



The Triangle

July 2018

7th Step: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings

7th Tradition: An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7th Concept: The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A.'s purse for final effectiveness.

Dances with Defects

From the July 1999 magazine.

When I was drinking, my life was about getting things: getting the next drink, getting rich and famous, getting a girlfriend, getting really drunk. This continued when I became sober. I wanted to get through the Steps fast, so I could get those Promises or maybe just get back to drinking. So when I read those two paragraphs in the Big Book on Steps Six and Seven, I thought, "Hey, I can knock this off in one night. I'll throw out everything I don't need and God the garbage man will take it away so I never have to think about it again." I mouthed the prayer, "We have now completed Step Seven," and thought, "Okay, what do I get for getting through that?"

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~ A.A. Needs Our Support! ~

Please use the following addresses – and don't forget your group's ID #

HMB District 9

P.O. Box 8112

Utica N.Y. 13505

HMB Area 48

118 Polar Plaza #114

Amsterdam N.Y. 12010

A.A. World Services

P.O Box 459

New York N.Y 10163

Looking for a meeting? Call our district's hotline: (315)226-3501

Announcements

July District Meeting: July 25th (Wed), 6:30pm at Our Savior Lutheran

Group Anniversary Dates: July

- All Are Welcome Group – 7/1/06

DISTRICT 18 SUMMER BASH: Hosted by District 18, Sunday July 15th, 12p – 5p, North Greenbush Town Park, 208 Geiser Road, West Sand Lake (Snyder's Lake). For more details, go to <https://aahmbny.org/district-events/>

New York State Informational Workshop: Hosted by HMB Area 48. July 27-29, Mohawk Valley Community College, 1101 Sherman Dr, Utica. For registration information and buffet menu visit aahmbny.org/NYSIW/. Registration deadline is June 20th.

~ Does your home group want to make donations to the 2018 HMB Area 48 Convention? ~

Make checks payable to: HMB Area Convention

Bring it to the District Mtg or mail it to:

HMB Area Convention

P.O. Box 91

New Hartford N.Y. 13413.

Traditions Checklist – Tradition 7

- Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new guy who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
- Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
- If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
- Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
- Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
- How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of being always under obligation for charity received?

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I didn't get much, because most of the stuff I threw out just sat on the curb and stunk things up. Wasn't God supposed to take care of this for me, so I could be the envy of all my friends and the defect-free man of the year? The first thing I learned was, it wasn't about my personal quest for perfection, it was about making me better fit to serve. And I better not count on a one-time garbage pickup changing everything. As Step Ten says, "We continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them." So this action of asking God for help with my defects needs to continue indefinitely. The "Twelve and Twelve" sums up my reaction to that: "Character building through suffering might be all right for saints, but it certainly didn't appeal to us."

I finally accepted I'd be doing Six and Seven for a while. A friend of mine calls Six the most alcoholic of all the Steps, and it certainly was, the way I read it, which was "Were absolutely, unconditionally, entirely ready to have no one less than God himself personally remove every last shred of anything that causes me pain." And, of course, falling short of that perfection is a great excuse to drink. But then I saw the word humbly in Step Seven; it was a new word for me. I asked around, and one meaning I heard was "rightsized." In other words, I wasn't the most defective guy on the planet, nor the least, but somewhere in the middle.

So I was responsible for approaching God with a right-sized appraisal of my defects. I got lots of help from insightful sponsors. And since people had often said to me, "You need professional help," I went to a therapist as well. Just as I had surrendered my drinking problem to the process of

AA recovery, I needed to surrender my character to this process of self-inquiry. Then I could approach God humbly, and he'd take care of the rest. There was one sticking point for me: That's not what a couple of old-timers I respected said. They distilled Step Six down to "Don't do what you want to do," and Step Seven down to "Do what you don't want to do."

This action orientation has been good for me in sobriety. Rather than think myself into right actions, I can act myself into right thinking. Rather than be dashed on the rocks by my frequent emotional squalls, I can anchor myself in simple actions and sit tight through the storms, confident that it will pass. My thoughts are often warped, my emotions sick, but if my actions remain within reason, I may save myself an amends. And, one day at a time, I can focus on not practicing a particular defect, especially if I keep myself busy doing things I don't want to do--like service.

It works--it really does. But being an alcoholic, I had to find a way to screw it up. And I did, with a nasty, punitive attitude toward myself, a rigid perfectionism that made me crave a drink rather than continue in this puritan lifestyle. That's certainly not the spirit of the prayer that says God wants all of me, good and bad.

Someone helped me by saying when a defect appeared, I should think of it as a part of myself and ask for acceptance. Rather than trying to squash it, which just drives it underground, I should welcome it to the party, even greet it with good humor. I could play Name That Tune. There's "Pour Me," a classic country song; "The Ingratitude Blues"; and then there's that rock ballad, "If You'd Only Let Me

Fix You." Instead of getting so uptight, I could dance with my defects. Might as well, they're always gonna be there.

A story retold by Anthony de Mello in One Minute Wisdom, helps me:

"One of the disconcerting--and delightful--teachings of the master was: God is closer to sinners than saints. This is how he explained it: God in heaven holds each person by a string. When you sin, you cut the string. Then God ties it up again, making a knot--and thereby bringing you a little closer to him. Again and again, your sins cut the string--and with each further knot God keeps drawing you closer and closer."

Emerson said, "There is a crack in everything God has made." When I begin to gently accept my cracks, my weaknesses, I can accept them in you as well. And AA was founded upon the strength of shared weakness.

Recently, I went through a period where I had very little patience with my children, people at work, and my wife. I tried my best to blame all of them, but finally admitted maybe I was the problem. That admission opened the door, and in came awareness, which is so very annoying when it's not accompanied by surrender. Turn to God for help? Often it just doesn't occur to me. I'm always having those V-8 moments, hitting myself in the head thinking, "I could've had a Higher Power!" Finally I got uncomfortable enough to actually pray about it.

My prayers are often answered instantly, in the sense that just the intention of praying helps me. It's like being sick and not wanting to call the doctor. The moment I finally make a doctor's appointment, I start feeling better, to the point

where, when I finally see the doctor, I'm embarrassed by how good I feel.

In this case, by praying, my ears were suddenly opened, and I heard someone suggest perhaps I was getting impatient with others because I didn't feel I had enough time for myself. I decided I would wake up earlier and take a little time for me. Of course, waking up earlier requires discipline, and my first instinct is to get the whip out. After weeks of struggling, someone suggested I might be able to wake up earlier if I went to bed earlier--it had never occurred to me. So I did what I didn't want to do, passed up a little television, and went to bed earlier. That time for myself in the morning has made a huge difference. I'm much more patient and tolerant.

So I do get benefits from this process, but not exactly when I'd like, in the way I expect, or for reasons I fully comprehend. But when I humbly ask, God (often through all of you) does for me what I cannot do for myself.

-- Jeff W.

Maplewood, New Jersey

A 7th Step Prayer

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

-- Alcoholics Anonymous, p.76