



Sobriety in Stumptown

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Portland Area Intergroup
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October Stories and Art

Step Ten and Tradition Ten

by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Tenth Step and Tenth Tradition, and a letter from one member of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to another, on the occasion of his 8th anniversary of sobriety.

The 10th Step: A Love/Hate Relationship

by Paige W. from Portland, OR

For a long time, I have had a love/hate relationship with the 10th step. Sometimes I'm resentful about cataloguing my resentments. For starters, I can hardly remember what I did this morning, much less the dozens of resentments I stacked up throughout the day. Just driving over the Ross Island Bridge in the morning usually provides at least five juicy ones.

Then there's the amount of time it takes to reflect (and remember!) and write down my inventory. That is precious pleasure-reading time spent on a catalogue of my flaws.

And finally, why end my day on a negative note by examining all my character defects? Who needs that?!

Last week I told my sponsor I don't like the 10th Step and it's counterproductive. "It's not working for me," I complained.

She asked me a fair question, "What would it look like if it were 'working'?"

"Maybe I wouldn't feel like shit all the time. I just don't see how focusing on what's wrong with me is going to help me get over my shame and guilt." I started rattling off the questions on page

86: “Where had I been selfish, dishonest, ... “ The more I thought about it, the angrier I got.

“Look, I want to stay sober. I want to feel better. I just don’t see how this is helping. I turn all those questions into an opportunity to beat myself up.”

My sponsor is one smart cookie. She thought for a second and then opened up the Big Book on her phone.

She started to read, and then said, “It looks like you’re focusing on the middle of the paragraph and missing the first sentence.” She read to me: “When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. ... We must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others...”

She was right. I’d forgotten that part, and I had definitely turned my inventory into more wallowing in “worry, remorse and morbid reflection.”

I saw that I could make the 10th Step what it needed to be for me. I could find a way to make it work for me with language that didn’t trigger so much self-judgment and criticism. My own cloudy judgment got in the way of my ability to perform the step as intended. Hearing that it simply needed to be a constructive review of my day, “relieved me of the bondage of self.” I had been trying to follow the rules exactly in an effort to get approval. That people-pleasing habit was in conflict with the part of me that is getting healthier.

If I hadn’t raised this issue with my sponsor, I would’ve continued developing an even greater resentment toward this step. However, because of this program, I am learning to have the courage to be honest with my sponsor. I am learning how to have a real relationship with another person.

I happened to mention my battle with the 10th step to someone else, and so she sent me what she uses for herself and her sponsees. I like the language better; the phrasing is less judgmental.

The first night I used it as my guide, I realized that, in fact, doing the 10th step in whatever form, had been helping. It was keeping me honest — and sober.

Step Ten

by George D. from Portland, OR

“As we work the first nine steps, we prepare ourselves for the adventure of a new life. But when we approach Step 10 we commence to put our A.A. way of living to practical use day by day, fair weather or foul.” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg. 88)

I don’t often introduce an article with so many quotes. In this case, I felt it was necessary to look at the 12x12 several times while constructing this piece on Step 10. Perhaps I should just encourage you, the reader, to pick up a copy of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; I recommend starting on page 88 and draw from the wisdom, guidance and conviction that the

pages will likely invoke. Then, with all the rigorous honesty you can muster, sit down and ask yourself, “How was my day?”

I shall conclude this article as I started; with quotes again.

“For the wise have always known that no one can make much of this life until self-searching becomes a regular habit, until he is able to admit and accept what he finds, and until he patiently and persistently tries to correct what is wrong.” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg. 88)

May your nights be of good conscience, and your sleep filled with the sweetest of dreams.

Step Ten

by Mike B. from Portland, OR

Step Ten, I really like this step; it is a daily, continuous reminder to me to get over myself. It helps me remember my place in the universe and helps keep me grounded. Whenever fear starts to creep in, or doubts pile up, I just think, you're an alcoholic: This shit is gonna happen. But it will pass, the clouds will evaporate, and I'll wonder what I was afraid of. Step Ten also keeps me humble, and reminds me to keep things in perspective. It helps me to be a happier guy. That's when I get little glimpses of the promises, and that keeps me coming back, keeps me on the path.

Tradition Ten

By Barbara E. from Portland OR

“Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

Not for nothing does the explanation about Tradition 10 in the Twelve by Twelve single out the Washingtonian Society's collapse. From its mid-1800s start with a couple of recovering alcoholics telling their stories in the backroom of a Baltimore tavern to the growth of 100,000 alcoholics in the Eastern half of the country, it died because its members forgot their singleness of purpose: sobriety.

