



Approved by
The AA General Service Conference in Great Britain

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Helpline 0800 9177650
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
help@aamail.org

General Service Office, P.O. Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ
Tel (01904) 644026

30600519

WHO ME



Helpline 0800 9177 650

Who Me?

The AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober, and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Not all drinkers are alcoholics. Many people can drink normally and have a normal life. Alcoholics Anonymous has nothing to offer these drinkers. For them, alcohol is not a problem.

The message of Alcoholics Anonymous is for those who do have a problem with alcohol and crave it, even though drinking is causing them a lot of harm.

No alcoholic starts as a down-and-out. It is our drinking and what it makes us do that in time may lose us our homes, families and jobs. Accidents, prison sentences, hospital admissions, suicides and murders are often linked to alcoholic drinking. We know because we are alcoholics.

WE KNOW what it is like to give up drink, and then wait in agony for the off-licence or the pub to open.

WE KNOW what it is like to spend money that we haven't got; to be driven to steal; to hide drink around the house; to wake up not knowing where we have been or what we have done, or knowing only too well.

WE TOO have felt those terrible feelings of loneliness, despair, depression, shame and self-hatred that this illness brings.

Those of us who have tried to control our drinking have found that we cannot. We behave much like other people while we stay away from drink, but if we take any alcohol at all it is difficult or impossible for us to stop.

We have lost control of our drinking.

Alcoholism is a disease that compels us to want more of the very thing that hurts us, and makes us ill and lonely. We found that over time, drinking made our lives worse. Even though it may cost us our family, friends, home and job, we don't really know why we are drinking. We just know that once we start drinking, we cannot stop. This is why an alcoholic can't be a social drinker and just have one or two.

Many of us found it hard to understand that for us it was the first drink that did the damage. We argued that we never got drunk on one drink; it was the fourth, or the eighth, or the sixteenth, which was the culprit that did the damage. If only we had just had one or two we would have been all right.

The fact was that we could not stop at one or two. Once we had taken the first drink, our power of choice had gone. Even if, occasionally, we managed to control our drinking, that very control made us think that — next day or next week or next month - we could handle alcohol. We can't. It is the first drink that destroys our power of choice. No matter how small, or how innocent or tempting the first drink seems we stay away from it — a day at a time.

When we really wanted to enjoy life as we once did, but couldn't picture life without alcohol, we experienced the full feeling of hopelessness and misery. We were obsessed by the idea that one day we would be able to control our drinking and live a normal life. As members of AA, we believe that alcoholism is a deadly illness. Many men and women who suffer from it find it hard to believe this. Alcoholics have to deal with people who see them as just useless and bad.

THROUGH COMING TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS we found out how to stop drinking, and how to stay stopped. We have found that life without alcohol is not just OK, but that we can enjoy it. We began to get better as soon as we stopped fighting the idea that we were alcoholics.

Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself:

When you drink, do you have little or no control over the amount you take?

Do you find you cannot stop drinking, even if you want to?

If you answer yes to these questions, there's a good chance that you are alcoholic and have lost control over your drinking.

Today it may seem like the end of the world to you, but there are thousands of people in AA who can state that knowing and accepting that they were powerless over alcohol was not an end, but a beginning; the beginning of their recovery and the start of a new, useful and rewarding life.

AA offers a simple 12-step programme of recovery. It is a practical programme of action that has helped many AA members to recover from alcoholism. If you want to stop drinking, this programme of recovery might work for you too.

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING

This means you do not have to sign up, or pay money. You can come to any AA meeting and you may meet people who have had similar experiences to yours. By attending many different

meetings, you will hear different members tell their stories. Among them you will find people like you, who understand you.

Our ability to stay away from that first drink depends on us taking care of mental and spiritual health. Staying sober goes on all the time. We have found our only sure - and enjoyable - course is to stay close to AA. That way we don't go back to our old destructive ways of thinking and behaviour and we share our experience with the newcomer.

At first some of us thought this was obsessive. Once we were sober we wanted to spend more time with our loved ones, to get ahead with careers, or hobbies.

Older, wiser members urged us to put our sobriety first. They pointed out that, in time, we would each find the balance that was right for us. Without sobriety, the future held nothing but destruction of ourselves and everything around us; with sobriety, the world could once more open up for us.

