it one day at a time.”

Bill W., letter, 1958.

Living Sober is the theme for the summer issue of The Point, and this issue’s stories tell the struggles and triumphs our fellows face – from getting into the rooms of A.A. in the first place to living each day in sobriety. Several stories this quarter address the challenges of living sober and the power of working the steps one day at a time with the help of a Higher Power and A.A. Tashina B tackles the old voices that fed her disease, Jamie M tots up how much he has saved by staying sober, and Barbara L brings her new and improved H.P. into her heart. Chandler writes of the many recovery tools he uses daily, and the comfort of unity and connection they can bring. Eduardo reminds us our 12 Steps give us a life worth living. Pat walks us through hitting bottom and starting a new, sober life, and Kathleen describes how the spiritual discipline of the 12 Steps saved her life. Finally, Frank T discusses the importance of service to sobriety.

The poetry in this issue shows the real transformations that happen with sober living. David R. reflects on a trust that can grow as we change in sobriety. Tashina B writes of self-love turning into forgiveness for others. John W observes how we can reconnect with joy in and through nature.

Thank you to all of our contributors for your shares and your service! Thanks also to Ramona S. for line-editing the stories and poems, and to Bernadette S. for taking the rough layout and turning it into this beautiful newsletter!

Editorial Policy

The Point publishes original feature articles, submitted by members of the San Francisco and Marin A.A. Fellowship, that reflect the full diversity of experience and opinion found with the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. No one viewpoint or philosophy dominates its pages, and in determining the editorial content, the editors rely on the principles of the Twelve Traditions.

This statement is a summary; for the full editorial policy, please go to News and Events on www.aasfmarin.org. To contact The Point commit-tee directly, write to thepoint@aasfmarin.org.



Thank you!

Intergroup is grateful for all the individual contributions, including memorial, honorary and anniversary contributions received in 2025. Individual contributions have been a consistent source of revenue these last few years.

In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, San Francisco and Marin Intergroup limits contributions to two sources: A.A. groups and individual A.A. members. While there is no limitation on the amount an A.A. group may contribute, we follow the limits established by the General Service Conference for individual contributions. A.A. members may contribute up to \$7,500 annually. Bequests in wills are acceptable on a one-time basis, and not in perpetuity. The limit is no more than \$12,500.



A special thanks to our current Grateful Givers. San Francisco and Marin Intergroup is grateful to our 354 Grateful Givers who contributed \$64,617 in 2025 with an average monthly contribution of \$14.40.

Sign up to become a Grateful Giver
Are you a Grateful Giver? If not, consider signing up for a monthly contribution to support your local Intergroup at the QR code below.



And On the Topic of Living Sober

Ian M.

It used to be yellow, right? The much-maligned final member of the A.A. canon, it squeaks by with the coveted qualification: conference approved literature. Full of quirky, down-home advice for any occasion, of gems and life hacks for the newly sober.

“I am a little piece of God having a human experience.”

But in the short title lie our hopes and dreams as A.A. members. Chase and enjoy that daily reprieve. Trudge the road. It wends a winding path through the structure of God’s plot, twisting and looping back, if I am lucky enough, to clean up my messes. I’ll fix the messes I caused the first go ‘round, so my instincts and reactions learn to operate in reality, as opposed to in my fantasy.

If I am free and easy in the world, then I can be heard by alcoholics in trouble; get a chance to answer a question or two. Can I crack the code, or track the road for any alcoholic to grasp and see? Not at all. At best, I can provide a spotlight for them or a foothold that worked for me.

I clearly live in a Dr. Seuss, cartoon version (if not perversion) of reality. But along with that, I find my way to A.A. by the end of the day. Ok, great, so it’s not a song, or a sing along most seek-- but I’ll still recommend a regimen of seven meetings per week.

How then, do I get life done, with so much time at A.A.? The time I spend opens up the end of the day. My mind is calmed by the steps, like a balm, and the self-centered fear falls away; It concentrates the activity in the other hours of the day.

If my third step prayer comes true, difficulties evaporate... transparently God’s tool, waving like a lily in the field, struck by every breeze, and better for bending a bit, with the sense of the third step prayer to guide it.

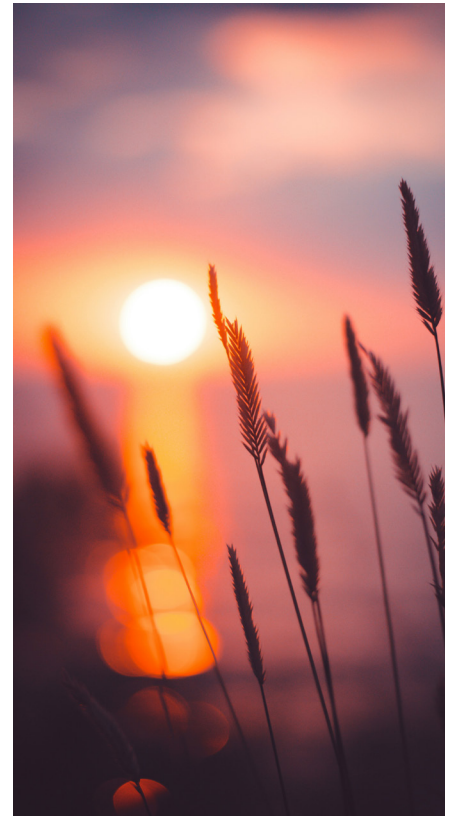
Living sober has been a fun mix of chasing the “pink cloud,” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 113) and coasting downhill (not in the literature). Gaining perspective after all, it seems my cyclical bouts of fear and depression were, in the end, temporary.

That sounds a bit bad. I won’t back off of the word “fun” though. If I can take a purposeful step forward with my eyes open, that is fun! And if that sounds like a low bar, consider, if you can’t take a step in any direction or open your eyes to see (think factory-farmed chicken or pork) then that is certainly “not fun.”