That's what happened when those open meetings drew crowds and, as always, that drew those needing crowds to hustle businesses, political campaigns, and religion—especially the temperance movement. Add to such a mix the fiery topic of abolition and, then, secession. Sobriety was co-opted and, then, trampled to death.

A.A.'s founders and early members were well familiar with that history and militantly determined our program was not going to be co-opted. Nor was it going to be lured into any kind of coalition of various worthy causes, including “letterhead” lists supporting non-alcoholic programs. This precept is reinforced every time we hear the Preamble. Its ending covers just about any kind of cause extant:

“A.A. 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.”

And goodness knows when A.A. was founded in June 1935, the nation was in economic and political chaos, underpinned by vital causes galore and hope dispensed by religious types on radio or wherever the jobless, homeless, and starving gathered.

As the program became known, it undoubtedly was courted locally or nationally to join organizations involved with health, poverty, domestic violence, and crime. But members resisted those heart-rending and critical causes. They stuck to sobriety, backstopped by the publication of the Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Too, in those early meetings during the Great Depression, hope was dispensed to and from fellow alcoholics, aided by the practical emphasis of living just one day at a time. Temperance fanatics and those desperate to get A.A. to help promote their causes usually failed because “Nobody speaks for A.A.” has been one of our unofficial mottos governing behavior outside our “rooms.”

So most members not only knew why they better resist the itch to get on soapboxes or panel discussions and declare they represented A.A. in supporting this political view, that kind of religion, or, most tempting, “alcohol reform,” as the long-form of Tradition 10 puts it (p. 192).

Now, that doesn’t mean that A.A. members don’t get involved in those “outside issues” or movements. But they do so as members of those causes or organizations—never on behalf of A.A. As Tradition 10 explains the difference (p. 177), as restored “citizens of the world” we are not “going to back away” from our individual responsibilities” to act as we “see the right upon issues of our time.” And today’s major issues tend to be overwhelmingly frightening, whether involving global warming, a nuclear Armageddon, dangerous economic disparities, or the right to affordable healthcare and housing. Most Americans are becoming outspoken on these and other threatening topics. Many A.A.s join causes or organizations to address those topics with energy, time, and money.

As a long-time political, environmental, and social activist, I am a canvasser, a street demonstrator and marcher, a political and environmental website writer, a petition carrier, a kayak helper, a meeting-goer, and a donor to causes, charities, and the arts. Equally, before and after A.A. meetings, I certainly am involved in those spirited hallway/parking lot discussions about our country’s major and critical issues. After all, decades of sobriety within A.A. have made me an enthusiastic, educated, opinionated, and responsible participant in what goes on in the world.

And in those activities, I practice A.A. principles of fellowship, along with service. That’s life on life’s terms.

Back Home

by Riley S, Portland, OR

I used to think Portland was a big city, but after living and working in Indonesia it feels quaint. It has been pleasant coming back to a slower pace of life, people who speak my own language, clean tap water, and cross walks and sidewalks where people stop to let you pass; but what’s been hard is to transition back to being a student. It’s been especially challenging engaging with my classmates. Looking back, I was struggling with them before I left for the summer, and it came to a head when they met us in Hong Kong. There were a handful of people I wanted nothing to do with, and as the days wore on, I found myself getting worked up to the point where I didn’t want to talk to any of my classmates except for a few of my close friends.

When I came back to the States, the intensity decreased but I still found myself getting upset as I was sitting in class and listening to them talk about their experiences. I bring this up because it translates to the work I do with the 10th Step. For the past two weeks, in just about each class, I would do or say something that wound up on my Tenth Step. It would often be painful and embarrassing. I would lose my cool, and make a comment that I wished I could take back. I did find out that part of the problem was I was getting hungry, but beyond that it was out of my control; these actions would happen before I had a chance to think it over. I talked about it with my sponsor and we're working on an inventory to look at my relationships with other people.

I bring this up because of the amount of pain I was feeling after each incident. In the past, after a stressful day at school I would head to the bar, but now I have to stay with these thoughts and emotions, and lately they've been tough to sit with. I probably did need a bit of guilt to motivate me to look at this inventory, but at the same time I doubt I need to beat myself up as much as I do. I've been in school for over a year now, and I look back at how I acted in the first couple quarters, and it's more or less similar to how I'm acting now. The difference is I'm now more aware of my character defects that cause me the most trouble. I hope I can let myself off the hook a little bit, and I certainly don't need to beat myself up to the point where a drink sounds like it would fix things. The great thing about school is it's a place to make mistakes. Unfortunately, some of the mistakes I'm making show up on a public forum, such as class discussions, but that's just how it is for now.

