

# WHERE'S THE NEWCOMER?



Feeling ugly and broken, he warmed up to his first meeting, even though it seemed really weird

**W**HEN I first walked into the rooms of AA, I was too broken to be nervous. I felt like a ghost of myself as I just floated through the door. I didn't know what to expect and had forgotten how to care. My life was a mess and always had been so, but I was oblivious to that fact then.

I remember looking at the floor, confused, then looking up, seeing all these happy, smiling faces. The chatter of happiness echoed through my empty being. Then an open hand appeared before me. I'll always remember that hand. That image is imprinted in my mind forever. That hand led up to an open, smiling face. That face, so full of joy, smiling, welcoming, comforting.

The man introduced himself to me and asked me what my name was. He made a fuss about me. This man that I had never seen before seemed excited to meet me. Me?

All of a sudden,  
there was a loud  
noise...banging on  
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me it sounded scary.  
People looked up.  
It was a Step  
meeting, whatever  
that meant.

Why? I was broken, ugly, weird. Nobody cared about me. I didn't even care about me. Actually, I hated myself. Why would a complete stranger be so happy to see me? He didn't even know me. But *I* knew me, and I was sad, embarrassed, guilty and confused.

Before long, I was sitting on a chair with a cup of tea in my hand. Random strangers came up to me, happily introducing themselves and shaking my hand. I look back now and could almost say that they were sympathizing with me for the wreckage of what I'd become, which I felt I'd left just outside the door.

All of a sudden, there was a loud knocking noise. A plastic bowl banging on a wooden table. To me it sounded scary, almost aggressive. But no, people quietly stopped talking and looked up, ready to be called to attention. It was a Step

meeting, whatever that meant. Something called the Preamble was read out and a newcomer was mentioned. I looked around the room for the newcomer, which brought a strange thought to me. This was an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, wasn't it? Where were all the alcoholics? These were all fresh-looking, normal people. To me, it looked like a town hall committee meeting. Where were all the alcoholics?

I looked around and still didn't see the newcomer, but everyone else did. Because a newcomer was there, they said, the group decided to talk about Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."

I wasn't sure if that made sense to me. Had I made a mistake coming here? I didn't drink a bottle of liquor every day. That's what an alcoholic does. I didn't hang around the town, clad in dirty rags, drinking from a paper bag. That's what an alcoholic does. I didn't go from work to the pub every day. That's what an alcoholic does. Or so I thought. So why did I come then? What was I doing there? I thought about it and I decided to stay.

But then I looked around again. I still didn't see that newcomer.

AARON F.  
*Cork, Ireland*



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