

# GRAPESCCIN

August 2023

## Getting to Know ‘Her’

When I walked into my first A.A. meeting, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I didn’t think about quitting drinking for good or steps or higher powers. I probably wasn’t thinking about much other than looking cool and finding a new boyfriend. Not thinking was probably what enabled me just to go to that first meeting. If I’d thought too much about it, I probably wouldn’t have taken my stepmother’s suggestion to go to A.A. I wouldn’t have called the A.A. number, and I wouldn’t have listened to the woman who told me to go to a meeting that day. Not thinking, for that one day, saved my life.

In the beginning, I thought, “This is fun. These people are so interesting, funny and happy.” I was given a Big Book and a sponsor that first night. I hid the book under my car seat and didn’t call the sponsor. I did go back the following week, then skipped a week. I was busy! And I didn’t know there were meetings on other days of the week. I wasn’t sure alcohol was my problem. I thought my problems were my problem.

But I was my problem. When I saw my sponsor again, she was ice cold. These women aren’t nice, I thought What’s wrong with them? I found a cute guy I thought would understand. He introduced me to his girlfriend. And she invited me to a women’s meeting at her house. We read the Big Book and went around the room sharing.

Little by little, women talked to me, gave me their phone numbers and invited me out for coffee. They talked about working the steps. My sponsor always seemed too busy and annoyed with me, so I fired her. In just a few months I was feeling worse than I’d ever felt drinking. And I wasn’t numbing it! I called someone and asked how to get a sponsor. She gave me a name, I met with a new sponsor and we started working the steps. The reading and writing seemed like pointless homework, but I was willing to do anything, if only to look good.

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Intergroup minutes and reports are now published on our website:  
<https://aasantacruz.org/documents/>



When I got to the Fourth Step, I slowed down. Way down. This was getting personal. I had done a sort of narrative inventory the first time, and not only had I felt exposed and humiliated, but my sponsor had said I “did it wrong.” My new sponsor explained it to me in baby steps. By the time I read her my inventory, I had just enough trust to share it despite feeling uncomfortable.

She said a few things during the Fifth Step. One was, “You seem very concerned with being cool.” She shared some of her experiences, so I didn’t feel so unique or broken. At the end, she asked if there was anything I thought I’d left out, so I shared something I felt was extremely shameful. She was unfazed. We burned the pages and I let go of my past. I felt a part of humanity for the first time.

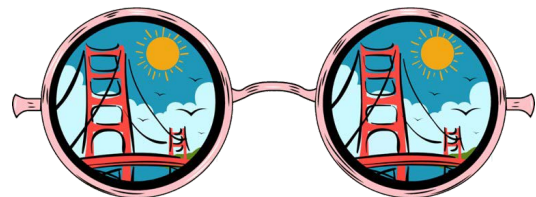
I had much more to do, but that was the beginning of a journey to uncover the truth about myself and to get to know her – my true self. That’s what I didn’t know when I walked into that first meeting: I needed to stop drinking; I needed to grow up; but most of all I needed to accept myself for who I am.

*Leigh F, PA*



**HARD SOBER**  
 SUMMER RAVE  
 PRESENTED BY CRUZYPAA  
**AUGUST 26**  
 7PM MEETING  
 8PM-1AM RAVE  
 SPEAKERS  
 KRISTEN FROM SOCPAA  
 LEELEE FROM WACYPA  
**HOPE CHURCH**  
**4525 SOQUEL DR**  
**SOQUEL CA 95073**  
 FEATURING:  
 EGG  
 DJ ELL  
 Eyeris  
 SUGGESTED DONATION \$20

*Watch Loneliness Vanish*



*Ver Como Desaparece la Soledad*

**The 63<sup>rd</sup> ICYPAA**

International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous  
 with AI-Anon Participation

Labor Day Weekend, Friday – Monday  
 September 1 – 4, 2023

Marriott Marquis, 780 Mission Street, San Francisco

63<sup>ra</sup> Conferencia Internacional de Jóvenes en Alcohólicos Anónimos  
 Fin de semana del Día del Trabajo, del viernes al lunes  
 del 1 al 4 de septiembre de 2023

Marriott Marquis, 780 Mission Street, San Francisco

Las principales reuniones de ponentes y algunos de los paneles/talleres contarán con interpretación al español

[www.ICYPAA.org](http://www.ICYPAA.org)

Pre-reg and book your room now!




**Looking for a Meeting?  
 Wherever or whenever,  
 locate one fast with the  
 AA Meeting Guide App!**

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**Google Play**

Download on the  
**App Store**

**See the complete list of  
 local AA meetings and  
 events on [aasantacruz.org](http://aasantacruz.org).**





# An A.A. Journey

I've been sober for 21 years, and have had many cycles of working a good program and not working a good program.

During the pandemic, I was down to one online meeting a week. My home group was still great and I looked forward to the meeting, but it wasn't enough.