My fear in all this public embarrassment is that I'll become a pariah amongst my classmates—that my social etiquette will be so bad that everyone avoids me. Up to this point, that hasn't happened. I still have friends and acquaintances that seem to enjoy my company. As far as the rest of the class, I'm not sure how they feel about me, maybe it's the same way I feel about them; but that doesn't matter, I can work to not let them affect me, and that's the main thing I have control over. I also have control over how I view myself. My thinking lately has gone like this: since I grew up in a less than desirable situation, I didn't learn a lot of the family values, or social etiquette people learn when they grow up in a home or in a family that was well put together. What I'm realizing is none of that stuff matters. I grew up the way I grew up, and I'm learning what I need to: to show up as a business school student who may or may not be headed to Asia to continue his career. It's just my alcoholism that tells me I don't fit in, or that I'm fundamentally different from other people. I learn a lot in A.A. meetings and particularly during time spent with other alcoholics. It's a great space to make mistakes and I'm getting better at feeling less self-conscious when I screw up around other alcoholics. Now I just have to work on accepting that I'll make mistakes around non-alcoholics as well.

8th Anniversary Letter

by Luke F, from Portland, OR

Marshall –

I have not known you long – a bit over a year – but I wanted to acknowledge your PROGRAM. A.A. has represented to me a way to see the world, and the people in it, as I was never capable of doing before. This is your eighth year of LIFE. We were the walking dead until God (or *whatever* it is that seems to be involved in our affairs) seemed to grab us by the scruff of the neck

and say:

"I have a way out for you. At times, it's going to seem like it's something you really don't want to do – but if you do it, you will have a life that you can only imagine now. You will be loved and cherished and understood in a way that never would have happened without it. All I ask is that you give everything I give to you to all those people I will send across your path. You'll never know which of them will find their way, but if you're beside them it won't matter. And what I will give you – Peace, Understanding, Compassion, Gentleness, and Love – can only INCREASE as you give up your supply. Your strength will be ever-present and your storehouse – for that tricky time to come – will be filled to overflowing, and you will RECEIVE back what you have been given and given to others."

I know that the path is not necessarily linear. Strange detours, feelings and pursuits will constantly make you ask the wrong questions. You will doubt. You will want more time for yourself; more ambition, drive, and security. Occasionally that will make you walk in the wrong direction, but you will always find your way home. You really only have One Path.

On my 8th Birthday, as they were handing me a beautiful cake with candles, a breeze came out of nowhere and blew out all the candles! I was always looking for signs then; answers; stuff I didn't need to fill my life with and convince ME that I was doing God's will. I saw the snuffed out candles as the proof that I would die in the coming year.

At the time, I was renting out rooms in my house to A.A. people and one of them, Tom, had become like a brother. One night I suddenly awoke experiencing the worst pain in my entire life in my lower stomach. I knew this was it. I had just ended a relationship and in a moment of heavy drama (lots of drama back then) I asked God to take me. I didn't want to live. And it seemed God was answering me and my Birthday Prediction was coming true.

I woke up Tom and he drove me to the emergency room. On the way to the hospital I said goodbye to him, enduring my agonizing pain. Then I said, "I wanted to die, but I didn't think I would go through any PAIN!" Suddenly, through my anguish, I saw my stupidity and selfishness. Tom laughed at my remark and I briefly joined in, realizing in my insanity that what they said was true. It only hurt when I laughed.

The certain death turned out to be an easily (HA!) passed kidney stone. Tom moved out to be married the following year to a lady in the Program that I had introduced him to. We lost touch over the years and then through the magic of Facebook, he contacted me. Tom and his wife Miriam had enjoyed a great life, two wonderful daughters and all the problems that go with that – but much better than what had come before A.A. They visited me a while back and we spent a wonderful day together reminiscing about those seemingly lost years. For me there have been dozens of "Toms", some alive, some not so lucky. And you, Marshall, have also had many around you, whose lives you have touched and mended, and they, as with Tom and me, have saved you on those days when YOU were insane and your blessing on them made their presence heal you so that you could share the laughter of sobriety, together.

What I promise you is a future of wonder which you can't imagine. When twenty minutes spent with a newcomer seems to end in failure, only to see him decades later at a meeting – alive and happy and surrounded by the NEXT Generation of Escapees.

Lots of Love to you! I have many heroes these days – sober people who are living the LARGE LIFE. They can be as selfish and self-centered as ever, just like me, but TODAY they are

beacons of what this world can be transformed into. God promises that we will be given everything we need; but looking back over the years, that is such an understatement.