Maybe you are still not sure you are an alcoholic.

In which case, a few meetings may help you to decide. All we ask is that you bring with you an open mind.

Why not give the AA programme a try?

We did, and it has worked for us.

THE AA PROGRAMME OF RECOVERY

The AA Programme of Recovery is summarised in the suggested Twelve Steps. These are set out in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (The 'Big Book'), which was written and based on the experience of the first hundred AAs to get sober in the US.

HERE ARE THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

You may see the point of these steps straight away

On the other hand, they may seem completely alien to you, full of talk of God and wrongdoing. When we speak of God or spiritual awakening, we are not giving you a new theology or trying to put a new light or explanation on your own belief.

In AA there are as many different religious beliefs and interpretations as there are members. You only need to come to believe that a power greater than yourself exists and is much more capable of running your daily life than you have shown yourself to be; for some that power is the AA group, or the Fellowship as a whole.

A programme for living

Most of us have found that sobriety is the most important thing in our lives, without exception. It is easy to believe that one's job, domestic life, or many other things might come first. However, our experience is that without getting and staying sober we might not be able to hold down a job, keep our families, maintain our sanity or even stay alive. Being convinced that our lives depend upon sobriety, we have a much better chance of getting and staying sober.

IS AA FOR YOU?

Only you can decide whether you want to give AA a try — whether you think it might help you.

We who are in AA came in because we finally gave up trying to control our drinking. We still hated to admit that we could never drink safely. When we came in, we heard from other AA members that we were sick people, rather than bad people. We discovered that many people had the same feelings of guilt, loneliness and hopelessness that we did.

We decided to face up to what alcohol had done to us. Here are some of the questions we tried to answer honestly.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Have you ever decided to give up drinking but only managed to last a few days? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Have you ever had a loss of memory because of drinking? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Have you ever tried switching from one kind of drink to another in an effort to control your drinking? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you often want to continue drinking after your friends say they have had enough? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you hide alcohol or drink in secret? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. When drinking with other people do you try to have a few extra drinks which they don't know about?
7. Do you crave alcohol, and have a sense of relief once you have had a drink?
8. Have you ever tried to stop your drinking and been unsuccessful?
9. After drinking have you ever felt remorseful and made a resolution not to drink again?
10. Do you drink to make you feel normal?
11. Have you ever tried to control your drinking?
12. Do you get to the point where you forget or don't care about the negative consequences of drinking, or think 'this time it will be different'?

What's your score?

If you have answered YES to any one of the questions, you may be in trouble with alcohol, The more questions you answered YES to, the greater the chance that you could be an alcoholic.

Why do we say this? Because many members in AA have had these very experiences and found out the truth about their alcoholism.



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A newcomer asks...



Helpline 0800 9177 650

This leaflet is intended to help people approaching Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for the first time. In it we have tried to answer the questions most frequently in the minds of newcomers — the questions which were in our minds when we approached the Fellowship.

What should I do if I am worried about my drinking?

Seek help — Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

Am I an alcoholic?

If you repeatedly drink more than you intend or want to, or if you get into trouble when you drink, you may be an alcoholic. Only you can decide. No one in AA will tell you if you are or not. You might find it helpful to look at the questions in “Who Me?” in coming to a decision.

What is Alcoholics Anonymous?

We are a fellowship of men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking and have found ourselves in various sorts of trouble as a result of drink. We attempt, most of us successfully, to create a satisfactory way of life without alcohol. For this we need the help and support of other alcoholics in AA.

If I go to an AA meeting, does that commit me to anything?

No. AA keeps no membership files, or attendance records. You need disclose nothing about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back.

What happens if I meet people I know in AA?

They will be there for the same reason as you. They will not reveal your identity to outsiders. At AA you retain as much anonymity as you wish. That is one of the reasons we call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous.

What does anonymity mean to AA?

Members of AA make a point of carrying the message about their own recovery in AA on a person-to-person basis - but never disclose the membership of others. In this way they may serve as examples of recovery and thus encourage active alcoholics to seek help.

In the public media, however — such as TV, radio, films and the press — AA Traditions urge members to maintain strict anonymity. We have learned from our experience that the active alcoholic will shun any source of help which might reveal his or her identity. In addition, past experiences indicate that those alcoholics who seek public recognition as AA members may drink again.