I have one singular part in things. My character defect: unwillingness to churn through moral inventory and amends as they come up, the essential spiritual hygiene. That’s right, it’s that same old saw: “A.A. works if you work it.”

I am a little piece of God having a human experience. And with that humanity comes my original sin: un-saleable goods. If I am honest about the stock in trade, I always think I know what’s right and wrong about situations, as soon as they come down the chute.

But I just don’t want to churn through searching and fearless moral inventory, so the defect is laziness. It’s like all of the paradoxes in A.A., reach the truth of the situation by turning it around just so. My amends to myself: work the steps. That’s the root of all my difficulties, a lack of steps, a lack of conscious contact with HP. Treat that, and my problems disappear.



Jury Duty

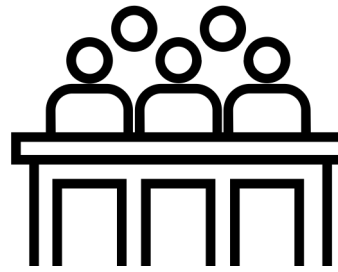
Tashina B.

I received a small postcard that read, "Official Jury Summons" and was not happy about it. My stomach turned like it did every year that I received it. I dialed the automated line to the courthouse and entered my three-digit group number. I didn't have to report on Monday or Tuesday and found myself feeling pretty good about not having to go to 850 Bryant.

"Flashbacks of being in a courtroom waiting for my last name to be called versus whoever the lucky person or county was at the time."

After working all day and teaching my night class, I was exhausted. I got home around 9pm, took a shower, prepped my breakfast, and went to bed. When I woke up, I started my coffee, clocked into work, and went about my day. Then at 8:48am I remembered that I had forgotten to call the automated Jury line the night before. I grabbed that annoying postcard and quickly dialed the number. I felt anxious but figured that I was probably stressing over nothing. I entered my group number and listened. I froze. I was required to report that morning at 8:30am and it was already 8:48am. I quickly clocked out, threw on a blouse, ran my fingers through my hair, grabbed my purse and raced out the door. By the time I arrived it was 9:16am and there was a line of eager people wrapped around the building. By the time I made it to the front of the line, it was 9:28am. The guard motioned for me to walk through the metal detectors.

I had never liked the courthouse. My memories were tainted with traumatic moments where I cried in the hallway after losing custody of my son. Flashbacks of being in a courtroom waiting for my last name to be called versus whoever the lucky person or county was at the time. DUI's, restraining



orders, and child custody hearings flashed before my eyes and I wanted to cry. I located the red exit sign and ran down

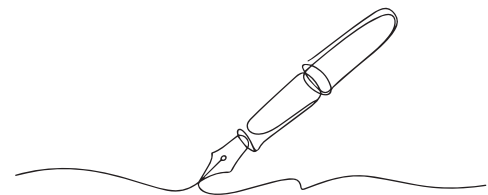
the stairs. Tears were already pouring down my cheeks by the time I made it outside of the courthouse. I rushed past the guards, out the doors, and down the cement stairs. I felt sick. I wanted to get as far away from there as possible. My thoughts spun around in my head and didn't make much sense. They sounded like they did twenty years ago and said things that I used to believe. I grabbed my phone and called my sponsor.

She answered and she listened. These thoughts were what fed my disease. They told me that I was nothing, that no one loved me and that I was a bad mom. They told me that my children were better without me and that I was alone with nothing. I used to listen to them over and over until I needed to numb and find a bottle. I used to believe those self-defeating words that were spoken to me in my own voice, telling me that I was nothing. The more I listened to them, the more I drank. I would drink until I blacked out, then come to enmeshed in a toxic situation with people that I didn't trust. It was a never-ending cycle of numbing and running away from my problems. I was lost.

My sponsor reminded me that I am no longer the same person that I was twenty years ago. I have a community of support that loves me and accepts me for who I am. Today I am invested in my recovery and I am not alone. I have my sponsor, my home group, the program, and all of my children.

THE POINT NEEDS YOUR VOICE!!

FALL THEME: **GRATITUDE** Deadline: **SEP 1**
the^{point}@aasfmarin.org



Share your experience, strength and hope. Follow the QR code for more information



Are You Glad You Quit?

Jamie M.

I was recently in an online forum where I saw the question posted: “Are you glad you quit drinking? How long ago was it?” So I answered. . .

I quit in 1986.

They say you can't buy happiness, but for fun let's say that the cost of booze is the cost of happiness.

I used to drink a lot of beer. A six pack of domestic beer cost about \$4.50 in those days. So at an average of a six pack a day at that price, I saved \$1,650 the first year. If I assume I was also drinking a fifth of bourbon a week at eight bucks a bottle, that's another 416 bucks saved, so rounding up to account for the occasional party, that's around \$2,100 saved the first year. So if you use those prices for the next ten years, that's \$21,000 saved.

By 1996, the estimated price of a six pack was more like \$5.90 and the bourbon was around \$10 for a 750 ml bottle. Rounding up for the occasional party, that's \$2,675 for the year, so the next decade then is \$26,750. Allowing for a few splurges, call it \$27K for the decade.

By 2006 the estimated price of a six pack is up to around \$7.25 and the bourbon is maybe \$12.50 so the annual total is around \$3,300 without even splurging on vacation. That makes it around \$33,000 for the decade.

For the decade ending 2016 the estimated cost of a six pack in San Francisco was around ten bucks, so at a six pack a day that's \$3,650 and the estimated cost of my former brand of bourbon in San Francisco was running around \$20, so a bottle a week would add up to \$1,040 for the year. Put the two together with no extras and that's about \$4,690 for the year and allowing for some additional splurges, \$47K for the decade.

