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Java Journal



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From The Archives

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Are We Doing Enough?

An AA looks at the changing face of Twelfth-Step work

I've heard this comment a lot lately: "I am going through the work again." In fact, I heard it again last night at my home group. I guess the people who say this mean they are taking the Steps again, but the work, as I understand it, is not in the Steps themselves, the mechanics of them, or the taking of them. The work is in the Twelfth Step, where we take the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and we practice the principles in all our affairs. That's about all the work any of us can ever really do, and, at the end of the day, is the only work really worth doing.

And yet, I'm told, and have come to understand, that a good number of our people don't know how to do Twelfth-Step work. I don't know how that could possibly happen unless their group isn't doing any, which I suspect, more often than not, is the case. Taking somebody to a detox or treatment center and dropping them off is not Twelfth-Step work; it is a Twelfth-Step taxi service. While certainly a humanitarian effort, it is not the essence of our Twelfth-Step work as such. When we perform such tasks under the guise of Twelfth-Step work, we have commenced to put the work on a service plane and have violated one of the basic tenets; we have made the prospect unduly reliant on us to provide him or her with services.

I was at a multi-district function recently in a large metropolitan area in the Southwest and heard over thirty general service reps

(GSRs) report on their groups. I heard about the group hayride, dance, picnics, a new building or two, elections of officers, the addition and loss of meetings, but I heard not one comment about the number of Twelfth-Step calls cleared or taken during the month, how many newcomers were staying with the group, correctional work, or treatment facility work, and not one report on approaching professionals, or doing public information work.

Similarly, during some general sharing at an assembly in the region a few years ago, I heard someone say, "Since the treatment centers took away all our Twelfth-Step work, we haven't had any around here." I was baffled; to me, there are more opportunities now to engage in active Twelfth-Step work than at any time in our history. The general population is growing, and with that comes the ever-increasing number of people who are in trouble with their drinking. The real problem is that, during the treatment boom, our Fellowship got lazy, depending on the treatment industry to supply the groups with fresh, cleaned-up prospects. We didn't have to do anything but sit around the group waiting for the "booze buggy" to show up with the candidates.

A listing in June 1989 from our local central office contained over 600 names and phone numbers. Today, that same list contains fewer than 300 names--and very few at all in my own community. This math suggests to me that fewer and fewer members are available for Twelfth-Step work--much less Twelfth-Step calls.

I believe there is a difference between taking a "Twelfth-Step call" and doing "Twelfth-Step work." It's the difference between face-to-face Twelfth-Step work and a referral to a nearby

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Proportion

harmonious
relation of parts to
each other or to
the whole

Merriam-Webster®
Dictionary of the English
Language

Perspective

The ability to
perceive things in
their actual
interrelations or
comparative
importance

The American Heritage®
Dictionary of the English
Language, Fourth Edition

From the Archives (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

meeting. While I admit this speaks to a philosophical point, if we continue the fairly common practice of merely referring folks to the nearest meeting, there is a high degree of likelihood that the work will have to be done in the midst of that meeting or the prospect will be left to deduce for himself or herself just what AA is all about.

This is the case in the face of a large number of addicts and others being sent to our meetings and groups by our "friends of AA"--the professionals, probation officers, judges, defense counsel, and others who deal with drinkers every day. Some of these newcomers are, no doubt, real-deal alcoholics. Many are not. Most new people, after all, are coming to our meetings "un-sponsored", meaning they haven't had the privilege or the opportunity to be "pitched" about what AA is, what it does, and what it doesn't do, prior to attending their first meeting.

A lot of this could be deflected if we as a Fellowship would take the time up front to help these folks sort out where they need to go. I was asking a couple of guys the other day where they thought most of their newer people were coming from. How did they hear about AA? Were most of them coming in as a result of inquiry through an intergroup/central office? How about from a parole officer or counselor? A doctor? They confessed that they didn't rightly know.

In my mind at least, it has become apparent that many groups have all but abdicated their responsibility for the conduct of our basic Twelfth-Step work, in favor of committees or whoever wants to do the work. The net result is that many other people are carrying out message and it is getting garbled.

