

THE *a*lternative

www.readingberksintergroup.org

JUNE 2010

NEWSLETTER OF THE READING-BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

NEWS & notes

Volunteers Still Needed

The Archive Committee of RBI, having been tasked with compiling and organizing the histories of area groups among other things, is looking for a few volunteers to assist in their mission. The committee meets the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Call Henry, chairperson, at 484-794-6363.

Volunteers are also needed for our Bridging the Gap efforts. Individuals are needed to serve as 'Contacts', writing to soon-to-be released prisoners via a P.O. Box and following up with them post release meeting assistance etc. Contact Terry at [Bridging-Gap@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org](mailto:Gap@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org).

Oley Group Plans Anniversary Night

The Oley Group will be commemorating their anniversary on Tuesday, June 15 at Friedens Lutheran Church, Rt. 72 in Oley.

The evening will begin with coffee and cake at 7pm with guest speaker Lucy to follow at 8 pm.

Intergroup Meeting Rescheduled in June

Due to a scheduling conflict, the June monthly meeting of the Reading-Berks Intergroup has been rescheduled for Tuesday, June 29. The meeting will still be held at the Calvary Baptist Church, 510 Park Ave. in Reading at 7:30 pm.

Dist. 67 Annual Picnic

District 67 will be holding their 13th Annual Picnic on Sunday, Aug., 29 from noon to 5 pm at Gibraltar Park, in Gibraltar, PA.

Hot dogs and hamburgers will be provided, and picnic goers asked to bring a covered dish. Donations are requested. Speakers begin at 2 pm, with 50/50 and other raffles going on during the day. Sorry, no pets.

Jumping Off That Noisy Bus

by Kris
Congo Big Book Group

Practicing these principles. We hear this phrase so often and like everything else in this program, it sounds so simple but it is not so easy. By the time we get to step five we have identified most of those fatal flaws we call defects of character. Knowing what drives our particular bus, we now have the freedom, but more importantly the responsibility, to make the choice of whether we go down the same dead end roads that lead us to futility, bitterness, resentment and alcohol.

Brought face to face with our defects we realize we are not capable of releasing ourselves from their strangling hold. They are overwhelming — a lifetime of knee-jerk reactions we must reckon with, or die trying.

For me personally, I know I'm in trouble when my noise level goes up.

If my lips are moving, I am not listening.

If I am angry, I can't see the situation clearly.

If I am despairing, I rob myself of the energy to see the situation clearly and deal with it effectively.

If I am self-righteous, I am forgetting how well I can screw things up.

If I am needy, then I am empty, and there is only One who can fill my cup.

Sharing

OUR READERS WRITE

I have to take that responsibility to turn to my HP who knows my needs and is in the process of meeting them, whether I can see it or not.

Instead of jumping on that noisy bus on the road to nowhere with all of my character defects, I can choose to just stand there and wait for the answers, and so I have. Sometimes I take a short spin around the block, but more and more often I choose to wait.

It takes some getting used to, mostly due to my fear of what others will think, since we live in a world that values self-direction, and waiting for direction from "out there" qualifies for a mental health commitment! But I can listen now, and follow direction, so I stand there, pray and I wait.

While I am waiting I begin to see more clearly the things behind the patterns, the real drivers of the situation.

While I am waiting, I can more clearly see that the things that are

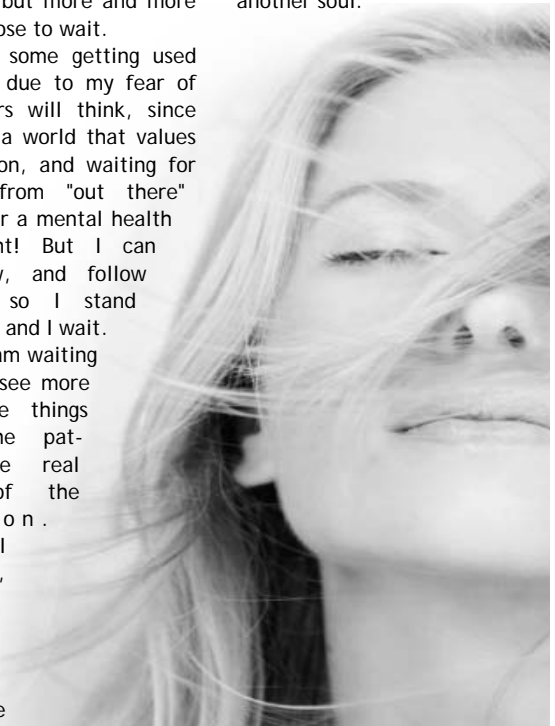
happening in my life are not random, NOT at all.