By quitting alcohol I saved about \$128K over the last forty years. And I'm absolutely sure I low-balled my estimates of how much I was consuming.

So I'm rather pleased that I quit, on that basis alone. Just don't ask me about cocaine, because I wasn't keeping very good track of that, if you know what I mean. Also, I quit smoking cigarettes in 1987 from a level of two or three packs a week. I wouldn't have done that if I had kept drinking. I checked prices and cigs were about \$1.75 a pack the year I quit, so that's ballpark savings of \$275 a year then and \$1,500 a year if I was still smoking.



All prices are ballpark prices for San Francisco, California.

Of course, I wouldn't have saved all that money if I had died twenty or thirty years earlier from the health consequences. Also, romantic relationships tended to blow up after a year or two back in the day, and I'm now in the same relationship for 30 years, legally wed for 28. Seriously doubt that would have happened.

So yeah, I'm glad I quit. And that's an understatement.

Upgrading my H.P.

Barbara L.

When I was younger, God was in the sky. There were no satellites, space stations, or moon walkers, so God was in the sky. He was also at my local church, where we went every Sunday and Reverend Dixon presided in God's house. When my dad was arrested for drunk driving, the Reverend gave us a home visit, but he parked his car halfway down the block, not in front of our house. My prayers for Reverend Dixon and my father went up to the sky.

Into my teens, my dad was still drinking, life was hard and God seemed more present in the sturdy granite cathedral of our town. That's where I went to pray, as I wasn't getting the desired results with my sky prayers. I had an aunt who was a nun and seemed to be getting better results; she gave me a set of rosary beads. I learned to pray the rosary. Those earnest prayers always circled getting my dad to quit drinking.

"I have a big, burly spirit who watches out and protects me."

There was also a statue of Jesus on the cathedral altar, so I focused on Jesus to receive my prayers. I felt God's presence with my prayers.

God was always somewhere else, up in the sky, on the wall, or up the street, far away from me and untouchable. There were places where I could pray and feel a sort of spiritual presence. The rosary I recited was one of mysteries, but prayer and reciting prayers felt good. It still does. Around this time, I identified as an alcoholic, counting up the many binges and hangovers I'd suffered.

Once I started drinking, I didn't stop, and the next morning suffered devastating hangovers. One time I had a hangover that lasted four days and ended in the emergency room. I was miserable, and pledged never to drink again, but soon would take that first drink and be off. Drinking was always on my mind, bartering with myself, planning, or managing, a variation of controlled drinking. Someone said in a meeting, "You can take the alcohol out of the alcoholic, but you still have the ick." Growing up in an alcoholic home, drinking was all I knew.

After my fourth and fifth step, so much was lifted; with the eighth and ninth, I could breathe easier and see things more clearly. I knew I could not ever drink again but I still needed support. I saw my Higher Power as a firm support, a strong hand to hold as I crossed the busy streets of life.

Then my husband and my brother, two important people in my life, died within a year of one another. It was during Covid-19, and having to trudge through life alone seemed unsurmountable. I upped my meetings and speed-dialed my sponsor. Along with this, I upgraded my Higher Power to a big, burly spiritual being with huge arms to hold, hug and watch out for me. I took God down from the heavens, off the wall, and brought him into my heart. Years ago, a senior member mentioned the Edna St. Vincent Milay couplet in the third edition of the Big Book: "Pity the heart that's slow to learn, what the quick mind knows at every turn."

Today my H.P. is in my heart and my gut. It is my truest self, spiritually centered, and only wants what's best for me. I have a big, burly spirit who watches out and protects me from those old alcoholic ways of being and thinking ingrained in this alcoholic's mind.



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A Letter for My Father

By Tashina B.

As a young girl,
Living under your roof,
I swore to never be like you,

I wanted more out of life,
Yet you told me
That I had no Power,
I did not cry,

You flared your Nostrils
And would Point your Finger in my face
You would punch me
During your Drunken Rages
Until I Fought back,
But I showed No Fear,
Because you wanted me
to be Tough,

I did not cry
Only the Silent Screams from the
Pits of my Soul,

Nightstands covered
In the ashes of cigarettes,
Blackened Ashtrays
And empty Beer cans,

Golden Bottles of liquor
On your paydays,
Were your God, your relief, your fix,
The Life of an Alcoholic,

Violent Expressions
of Your Darkened
Rage,
Shown on my
Mother's Face,
You found God behind bars and
Stone walls were the results of your violent Aggression,
I didn't miss you,
I finally felt safe

But I became you
you trained me well,

I drowned My Violent Rages
In bottles of vodka
And numbed all feelings of
Guilt and Shame,

I lost everything
I became nothing
But a bottle and a line,



My world went Dark
And I became small,

But I Found Hope
I saved myself from me,
I have power today
Because I can cry,

I fought back
By learning to love myself,
I Released my rage
And I have walked away from
The life I lived under your roof,
Because I Am Not like you,

But I Can
Forgive You.

How Birds in Flight Helped me Stay Sober

Chandler L.

I first got sober in 2010. It took me several years and many relapses to get it right.

One of my sobriety tools is taking photographs. I would drive to Ocean Beach in the morning and take a walk with my camera and telephoto lens. The fresh and salty ocean breeze cleared my head and strengthened my soul. I set out not to capture any particular scene but rather to open my mind to anything new that I saw: waves, ocean spray, foam, sand, dunes, people and birds.

Sanderlings patiently clustered in a group on the sand waiting for the waves to recede. Then they scampered towards the ocean to peck at the microorganisms buried beneath the wet sand. As soon as the waves started crashing, they scampered back to the safety of the dry sand. Then rinse and repeat until a human or dog or

“I tell the people at my local grocery store, my bakery, and even the post office what a great job they are doing.”

noise would scare them off.

