



Serving the Greater Portland Metropolitan Area

Sobriety in Stumptown

www.pdxaa.org
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Portland Area Intergroup
825 NE 20th Ave,
Portland, OR
503-223-8569

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July stories and Art

Step Seven and Tradition Seven

by Amy B., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

In July's issue, local AA members discuss humility, one of the cornerstones of AA philosophy.

What is "humility"?

by Luke from Portland, Oregon

What is *humility* and what the heck does it have to do with AA?

I think I've heard just about everything at AA Meetings and I have been to somewhere around Fifteen Thousand of them. But one of the ones I will never forget was the young man in Ventura, California who told the group, upon receiving his first-year token: "Yeah, I give God credit for my sobriety, but I also give myself credit. It was *hard*, man."

Interesting take on things, man. I don't know if the guy stayed sober or not. Or if he was wrong or right in what he said that evening. All I do remember is how grateful I felt that he was not *me*. By the time I heard him utter those words, I was at peace about who was doing the "work." My powerlessness is my strength. I don't have to do things perfectly or believe that turning things over to God was superstitious or even possible for an "Agnostic" kind of guy like I once was. I have had decades of proof, no matter how slim my faith, that I have no ability to stay sober alone. And I have also stopped depending on a "Group of Drunks = God" to save my butt. The God word is okay now.

For my first fifteen years in AA I had a bad attitude about relapsers. I saw them as weak, or stupid or just plain contagious. They didn't have my personal "grasp" on sobriety. I wasn't going to drink again. Ever. It made no sense. My life had been so great, so successful that no reason to drink would ever come along to challenge me. I knew it all.

And then overnight, my life was in turmoil and I was on an airplane heading for Phoenix and when a stewardess asked me if I wanted a drink I said jokingly, "Sure."

And even though I wasn't serious, the instant the word left my mouth, the obsession to drink returned and I was desperate. I temporarily told the stewardess "No" even though the answer was "Yes" and got to the restroom at the rear of the plane. I pleaded with God to keep me sober, but the obsession was stronger than my temporary resolve and I still wanted alcohol to put out the fire. Not knowing what else I could do, I told God that I would stay sober that day but if the obsession was still there in the morning, I was going to drink. You see, to my surprise, I suddenly understood the difference between an *obsession* and a strong desire to change my

mood with substances. That mood change thing was ever-present back then and I found many escapes, sex, gambling, food, or dangerous behavior to alter moods and not pay the obvious price of relapse. But this was different and I somehow know it.

Thank God I didn't drink that night and in the morning the obsession had been lifted. I have come to terms with my arrogance, my lack of humility and my odd relationship with God and my judgement of my fellow AA's. I'm not that guy today. I see people struggle sometimes, and fail, and return, as I did, humbled. AA is no longer a race to see how many tokens I die with. It's not a substitute for a life I would prefer--it is the only life I want. I tell new folk that they need to stay with us until they no longer still want to drink--if only they could do it with impunity. Most of us will tell you that's what they expected but found, instead, that alcohol simply lost its attraction. Then it's easy to stay because the necessity to stay is gone and replaced by a joy that comes from doing a few simple things each day that guarantee our serenity and our disinterest in our previous life.

Humbly Asking

by Dougie W. from Portland OR

Step Seven: "*Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*"

"My Humility Can Kick Your Humility's Ass" — some silly little humor about humility. What makes the joke funny is that humility is a subject that one cannot obtain and then talk about obtaining, at least about talking in the first person. However, we do want to make progress on that goal, or to attain some level of humility. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions states it is the founding principle of each of A.A.'s Twelve Steps. That's right, all 12 steps. Without humility, not one of us can stay sober or obtain much happiness.

Humility is directly tied to our Spiritual connection. To use an illustration, think of a gauge such as a gas gauge or pressure gauge, with the sides indicating "humility" and "arrogance." When our Spiritual connection is flowing in a healthy direction that is healthy, the indicator needle will move to the humility side or at least move to some degree away from the arrogant side of the gauge.

Is humility obtainable? Is it something you can practice? Are there levels of it? The 7th Step Prayer asks "Him" (capital H, so that is a reference to God) to remove our shortcomings. Are we to demand they be removed? Pray about it? Think them away? Worse yet, wish them away? Being humble is the first part, but how we start the process of obtaining some real, measurable degree of humility that will make a difference.

