

A MANUAL for ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



This pamphlet was written and edited by members of Alcoholics Anonymous Akron Group No. 1, popularly known as the King School Group. Akron Group No. 1 is the original chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous and includes in its active membership one of the organization's founders, the first person to accept the program, and a large number of other members whose sobriety dates back five, six and seven years. The text of this pamphlet has been approved by the membership.

A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous

FOREWORD

This booklet is intended to be a practical guide for new members and sponsors of new members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

TO THE NEWCOMER: The booklet is designed to give you a practical explanation of what to do and what not to do in your search for sobriety. The editors too, were pretty bewildered by the program at first. They realize that very likely you are groping for answers and offer this pamphlet in order that it may make a little straighter and less confusing the highway you are about to travel.

TO THE SPONSOR: If you have never before brought anyone into A. A., the booklet attempts to tell you what your duties are by your "baby," how you should conduct yourself while visiting patients, and other odd bits of information, some of which may be new to you.

The booklet should be read in conjunction with the large book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," the Bible, the daily lesson and other constructive literature. It is desirable that each member of A. A. furnish each of his prospective members with this "Manual" when he first calls on him, particularly in case of hospitalization.

The experience behind the writing and editing of the pamphlet adds up to hundreds of years of drinking plus scores of years of recent sobriety. Every suggestion is backed up by hard experience.

The editors do not pretend any explanation of the spiritual or religious aspects of A. A. It is assumed that this phase of the

work will be explained by sponsors.

The booklet therefore deals solely with the physical aspects of getting sober and remaining sober.

I

DEFINITION of an Alcoholic Anonymous:

An Alcoholic Anonymous is an alcoholic who, through application of and adherence to rules laid down by the organization, has completely foresworn the use of any and all alcoholic beverages. The moment he wittingly drinks so much as a drop of beer, wine, spirits or any other alcoholic beverage he automatically loses all status as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A. A. is not interested in sobering up drunks who are not sincere in their desire to remain completely sober for all time. It is not interested in alcoholics who want to sober up merely to go on another bender; sober up because they fear for their job, their wife, or to clear up some trouble, either real or imaginary. In other words, if a person is genuinely sincere in his desire for continued sobriety for his own good, is convinced in his own heart that alcohol has got him down, and is willing to admit that he is an alcoholic, Alcoholics Anonymous will do all in their power, spend days of their time to guide him to a new, a happy way of life.

It is utterly essential for the newcomer to sincerely say to himself, "I am doing this for myself and myself alone." Experience has proved in hundreds of cases that unless the alcoholic is sobering up for a purely personal and selfish motive, he will not last. He may remain sober for a few weeks or a few months, but the moment the motivating element, generally fear of some sort,

disappears, so disappears sobriety.

TO THE NEWCOMER: It is your life. It is your choice. If you are not completely convinced, to your own satisfaction, that you are an alcoholic; if you are not ready to part with alcohol for good, it would be better for all concerned if you discontinue reading this and give up the idea of becoming a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

II

TO THE LADIES: If we seem to slight you in this booklet it is not intentional. We merely use the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" for convenience. We fully realize that alcohol shows no partiality. It does not recognize age, sex nor estate. The millionaire drunk on five dollar Scotch looks just like the laboring man drunk on twenty eight cent wine when he is lying in the gutter or the hospital bed. And the only difference between a female and a male drunk is that the former is likely to be treated with a little more consideration and courtesy—although she generally does not deserve it. Every word in this booklet applies to women as well as men.—**THE EDITORS.**

III

A WORD to the sponsor who is putting his first newcomer into a hospital or otherwise introducing him to this new way of life:

You must assume the full responsibility for this man. He trusts you, otherwise he would not submit to hospitalization. You must fulfill all pledges that you make to him, be they tangible or intangible. If you cannot fulfill a promise do not make it. It is easy to promise a man that he will get

his job back if he will sober up. But unless you are certain that it can be fulfilled, don't make that promise. Don't promise financial aid unless you are ready to keep your part of the bargain. If you don't know how he is going to pay his hospital bill, don't put him in the hospital unless you are willing to assume financial responsibility.

It is definitely your job to see that he has visitors and you must visit him frequently yourself. If you put a man in a hospital and then neglect him, he will naturally lose confidence in you, assume a "nobody loves me" attitude, and your half-hearted labors will be lost.