While I am waiting, I can Dispassionately (not uncaringly) take a real look at the behaviors of others and See the truth of the matter.

Sometimes it's great to see the truth about a Defect and be suddenly relieved of it - poof - gone.

Other times seeing the truth means that making things right will be arduous and life changing.

To thine own self be true. Anything less and it's game over, John Barleycorn collects another soul.



Sharing

OUR READERS WRITE

We at the Alternative strongly encourage our readers to share their stories of experience, strength and hope. Submissions can be

mailed to P.O. Box 12157, Reading, PA 19612, or emailed to Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org.

Please include your name and a contact number, phone or email so we can verify the submission. Also please include the group to which you may be affiliated. Names will be withheld from publication upon request.

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commitments

INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

**Caron Adolescent
Extended Care - Men
Sundays 7 pm**

- June 6 Caron Alumni
- June 13 Boyertown Group
- June 20 Shillington Lifeline
- June 27 Leesport Group
- July 4 Caron Alumni

**Wernersville State Hosp.
See Guard in Building 34
Mondays 7 pm**

- June 7 Sober @ Six
- June 14 Sober @ Six
- June 21 611 Washington St. Group
- June 28 New Life Group
- July 5 Sober @ Six

**Reading Detox Unit
Every Other Tuesday 8 pm**

- June 1 Wyomissing Group
- June 15 YASNY
- June 29 Springview Group

**Reading Detox Unit
Thursdays 8 pm**

- June 3 Walnut St. Group
- June 10 Walk The Walk
- June 17 New Millenium Group
- June 24 611 Washing St. Group
- July 1 Walnut St. Group

*I am responsible, when anyone,
anywhere reaches out for help I
want the hand of AA always to be
there, and for that...
I am responsible!!*

**Caron Adolescent
Extended Care - Women
Sundays 7 pm**

- June 6 Caron Alumni
- June 13 Courage To Change
- June 20 Walnut St. Group
- June 27 YASNY
- July 4 Caron Alumni

**St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit
3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts.
Mondays 7:30 pm***

- June 7 Alpha Group
- June 14 Congo Big Book Group
- June 21 Alpha Group
- June 28 611 Washington St. Group
- July 5 Alpha Group

**Caron Foundation
Thursdays 8 pm**

- June 3 New Berlinville Group
- June 10 Springview Group
- June 17 Advent Men's Group
- June 24 New Life Group
- July 1 New Berlinville Group

**Caron Foundation
Young Adult Female
Fridays 8 pm**

- June 4 Women's Sat. Morning
- June 11 Walnut St. Group
- June 18 Boyertown Group
- June 25 Women's Sat. Morning
- July 2 Hilltop Group

*Note New Time for St. Joe's Monday Meetings.
Call 610-378-2000 and ask for Berkshire Pavilion before going.

If you take a commitment for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact the hospital first to see if there are any alcoholics there: 610-378-2092. *When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group.* These may be the only meetings that the patients may have. Remember, "You Are Responsible", when you commit your time. PLEASE don't let these commitments go unattended. If you cannot make your commitment please notify Steve at 610-750-4019.

On the 6th Step...

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

This step is most important because here we are ready for God (as we understand Him) to walk along with us and guide us as we seek to improve our character and eliminate the defects which contributed to our alcoholic problem.



With God's help we'll now apologize quickly when we are curt to others. We'll overcome our resentments. We'll become humble and remember it's our own character we want to improve, not the character of others. We'll remember that as we aren't perfect we haven't any particular right to be critical toward others.

We'll ask quickly for help each time we are aware of wrong thinking and whenever we begin to feel sorry for ourselves. When we wish to judge others, we'll remember that not so long ago we were in no position to judge anyone.