All it took was a single bird to sound the alarm and the entire flock would fly away in a dramatic formation that reminded me of a skyward ballet. The flock would fly in a coordinated effort to find a new safe ground, furiously flying to the left, then to the right, and then upward and outward until they disappeared.

This biologically executed behavior was a metaphor in my mind for those of us who are alcoholics and our constant search for liberation from our addiction. Since connection is the opposite of addiction, I surmised that my recovery should abandon isolation and embrace the fellowship of which I am a part. Instead of sitting alone drinking, now I reach out to other alcoholics and friends whenever I can.

Every day, I call or text my sponsor and at least one member of my home group. I say hello to strangers on the street and say “looking good today, what’s your

secret?” I compliment workers at my local grocery store, my bakery, and even the post office, and tell them what a great job they are doing. “I couldn’t do this without you,” I often say with a big smile. Most people thank me in return and tell me that I made their day. What a wonderful gift!

Every day, I do the First Step and write down how this will get me through the day. I also write down five things I am grateful for today: my health, my sobriety, my sober fellowship, my family and friends, my creative pursuits. I vow to be fully present in the moment, smell the flowers, and look intently at the beauty that surrounds me.

Every day, I make a list of all the positive actions that I can take today to maintain my sobriety, my honesty, my integrity, and my humility: seeking inspiration from other people; passion projects; exercise; creative forms of expression; living in the moment; visualizing self control; and knowing that acceptance is the answer. At cocktail time, I tell myself that I will not drink, no matter what! Instead, I do something that will replace drinking, like editing my photographs, going for a walk, calling a friend, going to an A.A. meeting, or writing down the important events of that day.

At the end of the day, I reflect on what I achieved that day, and what I can do better tomorrow, like being more humble, listening more, and being kinder to friends and strangers. These tools are a daily reminder to stay sober and connect, instead of isolate, and be the best person I can be.



The Aspens Sang

John W.

Somewhere it started,
Somewhere the wind blew,
Somewhere the gale was howling,
Somewhere the song was heard.
Somewhere was not here.

On the quaking Aspen the harp hung,
But so foreign this land,
No song of home could grace it.
A lost right hand better than
Plucked strings of joy.

Yet still The Aspens Sang.
The aria of boughs caressed
By invisible zephyrs
In harmony with leaves all
A shiver, a Voice of joy and hope.

That this land, that life, my life
Upon which my Aspens grew
Had become by me so defiled, so false
A land, a life of lies, even when the
Truth no harm to me would do.

So this heart held no song
This heart felt no joy
This life seemed so hopeless
Yet still The Aspens Sang.
They sang until I could again sing.

When my heart once more
Was filled with song I cannot
Recall to the moment, yet
As an incoming fog it upon
Me spread its cooling blanket.

I knew somehow I now believed:
Even I could again know joy,
Even I could again know hope.
This sanity with it brought serenity,
And still The Aspens Sang.

Their song weaved through the forest
Of my veins, so the sap within them
Flowed freely, nurturing every branch
To which they within organs reached.
The Aspens Sang, I believed that Song!



Photo credit: Robert Reyes

One Day at a Time

Eduardo D.

In the beginning, there were no indications that I had a drinking problem. I had a few relationships which lasted months, even years. However, as I continued to drink, my relationships failed. Being single, I would go to bars looking for fun. After a while, bars and drinking was no longer fun or social. I no longer sought the company of others.

I went from drinking on weekends to drinking during weekdays. My 5 pm cocktail became my 10 am fix. I drank during my lunch hour, hoping to make it to 5 pm. Then I would rush to the nearest liquor store to purchase my bottle for the night. This became a daily routine.

I began missing work. I couldn't control my speech or shakes. Just like my relationships, I lost one job after another. I lived off my unemployment until I found another job. I continued drinking.

One day, I was invited to a party. I had consumed more than my share of drinks. During the course of the party, I heard that a child was locked in the third floor bedroom and the only other entry was the window outside the house. I thought, I'll be a hero! I began to climb the outside of the three story home. Upon getting to the window, I fell backwards to the cement pavement below. I passed out. When I gained consciousness, I heard someone say "Don't move! The paramedics are coming!"

My neck was broken. I had not been employed long enough to receive workmen's compensation. I lost my job, lost my apartment and became a disabled homeless person. I ended up in a shelter, still drinking. My friends would not invite me into their homes for fear of me becoming a liability or just plain bad news!

I left the shelter and began living in the streets. Finally an acquaintance took pity on me and let me stay with him. I slowly recovered from my neck injury and landed a new job and an apartment.

I continued to drink secretly.

My health was in ruins. I bruised easily and my liver slowly suffered. I made an appointment to see a doctor. The doctor evaluated my bruises and my blood tests and said I had the beginnings of liver cirrhosis. "I cannot help your liver if you aren't willing to help yourself! What I'll prescribe you is rehab for your alcoholism!"

I was angry. When I got home, I had one more drink. I could not keep it down and began vomiting blood. My bottom had arrived. "I cannot do this anymore." If I continued to drink, I would soon die. I surrendered. My sober journey began. 90 days of rehab and A.A. meetings. After completing rehab, I continued to attend A.A. meetings. My body was wondering, "Who closed the saloon and opened the deli store?" Everytime I had a craving for a drink, I reached for food. Donuts and lots of sweets.

It's been a long journey. I learned to embrace A.A. and the 12 steps. This would be a lifetime commitment. There is no graduation. The way of A.A. is a lifestyle. I have a life worth living! I now have 14 years without a drink. I practice the 12 steps of A.A. Service and fellowship have kept my allergy at bay, one day at a time.



Photo credit: Debabrata Hazra

Quitting

Pat P.

It was May 9, 1988. I had just discovered a church, and decided to try some 'new age' ideas. I was 23 days into "Richard Hittleman's Yoga: 28 Day Exercise Plan." Today I was SO hung over from the night before. That was not unusual, since I drank every day. Nothing got between me and something to drink!