When asking God for anything, it is first based on a relationship, we know from our book page 53, that "God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't." So, believing He is everything, we need not demand, beg or be arrogant when we ask for Him to remove our shortcomings. We are to approach God with respect, and that respect is a form of humility. In so doing, we are taking baby steps in humility. In every case, pain has been the price of admission to a new life.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 66 (Step 6 with amplification in parentheses):

... Practically everybody wishes to be rid of his most glaring and destructive handicaps. (The Seven Sins) No one wants to be so proud (sin 1) that he is scorned as a braggart, nor so greedy (sin 2) that he is labeled a thief. No one wants to be angry (sin 3) enough to murder, lustful (sin 4) enough to rape, gluttonous (sin 5) enough to ruin his health. No one wants to be agonized by the chronic pain of envy (sin 6) or to be paralyzed by sloth (sin 7). Of course, most human beings don't suffer these defects at these rock-bottom levels.

We are asking God in Step 6 — "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character," such as fear and resentments, that lead to our bad conduct. Step 7 is the beginning of the removal of our

shortcomings or bad qualities and behaviors, such as resentments, greed, dishonesty, laziness, and criticism, and asking Him to replace those shortcomings with their opposites, namely kindness, humility, generosity, truthfulness, work, and praise. For example, if we tend to be self-serving, we pray to Him to be of service to others, and follow it up with action: go and be of service to others at your next meeting.

Moving backward to Step 5 we find the “Exact Nature” of our wrongs. It is not meant to be a long list of all our failings; rather, it is a list which sums up what was our part, or defect, like being selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, or prideful. Those are the defects “we are entirely ready to have God remove” in Step 6. Now, in step 7, we humbly ask Him to decrease our shortcomings by having Him increase the corresponding opposite attribute, both in prayer and action.

The Guide to Humility

In conclusion, it is ironic that the very quality that is the foundation principle of each of the Twelve Steps of A.A., humility, has the least ability to be taught or transmitted to others. It is a fragile state, such that, if we claim humility, it is automatically forfeit. Without it, however, small the quantity, the *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* assures us that no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all AA.'s in my experience have found that without humility happiness, true happiness, is likewise unattainable. Humility hones our sense of purpose for our lives; makes us “right sized” and realistic in our self-assessments; what's more, in adversity, our humility and faith will help us weather any storm.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 70:

“Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of A.A.'s Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all A.A.'s have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety, they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Without it, they cannot live to much useful purpose, or, in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency.”

Three levels (increases in the effort) of Humility

From the book, *Sobriety and Beyond* by Father Ralph Phau, He was the first Catholic Priest to recover from alcoholism through A.A.

FIRST LEVEL

1. To speak as little of one's own self or affairs as possible.
2. To mind one's own business.
3. To avoid curiosity.
4. Not to want to manage other people's affairs.
5. To accept contradiction, or justice requiring and then only moderately with simplicity.
6. To pass over the mistakes of others, to cover them up, even where prudent, to accept them.
7. To yield to the will of others, where neither duty nor charity is involved.
8. To hide one's own ability or talent. (But to use it)
9. To avoid ostentation. (pretentious display to impress others)

SECOND LEVEL (all of these powers are within us ... But one can go further)

1. To accept blame when innocent.

2. To accept insult or injuries.
3. To accept being disliked.
4. Not to seek especially to be loved.
5. Not to be put out in one's own mistakes.
6. To be kind and gentle, even under provocation.
7. To accept. correction gladly.
8. To yield discussion even when right.
9. Not to be self-opinionated or self-assertive.

THIRD LEVEL (And if we fully understand that the perfection of humility is the perfection of loving God, we may even desire to still go further.)

1. To rejoice when despised.
2. To thank God when one is humiliated.
3. To be glad of one's lowliness.
4. To be patient with one's own failings.
5. To meet failure-with a ready smile.
6. To even glory in one's own infirmities. (weaknesses)

Then it is that love is becoming ardent and true and constant...

Topical Treatment

by Eva B. from Portland, OR

For the first year of my sobriety, I went to the same seven meetings, one each day, in the same church. I watched the leaves on the trees outside the windows change colors, the decorations for Christmas then Easter plaster the walls. I read the ten commandments posted on the wall over and over, pondering this mysterious world of faith.

Throughout that year, I heard one thing talked about more than any other: humility. In fact, it was so often the topic of the meetings that I came to find it was somewhat of an inside joke. Any topic that wasn't humility would be a rarity. But despite the saturation, it never grew tiresome or cumbersome, because it is so essential to our program, that it is almost impossible to discuss sobriety without humility.

Our primary issues when drinking was our pride, our arrogance, our self-centeredness and self-righteousness. The cure for these things is humility. It is that simple, but not that easy. That is why we must talk about it again and again and hear it over and over. Humility is the most relevant topic to sobriety, and it will always be.

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, 7:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland

Dist 37: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Friends Church, 23264 SW Main Street, Sherwood, OR

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 3rd**

Step Seven

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

Tradition Seven

"Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

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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