BLESSINGS, Luke

Monthly Business Meetings

For details about monthly business meetings, contact the PAI Office at 503-223-8569. Or send your questions or concerns to: 1212@pdxaa.org

Portland Area Intergroup (PAI): Business Meeting, 2nd Monday of every month, 7:00 PM, 4524 SE Stark St. (Unity of Portland), Portland.

Portland Deaf Access Committee: Monthly, 2nd Sunday of every month, 6:30, The Alano Club, NW 24th & Kearney.

Dist 9: 1st Wed, 6:30 PM, 24th and Kearney, Portland

Dist 10: Last Mon, 7:00 PM, 12945 Beaverdam Rd., West Side Service Cntr, Beaverton

Dist 11: Last Thu, 7:00 PM, "URS" Club, Portland

Dist 12: 1st Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland

Dist 15: 1st Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6th St., Oregon City

Dist 18: 1st Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6th St., St. Helens

Dist 23: 1st Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn

Dist 24: 1st Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland

Dist 25: 4th Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR

Dist 26: 2nd Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42nd Ave., Portland

Dist 27: 1st Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie

Dist 31: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro

Dist 34: 3rd Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone

Dist 35: 2nd & 4th Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton

Dist 36: 2nd Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland

Dist 37: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Center, 21907 SW Sherwood Blvd., Sherwood

Committee News

Portland Area Intergroup is a committee of volunteers that encourages mutual support and cooperation between Portland A.A. groups and provides services that would be too much for the individual groups to handle by themselves. PAI provides services for the AA community and the general public.

We have several committee positions available. Portland Area Intergroup needs your help. Working on a committee is excellent 12th Step service work. If you are interested in being on any Portland Area Intergroup committee, send an email to pdxaa.org with "COMMITTEE INTEREST" in the subject field. Or, just click on [Service](#) on the Intergroup website. **Intergroup committees carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.** Please help yourself and others. Sign up. Thank you.

Bridging the Gap (BTG): Provides a one-time, temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to A.A. meetings. BTG meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Portland Intergroup Office basement, located at 825 NE 20th Ave, Suite 200, Portland.

"We Bridge the Gap so alcoholics leaving treatment don't have to walk alone across that scary gap between the beginning of recovery in treatment and the continued recovery in A.A." Please contact the PAI office via phone, 503-223-8569, or email btg@pdxaa.org, if you are interested.

A.A. Hotline: The A.A. Hotline keeps the Portland phone number for A.A. active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The way this is accomplished is by volunteer support. Calls to the A.A. number placed after Central Office hours and redirected to volunteers' phones, keeping the volunteer's number anonymous. A volunteer can elect to go on a 12th Step call or just provide the information the caller needs about meetings. Commitments are generally two times a month. In particular, if you're a night-owl, we'd really appreciate your help. Call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

Corrections Committee Information: Take meetings into correctional facilities & carries the A.A. message to the alcoholic who suffers. The Corrections team is looking for A.A. volunteers, both men and women, to bring A.A. meetings into the jails in Multnomah County, specifically Inverness Jail, the Courthouse and the Justice Center. If you have questions on becoming a volunteer, or if you would like to be on the PAI Corrections Committee, please email: corrections@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

Cooperation with Treatment Centers: The Treatment Centers needs your help to share your experience, strength, and hope with the alcoholic who still suffers by taking meeting into treatment facilities. The Treatment Center committee needs volunteers to help coordinate and facilitate meetings at treatment centers. We need your help to contact treatment centers that have reached out to Portland Area Intergroup for A.A. support. We also speak with treatment centers to find out if A.A. is currently bringing in meetings, or if they would like to arrange an appointment to speak with a representative from A.A. that could explain what we can offer them and their patients. We also coordinate with A.A. groups to find out about the service opportunity, and how their group members can participate in this important 12th Step work. The committee meets monthly at 6pm, before the Portland Area Intergroup meeting. If you have questions, please email treatment@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office at 503-223-8569.

Public Information Committee: Panels meet with the media, schools, clubs, and the general public and show videos (produced by the General Service Office), provide literature, contact information and answer questions about A.A. For more information, email pi@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office at 503-223-8569.

Newsletter (*Sobriety in Stumptown*): The committee for the very publication you are now reading is looking for members. Send an email of interest to: newsletter@pdxaa.org

Events: The Events Committee needs committee members. Send an email to Events@pdxaa.org for more information.

Get Published!

If you have A.A. news, a meeting change, a big event, a story, a painting, a poem, or just a rant, Sobriety in Stumptown wants to hear it! Send articles of 1000 words or fewer to:

newsletter@pdxaa.org

Deadline for the August issue: August 1st.

Step Ten

"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it."

Tradition Ten

“Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

Serenity Prayer

“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.”

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