I woke up at 4:00 a.m. on the hall floor, went to bed and woke up again at 10:00 a.m. As unsteady as I was, I wanted to keep my commitment to try to do something good for myself. I sloppily went through the movements, wanting to get done so I could sit and read the daily Yoga reading.

As I struggled, the thought went through my head: "You could quit drinking." This was totally new; I did not think I had any problem with alcohol. However, I heard myself say "OK – maybe I'll think about stopping June 1st." Again a response: "Why not today?" That was a shocking thought.

"As I struggled, the thought went through my head: "You could quit drinking."

I hesitatingly responded in my mind: "Okay, if my reading after I'm done tells me to quit drinking, I will today." (The first 22 days had never been about anything to eat or drink, so I felt pretty safe.) I then heard myself say to myself, "Aww, you always make promises but you never keep them!" I argued: "NO! If it says to quit today I will!"



Photo credit: Alesia Kazantceva

Then I got scared because I had made a really strong statement. After the last pose, I hurried to the Yoga book on my bedside table and skimmed the reading. To my relief, it said NOTHING about drinking. So I took a breath, lit a cigarette, and had a sip of my coffee.

Then I re-read more slowly, and halfway down the page I saw, "Turn back to Lesson 18." I did—and was horrified to read: "It is strongly suggested that one refrain from all alcohol."

I was so shocked I could not think. I turned the book over, and went into my kitchen. I opened the bottom cupboard where I kept it all—wine, vermouth, rum, vodka—one never knew who might come over for a drink - and the scotch in half-gallons.

I took the bottles out and started dumping down the sink, one bottle after another. I'll never forget that sound—the house was SO quiet: glug–glug–glug. And the stench! I just kept looking out the window over the kitchen sink as I dumped, not hesitating. Just one bottle after the other.

Then I sat on my kitchen stool in front of the sink looking at all the empties. Everything was so quiet. My only thought was "What do I do now?"

My friend Ed's wife had shown me where she went to noon meetings. I got there in time but didn't hear much, just sat near the door, and at the end I went for it.

A woman stopped me saying, "Come back tomorrow." Then she looked me in the eyes and said, "And try not to drink until then." I was stunned at the idea of going a whole day without a drink. The idea of not drinking all day felt impossible. That's when I knew I was addicted.

At home I parked the car, not knowing what to do. I eventually went inside, put a few things in my purse, and left again— walking this time. I walked for hours, discovering parts of Gainesville that I had never seen. But I went to bed sober. That day my real life began.

1963

Kathleen W.

For a long time, I worked bottom-rung jobs doing my best to outshine myself, resenting the attention and growth others manifested in the work world. I drowned my sorrow in alcohol and drugs for 20 years. In August 1987, I emerged from that stupor on a hospital bed, only to face myself prancing around as a victim.

Thus, I entered Alcoholics Anonymous, I learned to work the steps, look within and make changes in myself. Those included changes in my self-perception, motivation, attitude and behavior. I'm thankful for A.A., which taught me to let myself be guided by a sponsor through the twelve steps, and to let myself be loved until I learned to love myself. Its principles helped me learn to meet my own needs as a way to love myself before rejoining the community in the service of others.

The basic tenets of A.A. are to trust your higher power, clean house and be of service to your fellow human beings. You help others only after you've learned to love and care for yourself. Then you keep your side of the street clean. This requires not blaming others for your own faulty decisions. It becomes your responsibility to steer your ship in all weather conditions, benign or inclement.

Although the detailed approach to diabetes maintenance is constant in my life, it can be grueling. It helped me realize the upkeep of my diabetes is a ritual honoring the physical plane and that my body housed my spirit. I think this life is as spiritual as it is material. Certainly, A.A.'s 12 Step program is a spiritual discipline. It is this practice that saved my life.

I took the steps and I seriously applied them to myself. I admitted defeat, and I asked for help from the universe. I got the support I seriously needed and the comfort of belonging to some entity bigger than myself bigger than the global community. It's divine.

This divine support helps me look my fears in the eye and walk through them. Fear of people and of economic insecurity gradually leave, one day at a time.

I pray to do God's will on the start of each day. I'm not as egocentric anymore; my life isn't just about me and what I want, it's more about us and what we need to prosper on all levels. The 'us' and 'we' are my partner, my family, my A.A. friends, my work friends, my writing community.

I've been in a long-term committed relationship for 26 years – it's been a slow process of building trust for each other and sharing the intimacies and angst of daily companionship. My partner and I maintain our humor, insight, patience and forgiveness for each other in the life we share together. My partner also lives with an A.A. program, so we have shared values, processes, and differences we respect about each other.

I've learned to trust God, myself and my fellow humans, within reason. I've learned to articulate my differences of opinions that I'd once bottled up for years. In tiny steps, I've learned to speak up for myself.

Through my recovery, I've developed my Dad's balance and my Mom's resilience. Gone is the self-pity, blaming my family, resenting my friends, wanting to escape forever. In its place is a faith in God that I am cared for, by caring for myself and others. This journey is a freedom and a responsibility to God, myself and others.



Photo credit: Mayur Gala

Living Sober, the Book

Anonymous

When I was first getting sober, I had no idea how anyone could get through a day without drinking. Drinking was my reward for doing everything I was supposed to do all day. I could tolerate work personalities and problems, I could stand doing laundry, making dinner, bathing the kids, reading bedtime stories over and over, anything, if I could have a drink and blot out all my feelings at the end of the day. The idea of not drinking to unwind was completely foreign. Unthinkable. Moreover, drinking was how I could socialize and get through small-talk. I needed it to handle living in the world.