Resentments, our biggest stumbling block, can be dropped right here. Resentments against those who loved us and tried to help us; resentments against the boss, against our fellow-worker, and all the million other little and big resentments must be turned over to a higher power.

At a later date, as our character becomes sound, we'll find that these resentments disappear.

We must ask God to help us understand others.

It takes a continued program of doing and thinking our best each day to lead us ahead, out into the open, where we can join the company of our fellow men.

The same help we seek in dealing with our alcoholic problem must be used to overcome our other defects. Knowing our problem is in God's hands will give us serenity and peace of mind.

In other words, we will turn our will over to God, asking that His will be done, and we'll work on our defects one by one as they make themselves known to us.

We'll become humble and remember it's our own character we want to improve, not the character of others.

Mark H., Buffalo, New York

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That Simple Sixth Step

I stubbornly clung to many of my defects of character because of the comfort and security I believed they gave me. Just as with alcohol, I couldn't imagine life without them.

I have talked to many people in AA who have had, or are having, great difficulties with Step Six, myself included. Step Six suggests: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

"Too simple," I said, "much too simple! Can't possibly work that way." And once again I was immediately in trouble, for this is what I did:

"I'll just put Steps Six and Seven together and get this over with," I said. "Bill W. was just trying to stretch these principles out to twelve because he was superstitious or something."

Here I made my first mistake. I was "asking" before I was "ready." It didn't work that way for me and still doesn't. I had to become ready first, and this Step provides the proving ground for that to happen.

Sometimes my decision to let go of a defect is quick because of the intense pain it causes me. But other defects are more subtle and I actually enjoy the sick kind of excitement and color they add to my life. I hate the "defect" but I love the "effect."

These, I found, will take me a long time to let go of. A lot of pain and praying for willingness will be required. I try to accept this part of myself, share it with others, seek progress in these areas of my life, and move on in the Steps. To sit and wait always hurts me.

Continuing with my analysis I said to myself, "There's nothing to do here! There's no challenge, nothing for me to fight with and overcome."

Here I made my second mistake. This Step, like One, Two, Three and Eight, requires a submissive type action of me that my bulldozer ego finds intolerable. In this Step I do not go out and fix something but instead allow myself to "become entirely ready."

For me this is an act of letting go, not of grasping or controlling. For me this is an action I find harder to perform, have cried over, have rebelled against more than any other in my entire life. In this Step I literally have to try to let myself go and trust my Higher Power. I cannot beat myself into readiness with my own willpower. And I let myself go by accepting all my defects, not by analyzing or fixing them.

To me this simply means repeating the process of the first Five Steps again on a new level: Admitting my defects (and assets) are truly who I am at this moment and then admitting further that I am powerless to change any of them by my own willpower alone. So simple to understand but so very hard to want to do!

It is inside this Step that I began to really experience the true nature of my powerlessness, and the extent of it. I found that I stubbornly clung to many of my defects of character because of the comfort and security I believed they gave me. Just as with alcohol, I couldn't imagine life without them.

Analyzing this Step further I said, "Finally!

Here is the Step I was looking for! Here at last is my chance to be perfect!"

Give me words like "entirely" and "all," and look out! I'm off and running in an attempt to be canonized by the end of the week. Needless to say, I haven't made it yet. I forgot this Step, like the others, was written by humans

for humans. I now am beginning to see this Step as a process of letting go by acceptance, a little at a time.

As each defect brings me to my knees, I let it go by accepting it as mine and by admitting my powerlessness over it just as I did with alcohol. One day at a time I am becoming "entirely ready." Because of my perfectionism, I must continually remember that Step Six is a guide, something to shoot for, not something I must accomplish perfectly before I move on, because I'd never do any more than five Steps the rest of my life, and five are not enough.

With further probing, into this Step with my brilliant mind I said to myself, "Good deal! Here is a Step I finally get to work by myself. Now I can do it the way I want to!"

I had just made my biggest mistake of all, and not for the first time either. I tried to work this Step alone. I read it as saying "remove all my defects of character." It doesn't say "my." None of the Steps use pronouns like "I," "me" or "my." The Steps, as I see them, are a shared way of life. They are the common experience of many people working together to solve a common problem. I cannot work Step Six all by myself.