DON'T COERCE HIM INTO A HOSPITAL. DON'T GET HIM DRUNK AND THEN THROW HIM IN WHILE HE IS UNCONSCIOUS. CHANCES ARE THAT WHEN HE SOBERS UP HE WON'T LAST.

You should be able to judge if a man is sincere in his desire to quit drinking. Use this judgment. Otherwise, you will find yourself needlessly bumping your head into a stone wall and wondering why your "babies" don't stay sober. Remember your own experience. You can remember many a time when you would have done anything to get over that awful alcoholic sickness, although you had no desire in the world to give up alcohol for good. It doesn't take much good health to make an alcoholic go back and do the things over again that made him sick.

You should see that your patient has the proper literature, such as "Alcoholics Anonymous," this pamphlet, the "Upper Room," a Bible if possible, and any other literature that has **HELPED YOU**. Impress upon him the wisdom and necessity of reading and rereading this literature.

Study the newcomer and decide who,

among your A. A. friends, might have the best story and exert the best influence on him. There are all types in A. A. and regardless of whom you hospitalize, there are dozens whose stories will help him. An hour on the telephone will produce callers. Don't depend on chance. Stray visitors will drop in, but twenty or thirty phone calls will clinch matters and remove uncertainty. It is your responsibility to conjure up callers.

When your patient is out of the hospital your work has not ended. It is now your duty not only to him but to yourself to see that he starts out on the right foot. See to it that he gets to his first meeting and accompany him on his first hospital call. Telephone him when you know of other patients.

REMEMBER, YOU DEPEND ON THE NEW-COMER'S SOBRIETY TO KEEP YOU SOBER AS MUCH AS HE DEPENDS ON YOU!

Never lose touch with your responsibility. Drop into his home or his office occasionally. Telephone him. Talk to him at meetings. Encourage him to look you up.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY NEVER ENDS.

Remember the old adage, "Two is company and three is a crowd." If you find that a patient has one or more visitors, don't go into the room. An alcoholic goes to the hospital for two purposes—to get sober and to learn how to remain sober. The former is easy. If he is deprived of alcohol he will get sober. So the important thing is to learn how to **KEEP SOBER**. Experience has taught that when more than three gather in a room—the patient included—the talk turns to the World Series, politics, funny drunken parties, and "I could drink more than you." Such discussion merely wastes the patient's time and money. He wants to know how you are managing to keep sober, and you won't hold his at-

tention if there is a crowd in the room.

One more word. It is desirable that the patient's visitors be confined to members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Have a quiet talk with his wife or family before he goes to the hospital. Explain that he will be in good hands and it is only through kindness to him that his family and friends are asked to stay away. New members are likely to be a little shy. If they find a woman in the patient's room they are not inclined to "let their hair down." The older hands don't mind it, but a new member might unwittingly be kept from delivering a valuable message.

IV

TO THE NEWCOMER:

Now you are in the hospital. Or perhaps you are learning to be an Alcoholic Anonymous the "hard way," by trying to continue with your work while learning to become sober.

You will have many callers. They will come singly or in pairs. They will arrive at all hours, from early morning far into the night. Some you will like; some you will resent; some will strike you as being silly, fantastic, or perhaps slightly insane; some will seem fanatics; some will doubtless tell you a story that will be "right down your alley." But remember this—never for one moment forget it:

EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM IS A FORMER DRUNK AND EVERY SINGLE ONE IS TRYING TO HELP YOU!

Your visitor has had the very problems that are facing you now. In comparison with some, your problems are trifles. You have one thing in common with every vis-

itor—an alcoholic problem. Your caller may have been sober for a week or for half a decade. He still has an alcoholic problem, and if he for one moment forgets to follow any single rule for sober living, he may be occupying your hospital bed tomorrow. He is going out of his way, taking up his time, perhaps missing a pleasant evening at home or at the theater by calling on you. His motives are twofold: He is selfish in that by calling on you he is taking out a little more "sobriety insurance" for himself; and secondly he is genuinely anxious to pass along the peace and happiness a new way of life has brought to him. Always bear in mind that your caller not so many days or months ago occupied the same bed you are in today.