Deep down, I knew I had to stop. As I have heard others say in the rooms, I was deteriorating faster than I could lower my standards. I was out of control at parties, and I was afraid for my mental health. Friends were quietly backing away. Suicide was starting to seem like an option. I knew I could not stop by myself. I had tried and failed more times than I could remember. A therapist urged me to A.A.

With great trepidation I went to my first meeting. It was a big meeting, and I remember feeling simultaneously like I was in the right place and like I had no idea which way was up. People were sharing about being sober for months or even years, but how they got through the day was what I wanted to know.

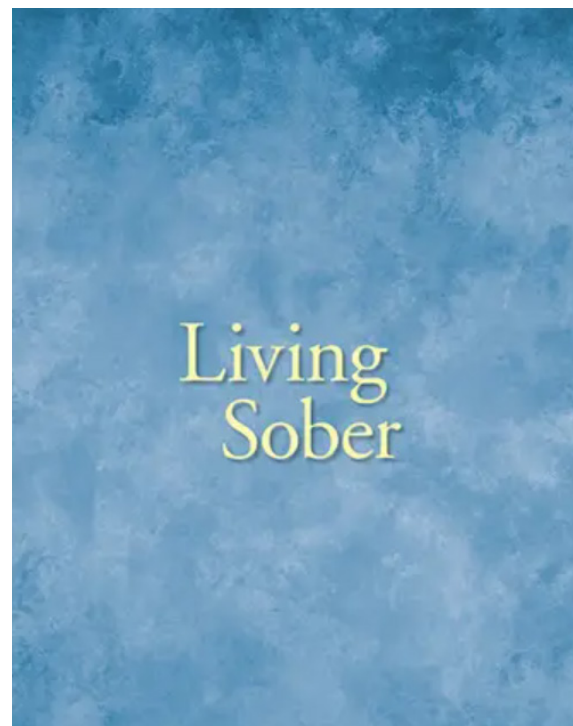
Someone pointed me to the book *Living Sober*, a wonderful collection of practical tips for living life without booze. It was there I learned I could grab a glass of fizzy water to avoid the endless “can I get you something to drink?” at a party. This book gave me permission to crave sweets in the early days. How good it was to hear that cravings are a normal response to quitting drinking. Tips like these helped me get through everyday situations when the Big Book was just too much to pick up, and the *Twelve*

Steps and Twelve Traditions? Forget it—way too heady. *Living Sober* talked to me about my life right now, and I needed to hear that, every day.

“I was deteriorating faster than I could lower my standards.”

So, *Living Sober* helped me in early sobriety. Later on, I returned to it when I was travelling. I had decided that I didn’t need a Big Book while traveling. I know: not my best decision. I think I thought it would take up too much space in my bags. I did, however, have the grace to stick *Living Sober* in my bag.

Most of the trip went fine. I met A.A. fellows in other countries; I experienced great food, vistas, people. I had a wonderful time, and I had difficulties. I felt overwhelmed, resentful, overtired, homesick. When I picked up *Living Sober*, I found it changed my perspective. The topics in the contents are general enough to find something that fits most situations, and I found that just remembering that I’m an alcoholic in need of a spiritual solution helped me to regain perspective and do the next right thing. I’m so grateful for the folks who wrote that little book. It has helped me in so many ways to not take a drink, one day at a time!



Living Sober is available to purchase in hard copy at Central Office, and you can find the entire text online:



<https://www.aa.org/living-sober-book>

Living Sober

Nan B.

I've been sober for 11 years, and heard many times the remarkable story of how, in sobriety, people have managed the death of a parent without picking up a drink. The story sometimes tells how, by working the steps, they were able to make amends, rebuild relationships, care for parents, show up and be helpful during a death or at a funeral. Early on, when I heard these stories, they seemed far-fetched, and I felt a little repulsed. I couldn't imagine any of these things for myself—but I was curious. These stories secretly gave me a tiny bit of hope.

Almost exactly a year ago, my 92-year-old father was in

“The crusty old guys made me laugh and reminded me not to drink.”

the hospital with a bladder infection that turned into sepsis. I drove to LA to see him and maybe take a turn at the hospital while my stepmom got some rest. My quick visit turned into three days at the hospital. My stepmom was exhausted, and I was alone with my dad, who had no idea where he was. I sat with him, soothed him, helped him eat and brushed his teeth. I met with doctors and kept my family posted. I did whatever needed doing. It was grueling and surreal, but I got a lot of very sweet time with my dad. Each evening, I made my way to an A.A. meeting at a strip mall full of crusty old guys with nicknames. I shared about my dad and how I was sad and overwhelmed. They smiled and let me know I was ok. They reminded me that the care I was able to give was the result of my sobriety, and offered their support. It was exactly what I needed.

A week before my birthday, I had plans to go camping, but I returned to LA knowing he was at the end. My

dad was no longer verbal, but his eyes got big when he saw me. He mouthed “I love you,” but no sound came out. The hospice nurse gave me an outdated pamphlet on what happens to the body just before death, and we played classical music on the radio. I sat with my siblings and my stepmom in the evenings, and we watched my dad draw one difficult breath after another. The death was a slow, somber experience and I stayed until my dad died. I shopped for food, cooked and did a lot of dishes. I went back to that same A.A. meeting, which lifted my spirits. The crusty old guys made me laugh and reminded me not to drink. The night before my birthday, I sat outside on the stoop in the hot heat, silently praying “please God, don't let my dad die on my birthday.” But that's what happened. I still don't know what to make of it, but on that day, when we were all in shock, I used my smart feet to go to the store to buy myself a cake and some candles, and that night we sang happy birthday even though our hearts were broken. I miss my dad and I'm finding a way to be ok with the fact that my birthday will also be the day my dad died. I'm glad I got to spend so much time with him at the end. And even on the saddest and strangest of birthdays, I never felt like drinking. It didn't even occur to me. I just walked through it, one step at a time—with the help of some anonymous A.A.s at a strip-mall in Upland, California.