In the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, it says that this is the Step that separates the men from the boys. This has certainly been my experience for it has brought out and is still bringing out my defects of character in a very revealing way through daily experience. In this Step, for the first time, I am beginning to understand just a little bit the need for true humility to live a happy and serene life. Part of true humility I believe is self-acceptance, which as it replaces the self-hatred of failing to fix myself, adds that dimension of serenity I need so badly in my life. Bill W. expressed this idea so beautifully when he wrote: "To those who have made progress in AA, humility amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be."

So when it comes to living Step Six, I can say to you and to myself, "Boy, I sure have a long way to go, and some days I don't feel like going at all, but I thank God that I know that much today about myself, because for me, that's progress."

See how it works?

E. C., Bowling Green, Kentucky
Oct. 1987 Vol. 44, No. 5

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Secret of Serenity

IN attending meetings in various groups in our region, I am continually surprised at the number of members who are resentful because they have not acquired "serenity". They can't get peace of mind "no matter how they try."

It is my opinion and it has certainly been my experience that we don't "get" serenity by fighting for it or even by looking for it. In fact, we may even lose it by wanting it!

Why? Again, in my opinion, serenity or peace of mind is not a goal in itself. It is the result of a revolution in our thinking; a revolution, in our case, brought about by our efforts to apply the Twelve Steps of the AA program to our daily life.

I heard a real old timer the other night say that the Twelve Steps are really one step, divided into twelve pieces. Of course the First Step is essential to sobriety and without it the whole program collapses. But the core of the program is the Third Step. And the heart of the difficulty we have in applying it is our increasing desire to run the show in our own way.

We lose our serenity in the hardship and anguish we suffer every day from the burden of our own selfishness and clumsiness and incompetence and pride.

Discouraged by our own failures, we are hungry to be led and advised and directed by someone else. Who? The Third Step answers the question. "Made a decision to turn our lives and will to the care of God, as we understand him."

Our own will has become the source of so much misery and darkness, that we renounce our own will, our own ego and pride and desire and seek God's will for us. When we do this we find peace and serenity even in the midst of labor and conflict and trial.

Serenity is impossible for the man who is dominated by all the confused and changing desires of his own will. And even if those desires reach out for the good things of life, for peace and recollection, or the pleasures of prayer, if



Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save:

We lose our serenity in the hardship and anguish we suffer every day from the burden of our own selfishness and clumsiness and incompetence and pride.

they are no more than natural desires, they will make serenity difficult or even impossible.

It is unlikely then that we will have perfect serenity or peace of mind unless we are detached from even the desire for serenity. We may never be able to pray perfectly unless we detach ourselves from the desire for the pleasures of prayer.

The secret of serenity then is detachment from our own will. That is worth repeating: The secret of serenity is detachment from our own will. If we attach importance to our own desires, we run the risk of losing what is essential to serenity--the acceptance of God's will, no matter what our feelings happen to be.

Detachment. If we think that the most important thing in life is serenity, we become all the more disturbed when we notice we do not have

it. And because we cannot directly produce serenity in ourselves when we want it, our disturbance increases with the failure of our efforts.

Finally, losing patience by refusing to accept this situation which we cannot control, we climb into the driver's seat and lose the one important reality--union with God's will, without which serenity is

nearly impossible.

It is important then to revolutionize our thinking about the importance of the human will--our own human will in particular. I heard it expressed once as the laying down of our will alongside God's will so that the two become as one.

Just how we accomplish this is what makes the individual aspect of the AA program. For each of us comes into AA with a different temperament, a different background and various reactions to our past experiences.

One thing I think is important in setting goals for yourself. Do not become too disturbed at failure. We all have a lot of the old Nick in us and we are all far from perfect. If we expect to achieve perfection we shall certainly be disappointed. But peace of mind and serenity do come to us in proportion as we turn our lives and wills over to the care of God, as we understand him.

But don't look for it and crave it. If you think serenity is a great and wonderful thing and that it makes you superior to other men, then you cannot desire it as it ought to be desired. It is necessary to be abased, not to be exalted. It is not helpful to be great in your own eyes but to be little.

For it is in humility that you find the answer to all the great problems of life and the soul.

Anonymous

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VICTOR E.