Around the same time, I had stopped talking to my sponsor, who had moved away. When in-person meetings opened up again, I started going to one a week, then two, three, four a week, and finally every day. I tried to reestablish the connections I'd had in A.A. I'd been working too much for too long, and my relationships weren't going well. I wasn't taking care of myself, and my health suffered.

I met a guy at one of my favorite meetings. I liked what he had to say. He was articulate and listened well to others. I asked him to be my sponsor. He said yes and we started working right away.

We met regularly to read, talk and drink coffee. We worked on the Steps and the Traditions. I learned to ride motorcycles all over again.

When the opportunity came, he gave me the nudge to do service, and I started to secretary a meeting. I saw how he would always talk to newcomers so I started trying to do that too, getting numbers and meeting new people.

I hope to find somebody to sponsor soon, so I can help another person and give back what was given to me. I am getting a deeper understanding of our program. I am starting to see how every aspect of life can be related to a Step or a Tradition, and how we can incorporate that into our lives.

My life today is 110 percent better than it was, and I believe it will continue to improve as I make A.A. my way of life again.

*Garry G, Aptos*

*I miss the ocean  
but when missing the ocean  
I miss being here*



*Kay M, Santa Cruz*



## Losing My Religion

**R**emember that song from R.E.M. “Losing My Religion”? That’s what happened to me around the time my alcoholism reached its zenith and tried to kill me. I was trying to practice the religious belief I was raised in, but a small voice in my head told me I no longer believed it. A treatment counselor wondered if the pressure to conform had actually contributed to my alcoholism; I don’t think that was the case. But that did allow me to consider whether I could make a change, knowing it would mean leaving relationships I had built over years in my church, and disappointing family and friends. It was a difficult decision.

Unlike some in A.A. who found a faith when they got sober, I lost mine. How could I understand the program of A.A. without a belief in a Higher Power? I met a group of agnostics in Santa Cruz who valued free thinking. They told me I didn’t have to give up personal beliefs to please others, or conform to their viewpoint.

As I continued to read what Bill Wilson’s wrote, I found many statements that show he understood A.A.’s door had to be widened to allow agnostics and atheists to stand with believers in finding sobriety in A.A., and to help like-minded newcomers feel comfortable here no matter what their beliefs.

This is what Bill wrote in 1965:

“Moreover, all people should have the right to voice their convictions. ... Newcomers are approaching AA at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In A.A. we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering. Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of A.A., so long as he or she so declares.” (Grapevine, July 1965, Responsibility Is Our Theme.)

Today I am part of the Santa Cruz group “We Agnostics,” which has a Zoom and in-person meeting. I cannot recount how many times over the years we’ve had newcomers tell us they are happy to find a meeting where they can hear a message of sobriety regardless of their beliefs.

This is in keeping with our literature, as this quote shows: “Though the A.A. program relies upon the sharing of experience, strength and hope among alcoholics, the recovery process itself is highly individual, adapted by each member to meet his or her needs.” (A Member’s-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous.)

– *Anonymous*

# Leading Newcomers Through the First Step



**A**fter a long season of service to those still suffering, be prepared for compassion fatigue. It can show up as frustration in having to confront the same misguided resistance to good old common sense from a succession of newbies.

We can be lulled into the idea that the program's life-changing benefits should be obvious to everyone, after we've led a few dozen of them to the light.

Doesn't everyone know by now that the 12 Steps are a path to happiness, joy and freedom, not a punishment for being alcoholics?

We can end up feeling like we're trying to teach the same simple lesson to the same person, over and over.

The truth is, trusted defenses and fundamental beliefs are under attack in everyone new to the steps. They are being challenged to change ... well, everything.

We hate change unless it's our own idea. So our minds and bodies tell us to reject this new threat to our emotional well-being, and return to the comforting, familiar solace of alcohol. We've seen that it doesn't work anymore, but our brains dangle enticing memories of when it did.

We veteran sponsors need to mix it up a bit to keep our message vital and engaging. Just as the Bible warns us "Woe to those who change any part of this book!", one shouldn't mess with the Letter of the Law within the Big Book. But this doesn't mean we shouldn't add anecdotes from our personal experience. Our contemporary perspective can help bring relevance for a newcomer trying to decipher the Big Book's 1930's point of view.

We lose a lot of seekers in the First Step when a newcomer's pride - the bondage

of self - won't allow them to admit powerlessness. After years of practicing brilliantly complex social adaptations to hide our drinking, how can one suggest they are powerless? Certainly the clever manipulations to avoid accountability and all the expertise in dodging consequences are anything but "unmanageable."

This new perspective asks the question; "After having become the cleverest alcoholic ever, is your path really sustainable? How much longer can you maintain this increasingly complex defense before you die, or are shamed into surrender?"

The First Step gives the newcomer a glimpse of hope - sustainable hope - for the path ahead, rather than despair.

Which of these is less shameful for the alcoholic when making the choice between pride and recovery?

- Having everyone you care about learn of your alcoholism after some cringeworthy event?
- Having their suspicions confirmed by watching the inevitable, grotesque degradation of mind and body, despite how well you've managed their perceptions of your drinking?
- Or, seeing you healthy, trustworthy and welcomed back in their lives out of respect for the courage it took for you to seek help?