Art credit: Nancy B.

Step Eight – All Persons We Had Harmed

Anonymous

Having done a thorough Step Eight when I first worked the steps (to the best of my ability at the time, which my sponsor then anointed with his solemn approval), I had that experience in my spiritual tool kit. Step Ten kept me on track, as sober days became years, so I thought of Step Eight as a memory or in the abstract.

However, when the challenges of life on life's terms hit like a tsunami, abstract thinking, memories or my idea of what's good for you, were washed away in the torrent of the storm. As instructed, I sought to determine what Step(s) applied to the circumstances. My sponsor, that "I want what he has" guy, reminded me that Step Four, the step to which I was pointed on the arc of life, had led many with more days than me back to the bottle. This was not an attractive alternative at all.

With my new Fourth Step inventory completed, I took the book down from the shelf, yielding unexpected and marvelous results. To this HP I asked that my defects be removed. With all I could muster, I was willing to make this request straight from my heart and with complete abandon. But the Big Book seems to never let A.A.s rest on their laurels; its authors knew a drunk like me was in trouble if I did. Instead, I was called to more action.

Now I had to "Make a list of all persons we had harmed." Since that ancient history was done and my recent episodes "promptly admitted," the effect of now requesting my defects be removed sank in; I had to ask: "Whom had I harmed" by the expression of these defects?

The answer was unexpected: "Me." Here I was, making a list, and the first name on it was mine. My sponsor assured me this was not a hidden manifestation of ego, but rather an honest appraisal. While I had developed resentments towards those on my inventory, thanks to my HP and my fellow A.A.s, I had not acted out upon them, but I sure let them eat me alive. While I had not taken actions I regretted or which called for amends, I had waxed profusely and profanely in the privacy of my mind. I had riddled my HP with questions, demanded He conjure up favorable responses to my plights, and denied that He had circumstances under control. I had forgotten I was in His care, an actor on His stage, a worker amongst workers in His field. As this realization was made during my Step Five, the reflections suggested by Step Six revealed that it was my shortcoming, my inability to trust my HP, which required attention, and demanded I ask to have it removed. To change, I needed to be willing and humbly ask for the help needed. In that reflection I also saw who I had hurt, who needed to be on my Eighth Step list: Me.

Into the mirror my sponsor held up, I looked at myself. I could now appreciate just how destructive my thinking and patterns had been, why I owed "me" an amends. I may not have lashed out at another (thank goodness) as I fretted with my issues, but I had sure beaten myself to a pulp. My acceptance developed around the circumstances, and my attitude with it, although the problems had not changed. Whether mine was to be a tragedy or comedy only my Director knew. But as my play of life unfolded, my lines now came more freely, for I had begun my living amends to "Me."



The Point Honors

Individual contributions to San Francisco and Marin Intergroup made between March 16 and June 15, 2026, acknowledging the following A.A. members:

Anniversaries

Peg D. (40 years)
Todd M. (26 years)
Herman B. (55 years)
Elizabeth M. (43 years)
Nancy R. (45 years)
Dennis H. (30 years)

In Memoriam

Raymond N.
Ralph C. (29 years)
John A. (41 years)

A Night of Happy Destiny

San Francisco and Marin Intergroup's Annual Gala and
A.A. Speaker Meeting with Al-Anon Participation

A.A. SPEAKER
Darren P. (Montecito, CA)

AL-ANON SPEAKER
Rosanna H. (Hayward, CA)

September 19, 2026

4:00 - 9:00 PM

St. Mary's Cathedral
1111 Gough Street, SF
On-Site Parking



\$65 per person
Tickets Go On Sale
June 27 at 10:00 AM

online shop.aasfmarin.org/gala
Visit 1821 Sacramento St., SF Call 415.674.1820

Committee Contacts

The following is a list of names and email addresses for our San Francisco and Marin Intergroup Board Officers and Intergroup committees. Please email the committees at the address below if you are interested in serving on a committee or would like more information. If you or someone you know could serve as a Tech or Communications Committee chair, please get in touch!

CHAIR: Judy W.
chair@aasfmarin.org

VICE CHAIR: Claire A.
vicechair@aasfmarin.org

TREASURER: Pam C.
treasurer@aasfmarin.org

SECRETARY: Courtney W.
secretary@aasfmarin.org

SF AND MARIN ARCHIVES
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Katie N. and Elena R.
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GALA SUB-COMMITTEE
Isae W. | gala@aasfmarin.org

SF PUBLIC RELATIONS
COMMITTEE
Michelle A. | sfpr@aasfmarin.org

TELESERVICE COMMITTEE
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SUNSHINE CLUB
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sunshineclub@aasfmarin.org

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
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COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
Vacant
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THE BUZZ SUB-COMMITTEE
Chiara O. | thebuzz@aasfmarin.org

THE POINT SUB-COMMITTEE
Claire A. | thepoint@aasfmarin.org



Intergroup Committees

Looking for a service commitment? Got a sponsee who could use one? San Francisco and Marin Intergroup's committees provide 12th Step services to people seeking help for their alcohol problem and to members of the A.A. Fellowship. Intergroup committees are an opportunity to have fun and do 12th Step service outside the group. Anyone can get involved: contact any of the committees at the emails provided below. We need your help!