And here we might, despite our promise earlier in the booklet, give you a hint on the spiritual phase of the A. A. program. You will be told to have Faith in a Higher Power. First have Faith in your visitor. He is sincere. He is not lying to you. He is not attempting to sell you a bill of goods. Believe him when he tells you what he has done and what you must do to attain sobriety. His very presence and appearance should be proof to you that the A. A. program really works.

Regardless of who he is or what he has to say, listen to him carefully and courteously. Your alcohol-befuddled mind may not absorb all he says in an hour's conversation, but you will find that after he leaves, certain things he has said will come back to you. Ponder these things carefully. They may bring you salvation. It has been the history of A. A. that one never knows where lightning will strike. You may pick up the germ of an idea from the most unexpected source. That single idea may shape the course of your entire life, may be the start of an entirely new philosophy. So no matter who your caller is or what he says,

listen attentively.

Your problem has always seemed to be one shared by no one else in this world. You cannot conceive of anyone else in your predicament.

Forget it! Your problem dates back to the very beginnings of history. Some long forgotten hero discovered that the juice of the grape made a pleasant drink that brought pleasant results. That same hero then probably discovered that he couldn't control his appetite for the juice of the grape. And suddenly he found himself in the same predicament you are in now—sick, worried, crazed with fear, and extremely thirsty.

Your caller once felt that he alone in the world had a drinking problem, and was amazed into sobriety when he discovered that countless thousands were sharing in his troubles.

It cannot be repeated too often—**LISTEN CAREFULLY AND THINK IT OVER AT GREAT LENGTH.**

V

NOW YOU ARE ALONE.

When you go to the hospital with typhoid fever your one thought is to be cured. When you go to the hospital as a chronic alcoholic your only thought should be to conquer a disease that is just as deadly if not so quick to kill.

This is the most serious moment in your life. You can leave the hospital and resume an alcoholic road to an untimely grave or a padded cell, or you can start upward to a life that is happy beyond any expectation. It is your choice and your choice alone. Your newly-found friends can't police you to keep you sober. They

have neither the time nor the inclination. They will go to unbelievable lengths to help you but there is a limit to all things. Shortly after you leave the hospital you will be on your own. The Bible tells us to "put first things first." Alcohol obviously is the first thing in your life. So concentrate on its cure.

You could have gone through the mechanics of sobering up at home. Your new friends could have called on you in your own living room as well. But at home there would be a hundred and one things to distract your attention—the radio, the furnace, a walk to the drug store, the broken screen door, your family. And every one of these things would make you forget the one important thing in your life, the thing upon which depends life or death—complete and endless sobriety. That is why you are in the hospital. You have time to think; you will be there when callers arrive; you have time to examine yourself; you have time and opportunity to read literature that will help you. And don't be in a hurry to leave. Your sponsor knows best. Stay in the hospital until you have at least a rudimentary understanding of the program.

There is the Bible you haven't opened for years. Get acquainted with it. Read it with an open mind. You will find things that will amaze you. You will be convinced that certain passages were written with you in mind. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, VI and VII.) Read St. Paul's inspired essay on love (I Corinthians XIII.) Read the Book of James. These readings are brief but so important.

Read "Alcoholics Anonymous" and then read it again. You may find that it contains your own story. It will become your second Bible. Ask your callers to suggest other readings.

And if you are puzzled, ask questions. One of your callers will know the answers.

Get your sponsor to explain to you the Twelve Steps and the Four Absolutes. If he is not certain about them—perhaps he too is new in this work—ask someone else. They are listed in the back of this booklet.

There is no standing still in this work. You either forge ahead or slip backwards. Even the oldest members, the founders, learn something new almost every day.

**YOU CAN NEVER LEARN TOO MUCH IN
THIS SEARCH FOR SOBRIETY.**

VI

AND NOW YOU ARE out of the hospital.

By this time you should know if you want to go along with A. A. or if you want to slip back into that old headache that you called life. You are physically sober and well—a bit shaky, perhaps, but that will wear off in a short time. You feel good enough to go on another bender, or good enough to try a different scheme of things—sobriety.

You have decided to go along with Alcoholics Anonymous? Very well, you will never regret it.

