

# K.I.T.—KEEP IN TOUCH

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Area 62 State Newsletter



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KIT NEWSLETTER

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### 2004 KIT Topics:

- “Why don’t you choose your own conception of God” - Alcoholics Anonymous Pg 12
- Steps 1, 2 and 3 – How do you do those steps, anyway???
- Acceptance was the answer...
- Your Home Group
- Contempt Prior to Investigation
- Letting Go of Anger
- Quantity vs. Quality
- Participation & Action
- The Traditions

The KIT newsletter is distributed at each Area Assembly. Deadline for the next issue is **March 1, 2005**.

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES,  
DISTRICT HAPPENINGS OR  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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## A WHOLE DIFFERENT A.A. PREAMBLE

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship designed and administered by a bunch of ex-drunks whose only qualification for membership is that we finally realized that we can't hold our liquor and we want to stop trying to impossibly learn how to hold it successfully. It has no rules, dues or fees, nor anything else that any sensible organization seems to require.

At meetings the speaker starts on one subject and winds up talking about something entirely different and concludes by saying he doesn't know anything about the program, except that it works. The groups are often broke, yet always seem to have money to carry on. We are always losing members but seem to grow. We claim AA is a selfish program but always seem to be doing something for others.

Every group passes laws, rules, edicts and pronouncements, which everyone blithely ignores. Members who disagree with anything are free to walk out in a huff, quitting forever, only to return as though nothing happened and are greeted accordingly.

Nothing we discuss in AA is ever planned in advance yet great results are born from the things we share with each other and our lives get better.

How can we survive like this?

Perhaps it's because we have learned to live and laugh at ourselves and with each other. God made us. He made laughter too. Perhaps He is pleased with our disorganized efforts and makes things right no matter who pushes the wrong buttons.

Maybe He is pleased with our simple yet sincere efforts to do what's right for ourselves and others. Maybe He is pleased with our trying to be nobody but ourselves. We don't know how it works, but it does and members keep receiving their dividend checks from their AA investments. It is wise to be sober, and it is much easier, my friends, to stay sober than to get sober.

Anonymous

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CORRECTIONS WORKSHOP  
SCDC's Pavilion @ Broad River Rd Complex  
Columbia  
October 24, 2004

SE REGIONAL FORUM  
Louisville, KY  
December 3-5, 2004

2005 AREA COMMITTEE MEETING  
Columbia  
(verify location via [www.area62.org](http://www.area62.org))  
February 13, 2005

58TH SC STATE CONVENTION  
“Rocketed into the 4th Dimension”  
The Columbiana Hotel & Conference Center  
(formerly named The Sheraton)  
Columbia (1-866-246-1829)  
March 3-6, 2005

2005 SC AREA ASSEMBLY  
Columbia  
(verify location via [www.area62.org](http://www.area62.org))  
March 12-13, 2005

2005 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION  
“I am Responsible”  
Toronto, Canada  
June 30– July 3, 2005

2005 SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE  
Holiday Inn Crown Plaza Ravinia-Atlanta, GA  
October 20– 23, 2005

KIT (Keep in Touch) presents the experience and opinions of members of Alcoholics Anonymous on the disease of Alcoholism. Opinions expressed here are not those of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or the South Carolina Area Assembly.

Please do not be concerned if your story did not appear in this issue of KIT. Your story or article may be incorporated in a future issue. If for any reason the KIT Committee has decided not to publish an article that has been submitted, we apologize.

The KIT Committee members would like to thank everyone for taking the time to write an article for this publication. If you have any questions or comments regarding the publication of KIT, please contact a KIT Committee Member. We welcome your feedback.

What events are happening in your district or group between February 2005 and June 2005 that you would like published in the next KIT???

## "HOW CAN WE HELP?"

Recently, I received a call from a newcomer through the "Bridge the Gap" program that our district conducts with treatment centers in this area. I met him upon his release from the facility and took him to a meeting of my home group Monday night. As newcomers do in my group, he sat quietly and listened, and all was well.

The following Wednesday, he met me for a meeting that we carry to the Spartanburg Detox. During the meeting, he introduced himself as an addict and proceeded to share a little bit on the problems he has had with drugs. Following the meeting, as I was giving him a copy of our book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, I decided to have a talk with him regarding his sharing. I asked, "I noticed that you introduced yourself as an addict and I need to ask, Do you have a problem with alcohol?"

"No," he replied. "I haven't had a drink in over a year and a half. I don't like alcohol and never really drank too much. My problem is with the drugs."