There are, I believe, a number of things (and this list is by no means all-inclusive) that groups can do to promote the continuance of our vital Twelfth-Step work. First, have greeters (as many as possible) at the door, to ask

folks who are not familiar to the group what they are looking for. This is not a screening committee, but people who can offer a welcoming hand and a little talking outside the meeting, at the door. Second, the groups can approach their local judiciary, probation, and other governmental agencies with good, basic AA information, such as the broadsheet "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous," which explains what AA does and what it doesn't do. Third, a group can run notices of its meetings in local, small-circulation papers and on radio/TV stations. (This would be in addition to work done by the public information committee that we find in a good number of our larger metropolitan areas.) Fourth, a group can approach local medical and treatment resources and explain the difference between closed and open meetings, as well as pass out information on the group and their meeting times, rather than de-these local efforts to the appropriate district committee to avoid multiple approaches.

One of the greatest public relations tools AA ever had was the old-time open meeting, where several members of the group share their stories. Unfortunately, many groups have decided to turn open meetings into discussion meetings, and this is too bad, because it is the process of identification that helps people figure out if they are in the right place or not, not the current spin on the problem of the day that you hear in discussion meetings.

All of these things, taken as a whole, will help the group reach out to the alcoholic sufferer and help to foster additional Twelfth-Step opportunity in the community. First will come the inquiries, or Twelfth-Step calls. Then will come the opportunity for good, solid Twelfth-Step work. Time and time again. I see groups that take this approach become vital, growing groups that create opportunities for sobriety all around.

Gary K.
Parker, Colorado

Monthly Laughs

Ham on Wry (December 1994)

A BLEEDING DEACON FALSELY ACCUSED a fellow AA of having had a slip, claiming he saw her car parked outside a saloon all day. Next night, she parked her car outside his house, and left it there all night.

Traditions Checklist

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

Tradition Five: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

1. Do I insist that there are only a few *right* of doing things in AA?
2. Does my always consider the welfare of the rest of AA? Of nearby groups? Of Loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?
3. Do I put down other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—his/her lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
6. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?

The Big Book authors define insanity:

“Insanity is a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight” (37: 1)

And

“an appalling lack of perspective” (5:5)

AA's Newsletter for the

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Please Contact The Java Journal Editor With the Following Info:

- Birthday announcements: send your name, sobriety date and years sober;
- Events, announcements, fellowship information, Journal corrections;
- Your email if you would like to receive the Journal in your inbox once a month.

Monthly Prayer: "When In Doubt"

"I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure."

(p.13)

Calendar of Events

<p>Silver Anniversary of the Touchet River Outdoor Roundup & World Famous Woody's Filipino Pig Roast. At the fairgrounds in Waitsburg. Register online at Snafubar.com/PigRoast link. For more information contact Larry (619)723-6390 or headpig@snafubar.com or Todd (KTW031584@hotmail.com)</p>	<p>May 28-30</p>
<p>Steak & Speaker Series. All Nations Center 3020 Ashue Rd. Wapato, WA. \$12.50 per person. Steak, salad & baked potato dinner. June 18 speaker is Candice M. from Los Angeles, CA (14 years sobriety). A member of the Pacific Group, Candice is a veteran of the speaking circuit and her passion for A.A. shines as she speaks!</p>	<p>June 18</p>
<p>Lost & Found's 2nd Annual CAMP-OUT. "Fellowship in the Park" Hell's Gate State Park. AA Meetings, Bonfire Meeting, Speakers. Pig Roast & Potluck. Approx \$7 per person for the whole weekend (8 people per site, includes 1 car and 1 motor home: extra cars \$5) Day rate is \$4 per car. For more information, call Greg F. 208-503-9376.</p>	<p>June 25-27</p>
<p>2010 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous "A Vision For You" Alamodome, San Antonio, TX. AA members and guests from around the world will celebrate AAs 75th year. Big meetings held Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday morning in the Alamodome. Other meetings, scheduled or informal, will take place throughout the weekend in the San Antonio Convention Center and local hotels. Go to http://aa.org for amore information.</p>	<p>Jul 1–Jul 4</p>