First off, your days will have a new pattern. You will open the day with a quiet period. This will be explained to you by your sponsor. You will read the "Upper Room" or whatever you think best for yourself. You will say a little prayer asking for help through the day. And you will go about your daily work. When night comes say a little prayer of thanks. Very likely your sponsor will call you—either on the phone or in person. He will suggest that you call on a patient. Don't wait until tomorrow to do this. You will find that it is fascinating work. You will find a kindred spirit. And you will be giving yourself a

new boost along the path of sobriety.

You have nothing to say? No story to tell? Nonsense! You have been sober for a day or for a week. That is your story. And believe it or not, the patient won't realize that you are nearly as much of a tyro as he. Definitely, you have something to say. And you will find that your story becomes more polished and more convincing with each day of sobriety.

**THE HARDER YOU WORK AT SOBRIETY
THE EASIER IT IS TO REMAIN SOBER.**

Your sponsor will take you to your first meeting. It will all be new to you, but you will find it inspirational. And after you have attended a few meetings, it is your duty to get up on your feet and say something. You definitely have something to say. You will find that you are pretty grateful after a few days of sobriety and it is only fair that you express that gratitude. Before many months have passed you will be asked to lead a meeting. Don't try to put it off with excuses. You are among friends, even if you are convinced that you are not a public speaker. Remember, your new associates are also ex-drunks.

Get in contact with your new friends at every opportunity. Call them up. Drop in at their homes or their offices. The door is never locked to a fellow-alcoholic.

**KEEP THE RULES IN MIND. AS LONG
AS YOU OBEY THEM YOU ARE ON FIRM
GROUND. BUT THE LEAST DEVIATION
—AND YOU ARE VULNERABLE.**

And now you are ready to go back and read the third section of this pamphlet, for you are ready to sponsor some other poor alcoholic who is so desperately in need of help, both human and Divine.

So God bless you and keep you.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

NOW THAT YOU ARE SOBER, you naturally feel that you want to make restitution in every possible way for the trouble you have caused your family, your friends—others. You want to get back on the job—if you still have a job—earn money, pay your immediate debts and obligations of long standing and almost forgotten. Money—you must have money, you think. And you also want to make restitution in action in many ways, not financial. If you could wave a magic wand and do all these things you would do it, wouldn't you?

Well, don't be in a hurry. You can't do all these things overnight. But you can do them—gradually, step by step. You may safely leave these matters to a Higher Power as you perhaps ponder them in your morning period of contemplation. If you are sincerely resolved to do your part, they will all be adjusted. "Be still and know that I am God."

SOBRIETY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT thing in your life, without exception. You may believe your job, or your home life, or one of many other things is first. But consider, if you do not get sober and stay sober, chances are you won't have a job, a family, or even sanity or life. If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first you are only hurting your chances.

YOU AREN'T very important in this world. If you lose your job some one better will replace you. If you die your wife will mourn briefly, and then remarry. Your children will grow up and you will be but a memory.

In the last analysis, you are the only one who benefits by your sobriety.

IF YOU THINK you can cheat—sneak a drink or two without anyone else knowing it—remember, you are only cheating yourself. You are the one who will be hurt by conscience. You are the one who will suffer a hangover. And you are the one who will return to a hospital bed.

DON'T criticize the leader. He has his own problems and is doing his best to solve them. Help him along by standing up and saying a few words. He will appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness.

DON'T criticize the methods of others. Strangely enough, you may change your own ideas as you become older in sobriety. Remember, there are a dozen roads from New York to Chicago, but they all land in Chicago.

IT IS not the second, or fifth, or tenth drink that hurts you. It is the first. Study the chapter on "The Beer Experiment" in "Alcoholics Anonymous."

WHAT'S YOUR HURRY? Perhaps you don't feel you are getting the hang of this program as rapidly as you should. Forget it. It probably took you years to get in this condition. You certainly cannot expect a complete cure over night. You are not expected to grasp the entire program in one day. No one else has ever done that, so it certainly is not expected of you. Even

the earliest members are learning something new about sober living nearly every day. There is an old saying, "Easy does it." It is a motto that any alcoholic could well ponder. A child learns to add and subtract in the lower grades. He is not expected to do problems in algebra until he is in high school. Sobriety is a thing that must be learned step by step. If anything puzzles you, ask your new friends about it, or forget it for the time being. The time is not so far away when you will have a good understanding of the entire program. Meantime, *EASY DOES IT!*

THE A. A. program is not a "cure," in the accepted sense of the word. There is no known "cure" for alcoholism except complete abstinence. It has been definitely proved that an alcoholic can never again be a normal drinker. But how soon you will be cured of a desire to drink is another matter. That depends entirely upon how quickly you can succeed in changing your fundamental outlook on life. For as your outlook changes for the better, desire will become less pronounced, until it disappears almost entirely. It may be weeks or it may be months. Your sincerity and your capacity for working with others on the A. A. program will determine the length of time.