I then asked, "If you don't have an alcohol problem, then why are you coming to AA meetings?"

His response was, "When I was in the treatment center, they told me to go to AA because there was more recovery there."

I explained to him that I was not trying to make him feel unwelcome in AA, but in order to be of help to him, I had to know where he was coming from. He again stated that he'd never had a problem with alcohol, that drinking did not create the craving that it does in alcoholics of our type. Knowing that many alcoholics reach their bottom through the aid of drugs and only later come to discover and admit to their alcoholism, I did not presume that he was nonalcoholic or that AA was not the path of recovery for him. I told him "I will help you to get started in recovery and we will begin by studying 'The Doctor's Opinion' in the Big Book. But I will only help if you attend NA meetings in addition to AA meetings. This is because there will come a time and place where you will have to take suggestions to stay sober that go against your nature — things you don't want to do — and if you are not absolutely convinced that the person giving you the suggestions has overcome the same problem you have, you will not follow the

## WELCOMING SOMEONE MIGHT NOT BE THE ANSWER

suggestions that may save your life."

That is where we parted, and I did not hear from him for a week. I had been thinking that I had run a newcomer off when I got a call from him. He said, "I just wanted to let you know that I am all right. I am going to NA and have a home group that I like and I am going to pick a sponsor this week. I just wanted to thank you for your help. I'll call once a week to let you know how it's going."

Why am I telling this story? I guess I feel that it shows real growth in my AA program. In the past, I would have been more comfortable welcoming this nonalcoholic addict and attempting to sponsor him in AA. It makes me feel better to be all-inclusive, to say all are welcome, to play the good Samaritan to one and all. I would have chosen my comfort over his welfare and the welfare of AA. But my efforts to sponsor nonalcoholics in AA have always failed, and I now realize that the way to be of real help is to help the nonalcoholic find the help he needs from those best equipped to give it to him. Singleness of purpose not only benefits AA as a whole, but those who seek recovery for whatever problem they have. We do not have all the answers for all the problems known to man.

What we do have is an answer for one very particular problem — alcoholism as defined in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. When I take a drink, I get a craving for another drink that eliminates my control over how much I drink or what I do in the process. And most importantly, knowledge of this fact will never keep me from taking the next drink. It is a progressive and fatal malady that we have come to view as a disease involving an allergic, or abnormal, reaction to alcohol coupled with a mental obsession for more of the same.

Our program began when one alcoholic, seeking to keep himself sober, sought out another alcoholic with whom he shared his experience with this particular problem. Dr. Bob, who was only going to listen for fifteen minutes, spent over six hours with Bill because, he said, Bill was "the first living human with whom I had ever talked who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience." Dr. Bob was able to accept the solution because he knew Bill had overcome a problem like his own.

So it was then and is still today. Our greatest asset as recovered alcoholics is our past. Whether in a meeting, on the answering service, or a one-on-one, we use our past experience with alcohol to reach the still-suffering alcoholic. It is through our stories of alcoholism that we help the alcoholic overcome his feelings of difference and isolation and accept the solution that we have to offer. As an alcoholic, I had many defenses against those who would talk to me of my drinking, but I had no defense against you when you spoke to me of your drinking. As I heard these stories, denial fell away and hope was born for me.

I am an alcoholic. I have a drug history as long as my alcoholism, but I am not an addict. The stories I have heard of addicts, gamblers, and so on elicit sympathy from me, but do not reach that place in me of identification that I find in the story of another alcoholic — that place where I actually begin to feel the pain experienced by the speaker and relate his experience to my own. Because identification is so vital to the recovery of alcoholics like me, I do not wish to risk weakening my effectiveness by speaking of my drug use in an AA meeting.

We alcoholics come with many "related disorders" of drugs, gambling, overeating, sex, depression, anxiety, and so on, but by choosing to join AA we have chosen a common ground on which to relate to one another — alcoholism and recovery from alcoholism. Given the diversity of people and problems in AA, the unity necessary to function as a group would be impossible and our effectiveness with newcomers diminished if we did not keep our focus on our common problem. I have to relate myself to the group as a whole for my own recovery, and the recovery of those I would help. I would hate to see the day in AA when an alcoholic's chance to recover was dependent upon whether AA had the "right" person with the "right" set of problems for him that day on the answering service. I would hate to see the day when any real alcoholic found herself unable to relate to a speaker or discussion due to too much talk of problems other than alcoholism that she does not possess. I want every alcoholic to have the chance I had to enter an AA meeting and come to realize, as I did, that "those people are like me and maybe if I do what they did it will work for me too."