What about anonymity on the internet?

As our name suggests, we members of AA are anonymous, and we respect each other's anonymity. This is especially true when engaging on various social media platforms. Our experience suggests that it is best practice to refrain from posting content, including pictures, that can identify ourselves, or others, as AA members. If joining AA related groups and events on social media, it is recommended to ensure that they are 'private' i.e. not visible to the public. On social media, we need to take

care not to affect the anonymity of other AA members. This is particularly important when using apps and social media platforms which may have access to your personal contacts.

What happens at an AA meeting?

An AA meeting may take one of several forms, but at any meeting you will find alcoholics talking about what drink did to their lives and personalities; what action they took to deal with this and how they are living their lives today.

How can this help with my drink problem?

We in AA know what it is like to be addicted to alcohol, and to be unable to keep promises made to others and ourselves that we will stop drinking. We are not professional therapists; our only qualification for helping others to recover from alcoholism is that we have recovered ourselves, but problem drinkers coming to us know that recovery is possible because they see people who have done it.

Why do you keep on going to meetings after you are cured?

We in the Fellowship of AA believe there is no such thing as a cure for alcoholism. We can never return to normal drinking. However, we can stay away from alcohol by going to meetings regularly and putting into practice what we learn there. In addition, we find it helps us to stay sober if we help other alcoholics.

How do I join AA?

You are an AA member if and when you say so. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking, and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached AA.

How much does AA membership cost?

There are no dues or fees for AA membership. An AA group will usually have a collection during the meeting to cover running expenses, such as rent, coffee, etc., and to this all members are free to contribute as much or as little as they wish.

Is AA a religious organisation?

No. Nor is it allied to any religious organisation.

There's a lot of talk about God though, isn't there?

The majority of AA members believe that we have found the solution to our drink problem not through individual willpower, but through a Power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the collective therapy of AA, still others refuse to believe in it at all. There is room in AA for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

Can I bring my family to an AA meeting?

Family members or close friends are welcome at 'open' AA meetings — discuss this with your local contact.

What advice do you give to new members?

In our experience the people who recover in AA are those who:

- 1 stay away from the first drink;
- 2 attend AA meetings regularly;
- 3 seek out the people in AA who have successfully stayed sober for some time;
- 4 try to put into practice the AA Programme of recovery.

How can I contact AA?

You can get details from www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk On the website there is a facility which allows you to message an AA member who will be happy to answer your questions. You will also find an email address and the phone number for our national helpline. If you prefer you can write to the General Service Office for Great Britain at the address on the back of this leaflet. If you are outside Great Britain you may wish to search for AA in your area.

Remember that alcoholism is a progressive illness. Take it seriously, even if you feel you are at an early stage of the illness. Alcoholism is a killer disease. If you are an alcoholic and if you continue to drink, in time you will get worse.

Some other AA pamphlets?

Is AA for you?

How it works

Now that you've stopped: 15 Points

Young people in AA

Hints and Suggestions

on Internet Safety

Letter to a woman alcoholic

Problems other than alcohol

Do you think you're different?

A member's eye view

AA for the woman

Now that you've stopped:
15 Points



Helpline 0800 917 7650

Now that you have stopped drinking, your main problem is not to start again. Here are a few practical tips, based on the experience of others, that should help make this easier for you:

1. Try to understand that you have a choice - between unhappy drunken drinking and a happy, sober life by staying away from the first drink, one day at a time.
2. Try to be really grateful that:
 - you have been fortunate to discover what was wrong before it was too late. So much can be yours for so small a price
 - you can swap just one drink for all the happiness sobriety gives you
 - AA exists, and you found out about it in time
 - you now know you are not a bad or wicked person but you have been in the grip of a compulsion
3. Try to eat healthily and regularly. You will feel less likely to want a drink on a full stomach.
 - accept that you will experience, perhaps for a long time, *the nagging craving for a drink*: this may simply be due to the body's demand for liquid and/or sugar, which is often very strong. So drink plenty - provided it's not alcoholic. Fruit juices with glucose, tea or coffee with plenty of sugar will best satisfy your body's need
 - accept, too, that you may feel
 - the sudden impulse just to take a drink
 - the craving, not for a drink as such, but for the

soothing glow and warmth a drink or two once gave you

4. Easy does it. Alcoholics tend to try and do too much too quickly. One day at a time, remember that the times when you don't want a drink are the times when you can build up the strength not to take one when you do want it.
5. Have a plan for each day, a plan where you live that day without taking a drink, regardless of what may upset you or how hard the old urge for a drink may hit you. You may not be able to carry it out but do your best - don't just muddle through. Never sit gazing into space with your mind a complete blank.