EARLIER in this pamphlet it was advised to keep relatives away from the hospital. The reason was explained. But after the patient leaves the hospital, it would be advisable to bring the wife, husband, or other close relative to meetings. It will give them a clearer understanding of the program and enable them to cooperate more intelligently

and more closely in the period of readjustment.

NEWCOMERS often ask why Alcoholics Anonymous supports a New York office. With the nation-wide spread of the A. A. movement, it was found advisable to have a central clearing house, so a New York office was established. This office acts as an information bureau as well as a co-ordinator for the various groups. For example, if a member living in Akron plans to move to Denver, the New York office can give him a list of A. A. members to look up in the Colorado city. A current function of the New York office is trying to establish contacts between members in the various branches of the armed services. Groups throughout the country contribute to the expenses of the New York office—secretary's salary, rent, mailing expenses, etc. Individual groups decide for themselves how money for the central office should be raised.

GROUPS just being formed might be interested in the organization and set-up of Akron Group No. 1, the oldest group in the country.

When A. A. was first organized, the founders and early members wisely decided that the less formal organization there was the better. Where there are officers invested with power there is likely to be jealousy and resentment. These are two of an alcoholic's worst enemies.

Akron Group No. 1 has successfully operated for seven years with no officers. There is an elected committee of seven, with no particular powers. The committee merely performs the various chores that must be

done, such as getting leaders for meetings, arranging for entertainment, paying rent and other bills out of the free-will collection, and similar jobs.

There is only one qualification for a committeeman—he must have been sober for a year. If he drinks while in office, he automatically loses his position. Elections are held every six months. For example, four new members are elected in November and three in May. In that way there are always several old members on the committee. No committee member can succeed himself in office. Each member serves for a year unless disqualified. At elections, names of all eligible members are placed on a ballot. Only members of the group can vote. The three or four (depending on the number of vacancies to be filled) receiving the highest number of votes are elected. Record of the voting is preserved so that the next in line becomes a committee member in case of disqualifications or resignations.

The committee meets monthly, elects its own chairman, treasurer and secretary. The chairman then appoints heads of committees—entertainment, speakers', etc.

It is obvious that new groups cannot make a year of sobriety a qualification for committee membership. The qualification should suit the situation. Qualifications, however, should be uniform.

Akron Group No. 1 has found this system highly successful and merely passes the information along for what it is worth.

THE TWELVE STEPS AND FOUR ABSOLUTES

THE ETHICAL CONDUCT of Alcoholics Anonymous is based on two definite sets of laws, known as the Twelve Steps and the

Four Absolutes. Years of hard experience have definitely proved that those who live up to these rules remain sober. Those who are inclined to gloss over any single rule are in constant danger of returning to their old way of living. Thousands of words could be written on each rule. Lack of space prevents that here, so they are merely listed. They should be explained thoroughly by the sponsor, or if he cannot explain them, he should provide someone who can.

THE TWELVE STEPS

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.**
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
- 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make**

amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were Wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE FOUR ABSOLUTES

ABSOLUTE HONESTY: Both with ourselves and with others, in word, deed and thought.

ABSOLUTE UNSELFISHNESS: To be willing wherever possible to help others who need our help.

ABSOLUTE LOVE: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

ABSOLUTE PURITY: Purity of mind, of body and of purpose.

DETACH AND MAIL THIS COUPON

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Those desiring additional copies of this booklet may obtain them at a cost of fifteen cents per copy or ten cents per copy in lots of twenty-five or more. Copies will be sent postage pre-paid in plain envelopes or packages. Make checks payable to A. A.

Akron Group No. 1.

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Alcoholics."

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VISITORS

You will have many visitors and will want to remember who they are. Have them sign their names, addresses, and telephone numbers in these blank pages.