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## PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE IN ALL MY AFFAIRS: THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

When I was first exposed to the Twelve Traditions I thought of them as – at best – second-class citizens to the Twelve Steps. In our Friday afternoon meeting where we focused on the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, I nearly groaned audibly when we completed Step Twelve and turned toward the First Tradition. However, having spent a good deal of my working life developing organizations and business ventures I was curious if not enthused. Soon I began to see the priceless nature of this portion of AA's legacy.

Just as the Twelve Steps outline suggestions for my return to health, the Twelve Traditions point to various characteristics found in a healthy recovery community. Setting the needs of the group as a priority ensures that the individual's health is protected. Defining leadership as a service discourages the creation of kingdoms where egos rule. Singleness of focus insures that the group does not become distracted from its very meaning for existence. Promoting a view of spirituality that makes our separate identities anonymous within the context of our overall goal prevents selfish consumption and discourages resentments. Numerous other insights from the Twelve

Traditions could be added to these. It took many more months for me to realize that as in the case of the Twelve Steps, there are a number of principles within the Twelve Traditions that should be practiced in all my affairs.

I have a family whose singleness of purpose is to love one another. That singleness of purpose can be put at risk whenever the individual becomes more important than the group. The meaning of our existence can be discounted when a family leader considers his or her mission to be one that places them in a superior's rather than a servant's role. No single member of our clan can claim an identity outside the clan as his or her very name attests. He or she is anonymous within the greater identity of the group.

My alcoholism made me an unhealthy leader in business and within my family. I was more important than whatever goal was set before me because I was always in possession of the true path to that goal. I did not see my leadership role as one of service but rather as one that permitted me to force my assumed wisdom on others. When others did not clearly see the wisdom in my demands, I found fertile ground for resentments, fear and dishonest

behavior.

The harm I did was extensive – spiritual, mental, physical – but nowhere was the damage more complete than within my own being. As the misunderstood father, husband, manager and leader, isolation became the fuel for my addictions; then the addictions became the medicine for coping with loneliness and depression. The insanity of my disease would not allow me to see that I was not terminally unique. I could not entertain the concept that there were others like me who suffered similarly. Finally, the stakes grew so great and the misery so complete that I was willing when someone invited me to go to my first AA meeting.

I must confess, I still groan a little inwardly when talk turns toward the Twelve Traditions. Maybe it is an alcoholic reaction to the insinuation of authority found in such words as "tradition". Nonetheless, by now I have learned to set aside my skepticism and listen. When I do, I get food for my journey of a quality unsurpassed. The Twelve Traditions have grown to be as important to my daily sobriety and serenity as the Twelve Steps.

Mike C—Georgetown CB Hut Group

### *Overheard at meetings...*

I had to drink before I went out so I wouldn't look so alcoholic...

In order to change the way we feel, we need to change the way we act.

The difference between a problem drinker and an alcoholic is that: a) When the alcohol is taken away from the problem drinker, the problem goes away, b) When the alcohol is taken away from the alcoholic, the problem begins.

Without memory, there is no healing. Without forgiveness, there is no future.

Sponsee: "When will I get a good job?" Sponsor: "When you are ready."

Sponsee: "How will I know I am ready?" Sponsor: "You'll have a good job."

If you're looking to have an image in AA, look around at the meetings you go to and take a look at who you're trying to impress.

I often obsessively pursue feeling good...no matter how bad it makes me feel.

When God closes a door, he opens another...but it's h--- in the hallway!!

(continued from Page 3—How Can We Help?)

AA is not all-inclusive, nor was it ever intended to be. We developed from a narrowing of the broad objectives of the Oxford Group to focus on helping alcoholics only. We are still strong; the Oxford Group is not. Many fine organizations have come and gone because of their inability to stick to the one thing they do well. Many organizations have failed because they lacked the humility to realize their limitations. Tradition Three states "our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism." Members may have as many "related disorders" or problems as they wish, but to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, one must have alcoholism and a desire to stop drinking.

Many fine twelve step programs have developed out of our program because their members also knew the importance of identification in recovery and sought to create a place where maximum identification, and therefore maximum recovery, was possible for their particular problem. In this day and age, anyone seeking help can find a group to deal with his particular problem. Our job is not to try to expand our program to fit all situations or persons, but to grow in effectiveness at the one simple thing that we do well. It is not always the easy path to stand on this principle, as arguments on this topic often run to extremes. I am learning that if we keep in mind that "to be helpful is our only aim," we can maintain our singleness of purpose with kindness, compassion, and tolerance. By doing so, we may see to it that Alcoholics Anonymous continues to be the single most effective treatment for alcoholism in history and that all those who suffer from alcoholism may find the hand of AA when they reach out for help.