Do something, anything positive:

- go for a walk
 - take a bath
 - do a bit of gardening
 - clean your shoes
 - make a phone call
 - send an e-mail
 - go to a meeting
6. Don't for a split second allow yourself to think: 'It's just not fair! Isn't it a pity that I can't take a drink like so-called normal people?' Remember, resentment is the number one offender and losing your temper is a luxury you can't afford. It could be that the other person could be right, so be tolerant and avoid emotional disturbance.
 7. Don't think about or talk about any real or imagined pleasure you once got from drinking.

8. Don't allow yourself to think a drink or two would make some bad situation better, or at least easier to live with. There is no problem which a drink will not make bigger, so keep all yours down to their true size by staying sober.
9. First things first. Try to get a clear idea of your priorities. You may believe your job, or your home life, or one of many other things come first. But always remember - sobriety is without exception the most important thing in your life. If you do not get sober, and stay sober, chances are you won't have a job, your family, your sanity or even your life: if you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you are much more likely to get sober and stay sober.
10. Try to put your situation in perspective. Many people have worse problems than you.

Think how happy they would be if their problems could be solved just by not taking one drink today. Think how fortunate you are to have so simple and small a problem.

11. Try to enjoy being sober. Think all the time:
 - how good it is to be free of shame and guilt
 - how good it is to be free of the consequences of a drunk just ended, or of a coming drunk you have never before been able to prevent
 - how good it is to be free of what people have been thinking and whispering about you, and of their mingled pity and contempt
 - how good it is to be free of fear
 - how good it is to eat and sleep normally, and to wake up glad you are alive; glad you were sober yesterday,

and glad you have the privilege of staying sober today

- how good it feels to be able to face whatever life may dish out, with peace of mind, self-respect, and full possession of all your faculties

12. Link in your mind these two ideas:

- a drink was the single cause of all the misery, shame and fear you have ever known
- a drink would destroy your newfound happiness, and take from you your self-respect and peace of mind

13. Seek out ways to help other alcoholics - and remember the first way to help others is to stay sober yourself.

14. Don't forget that when you're feeling down, your resistance to a drink is low. If you feel troubled and confused, the phone is your surest link with AA help. There is much comfort in a true and understanding friend standing by. The person you contact may need your call as much as you do. So never hesitate to ring at any time. And remember, in times of difficulty when you can't get the help, the Serenity Prayer said to your God *as you understand Him* will bring you sufficient confidence to cope. He is always available.

15. Take comfort from others in AA who have found sobriety. Their example and their experience can give you hope that in time, you too will no longer need to drink.



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Just for

today

Just for today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appal me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my 'luck' as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will

not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do – just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticise not one bit, not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for today I will have a programme. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

The 12 Steps of A.A.

1 – We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable. 2 – Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3 – Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*. 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5 – Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6 – Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7 – Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8 – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9 – Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10 – Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11 – Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12 – Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Steps and Traditions copyright © 1939 by A.A. World Services, Inc.

The 12 Traditions of A.A.

1 – Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity. 2 – For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. 3 – The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. 4 – Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole. 5 – Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. 6 – An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. 7 – Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. 8 – Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers. 9 – A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. 10 – Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy. 11 – Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. 12 – Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

*God grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

A.A.

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Medical Advice

As AA members, our Primary Purpose is to carry the message of AA (Tradition 5) and we are not qualified to offer medical advice.

No AA member should “play doctor”. If the subject of medication is raised, individuals are advised to have a discussion with their doctor or medical professional.



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Safeguarding in AA

Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain has a policy on safeguarding, which individual groups are recommended to follow. This is to ensure that new and long-standing members alike do not suffer harm from actions by members or non-members while participating in AA activity.

If something feels wrong, it is suggested to discuss the matter with another member, a Group officer, or consult our AA Structure Handbook for GB, (The Group, Section 5) for guidance.

If the issue is within the law, our Traditions apply; if outside the law, then contact outside agencies.