<p>Communications Committee</p> <p>Provides communications support to Intergroup and its publications, including The Point and The Buzz.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 4th Tuesday of the month @5pm</p> <p>communications@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>Fellowship Committee</p> <p>Organizes and hosts A.A. events to promote fellowship in SF and Marin.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 4th Thursday of the month @5pm</p> <p>fellowship@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>HelpChat</p> <p>Connects sober members of A.A. via text chat with individuals seeking help with their alcohol problem.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members</p> <p>Meets as needed</p> <p>helpchat@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>Outreach Committee</p> <p>Raises awareness of SF and Marin Intergroup and our 12th Step services.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 1st Wednesday of the month @6pm</p> <p>outreach@aasfmarin.org</p>
<p>SF and Marin Archives</p> <p>Collects and preserves historical A.A. materials, including objects, recordings, photographs, prints, documents and interviews.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Seeking committee members</p> <p>Meets in-person at Central Office 2nd Sunday of the month @12pm</p> <p>archives@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>SF Public Relations Committee</p> <p>Provides information about A.A. to the general public and community members whose professions bring them in contact with individuals suffering from alcoholism.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Volunteers to assist with tabling at events; committee members</p> <p>Meets online 2nd Monday of the month @6pm</p> <p>sfpr@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>Teleservice Committee</p> <p>A 24-hour helpline for alcoholics in need.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Sunday Daily Coordinator; Teleservice volunteers</p> <p>Meets online 3rd Monday of the month. Orientation @ 6pm, followed by business meeting @ 6:45pm</p> <p>teleservice@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>Sunshine Club</p> <p>Brings meetings to A.A. members in Marin and SF who cannot attend regularly scheduled meetings, and are seeking an in-person connection to A.A.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Volunteers to help bring meetings to A.A. members</p> <p>Meets as needed</p> <p>sunshineclub@aasfmarin.org</p>
<p>Technology Committee</p> <p>Identifies, researches, recommends and implements ways to use technology in A.A. service for meetings and SF and Marin Intergroup.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee Chair</p> <p>Meets online 1st Monday of the month @5pm</p> <p>tech@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>The Point Sub-Committee</p> <p>The Point quarterly journal features personal stories of recovery from members of the SF and Marin A.A. Fellowship.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members; artists; writers</p> <p>Meets online 2nd Thursday of the month @5:30pm</p> <p>thepoint@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>The Buzz Sub-Committee</p> <p>The Buzz weekly digital newsletter features news, timely events and service opportunities in SF and Marin.</p> <p>Service Opportunity: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online as part of Communications Committee 4th Tuesday of the month @5pm</p> <p>thebuzz@aasfmarin.org</p>	<p>Need Help? Questions?</p> <p>Contact aa@aasfmarin.org</p>

What is Intergroup, anyway?

San Francisco and Marin Intergroup serves more than 900 A.A. meetings and groups in our common purpose of carrying the A.A. message of recovery to alcoholics. We provide important services for local 12th Step work, such as running Central Office, selling A.A. literature, publishing a local meeting directory and website and operating a 24-hour telephone hotline. Intergroup also connects the local Fellowship to service opportunities, informs the public and professional community about A.A. and acts as an information exchange for announcements and events.

Service: From Avoidance to What It's Like Now

Frank T.

There were so many reasons I put myself first and avoided carrying the message of the 12th Step. For starters, I tended to go it alone. Isolation had long been my comfort — it kept me feeling safe and separate from others. Meetings were fine for entertainment, moments of insight, and showing friends and family I was “working on the problem.” But signing up for a role when I had no idea how I’d feel next week? Genuinely terrifying. I told myself that self-knowledge—tucked away safely in my own mind and heart—was enough. That was the addiction talking. And there was more to it than I wanted to admit.

What did service in A.A. actually look like? At its simplest, it meant helping my group. Setting up the meeting room, acting as secretary, greeting newcomers, showing up to a business meeting and offering my perspective. That already felt like a lot to ask of myself. Working the Steps? Hard enough on their own, but offering to sponsor someone? No thank you.

Service was inconvenient, uncertain, and far too exposed. I was unlikely to get it right, and the last thing I wanted was unwanted attention.

And then there was the bigger picture of service, which was enough to send me running. Becoming a sponsor. Working alongside professionals who encounter alcoholics. Carrying information to the general public. Starting a new meeting. Maintaining a website. Running a Zoom meeting. Serving as treasurer. Writing to incarcerated people around the country. Supporting retreats. Serving as an Intergroup Representative (IGR) or a General Service Representative (GSR). Unthinkable. That was genuinely how I felt.

Then, slowly, something shifted.

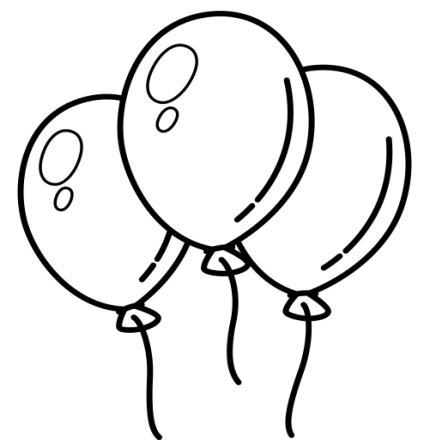
Over a few years, starting with small efforts, I began to show up in the service realm. I became secretary for a meeting and followed a script. I ordered literature and took on the treasurer role. I—like so many others—was asked to speak at meetings. Early on, I became an Intergroup Representative (IGR) when two “elder statesmen” cornered me and said “go do this.” I might never have joined on my own. The following year a General Service Representative (GSR) opened and I served on and off for eight years. I spent four years with PICPC and three years as a Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) service committee member. Service put me in conversation with more people, and each exchange opened something inside of me—ideas, connection, and fellowship I hadn’t known I needed.

It has taken time, but today, service is one of the most vital parts of my staying engaged — with my program, my fellow members, my Higher Power, and myself. I can no longer imagine being someone who runs from it. That’s what it’s like now.



Contribute to Intergroup's BIRTHDAY PLAN!

It's a way for A.A. members to show appreciation for their sobriety in A.A. and their commitment to helping others by contributing to SF and Marin Intergroup on their anniversary. The suggested contribution is \$1 or more for each year of sobriety.





San Francisco and Marin Intergroup
1821 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, CA 94109



photo credit: John L