David T., Spartanburg

### TWELVE WAYS TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR SPONSOR AND YOUR THERAPIST!!!

1. Your sponsor is not all that interested in the "reasons" you drank.
2. Your therapist thinks your root problem is your lack of self-esteem, negative self-image, and your poor self-concept. Your sponsor thinks your problem is self.
3. Your therapist wants you to pamper your "inner child." Your sponsor thinks it ought to be spanked.
4. Your sponsor thinks your inventory should be about you, not your parents.
5. Speaking of your parents, your sponsor tells you not to confront them, but to make amends to them.
6. The only time your sponsor uses the word "closure" is before the word "mouth."
7. Your sponsor thinks "boundaries" are things you need to take down not build up.
8. Your therapist wants you to love yourself first; your sponsor wants you to love others first.
9. Your therapist prescribes care taking and medication. Your sponsor prescribes prayer making and meditation.
10. Your sponsor thinks "anger management skills" are numbered 1 thru 12.
11. Now that you haven't drank in \_\_\_ months, your therapist thinks you should make a list of your goals and objectives for the next five years, starting with finishing up that college degree. Your sponsor thinks you should start today by cleaning the coffeepots and helping him carry heavy box of literature to the meeting.
12. Your sponsor will not lose his/her license to practice if he talks about God.

**HAVE WE FORGOTTEN?** When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I was a hopeless drunk who could not stay sober just based on a decision to stop drinking. I had tried everything at my disposal to quit and found that I could not. I tried everything... church, doctors, psychiatrists, keeping busy, keeping away from bars, not going down the beer and wine aisle in the grocery store. Everything failed. I went to AA meetings. Yet going to meetings did not remove the obsession to drink. It was with me for the first several months in AA, every day, every night. I often would go to meetings wanting to drink worse after the meeting than before I got to the meeting. Yet I was told "Don't drink and go to meetings".

Meetings are helpful but they don't necessarily spell the vital ingredients for a spiritual awakening or a psychic change that is necessary for real recovery. The steps were my solution... "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the steps...". So many times I have gone to meetings and have heard members tell those who show up drunk that they don't want sobriety or that they don't want it enough. Pretty shocking, huh?! Or that they don't work a good program and other criticism. Have we forgotten that it is "By the grace of God..." that we are sober? Often, I have heard from some members, "How dare he show up at a meeting drunk?!" "He's a loser." "He can't get it." "Can you believe the way he smelled and/or wreaked of it?" Yet I have heard these same members say "by the grace of God" and "the newcomer is the most important person here."

It would seem that when someone shows up at an AA meeting drunk or still drinking, that they might be a real alcoholic. They might actually be powerless. They may need our help or our support. I needed helpful suggestions from your experience, not orders or condemnations barked at me. They definitely don't need to be judged, condemned or criticized. I have to remember that it is through the Grace of God that I am sober today. I have to remember that some don't get sober at once and that some find obstacles inside and outside of the fellowship that hinder them from getting sober.

Not everyone that enters the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, has had the same life or life experiences. Many of us arrived in pretty bad shape from abusive parents, abusive spouses. Some of us arrived abused either mentally, physically, emotionally, sexually, etc. Is it any wonder that some of us sought escape by other means than God, AA? Some of us have had to endure these types of abuse while still attending meetings. Some of us may be experiencing this right at this moment! Some of us have been abused by so-called members of our fellowship. Fortunately for many of us, we were given grace and we seemed to hook up with the right people at the right times. Some, for whatever reason, are not.

How many times have I seen the member that no one thought could get sober, get sober and go on to help sponsor others and help them achieve sobriety? How many of these go on to sponsor even more? Could the man or woman that I think can't get sober go on one day to sponsor my child, a member of my family, a grandchild, a best friend, my spouse, or someone else that is important to my life or that will be important in my future? Could I be a better example of carrying the message and the truth by being kind and respectful of not only those who are "successful" but also those who are struggling or those that others say "can't make it"? I have heard people at meetings say "If an alcoholic wants to get sober, nothing you say can make him drink." My Big Book says something different... Page 103, paragraph 2: "A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it." May God bless you and keep you, until then....

Mark E.