One of the wonderful surprises in new sobriety is how quickly others are willing to forgive us once they see the miracle of our transformation through recovery. This is the promise in the First Step.

*Richard H, Corralitos*

# Joint Committee on Safety – July Forum



I attended the Joint Committee on Safety's July Forum, where they discussed How Members Can Approach the Topic of Safety in Their AA Groups. There was a panel of three speakers from the Santa Cruz area, and I found it very illuminating. There was a sizable crowd of people in attendance, as well as on Zoom. The script prioritized safety and recognized that some of the topics that were discussed could be triggering to people. That was appreciated. It was an accurate assessment. There was also the ability to submit questions anonymously on Zoom.

Across all three panel speakers, there were some noticeable themes. It seems that bringing up the topic of safety at meeting level is not as easy as it seems. Here's a summary of what I heard.

## **The problem of bringing up the topic of safety at meetings:**

- People may notice things happening in the meeting, but they may not feel it's their place to say something about it
- It takes courage to talk about these things
- "I feel unsafe at meetings" after bringing up safety concerns
- Many safety issues touch on things that we may have experienced in our disease or in our childhood, meaning we have our own "stuff" that gets activated whenever safety issues come up
- Nobody seems to debate that things are happening (behavior that threatens individual or group safety), but things aren't getting addressed by the group
- People have questions and don't know where to go with them: Where do we evaluate questionable behavior? What do we put up with and what do we not put up with?

## **What has worked in the past? What are people's experiences?**

- Be persistent to the point of annoyance in making a statement or getting out a message that is important
- Offer a safe place for people to talk about things that are bothering them
- Lead with humor
- Don't do anything on your own. Safety, as a solution, needs to be a group thing.
- Someone talked about the willingness to do the hard work to keep these rooms safe; "these rooms saved my life"
- People we elect to help solve problems need to be mature in their program; we don't go work on these issues, then go engage in gossip and criticism of one another ... no schoolyard drama is needed
- Have courage to address difficult issues
- Present a solution rather than discuss the problem

## **What's the goal of doing all this?**

- Teach us to work as a whole, as a group, to make our meetings safe.

Next month's Safety Forum will be on the topic of Combating Predatory Behavior: How Groups Can Respond to Complaints of Predatory Behavior in Their Meetings.

August 20th at 6 p.m.  
Resource Center for Nonviolence  
612 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA  
95060

or on Zoom:  
ID 81007230520  
PWD 762793

*Sarah R, Santa Cruz*

# From the General Service Chair

At last week's General Service Area Committee Meeting (ACM) I heard something that I've been thinking about since: "When did your God light turn on?"

For me it was on a warm fall Friday evening in Minnesota. I'd attended a large speaker meeting – a couple hundred people. I sat in the back as usual, trying to disappear. I was about seven months sober, and had unintentionally and recently chosen a sponsor active in A.A. service. This was one of "her" meetings. She had given up trying to meet me for stepwork on a prearranged date because I was always very, very late. She finally told me that if I wanted what she had by working the Sateps, I needed to attend the meetings she did; we could talk then.

I don't recall even seeing my sponsor that Friday night, but I distinctly remember the joy emanating from that room. I remember the laughter and conviviality.

I was struck with amazed happiness as I left the meeting and looked at the starlit night. I thought, and felt, "I want to be here!"

That was my moment. I realized that in spite of myself, "something" had taken over. I had a new attitude that hadn't been there when I walked into the meeting. Thank God.

Following my sponsor's example, I wanted to be of service to the fellowship that had saved my life.

My service journey took me to Petaluma for the most recent ACM on July 22. As a trusted servant, I'd like to share some of what I learned.

The Plain Language Big Book draft is complete. It goes now to the Conference Committee for review, and might be included on the Conference Agenda next year. Many naysayer delegates have been swayed by the love and ease of communication in the first chapters they've read, and there is much excitement to see the final product.

The book was a result of a 2021 71st Conference Advisory; members and group consciences requested such a book. It doesn't replace our standard text, but will be another service tool to reach those for whom our Big Book hasn't resonated. We want the hand of A.A. to be available to alcoholics with reading challenges, too.

Beta testing has launched for an improved Grapevine App, which may be available by subscription in the fall.

And congrats to our General Service Archives Chair, Dave H, for being chosen to attend the National A.A. Archives Workshop in Sunbury, Ontario, next month. We're grateful for your caring service to Santa Cruz, Dave.

Gratefully yours in service,  
Deb A  
General Service DCMC,  
District 03 Committee Member Chair



# SOBRIETY MILESTONES

## JULY

Gary P. . . . .	July 1, 1980
Rand M . . . . .	July 15, 1980
Wendy . . . . .	July 29, 1980
Mike B. . . . .	July 15, 1981
Mark D. . . . .	July 1, 1984
Ingrid . . . . .	July 1, 1984
Michael B . . . . .	July 14, 1984
Scott B . . . . .	July 20, 1984
Dan F . . . . .	July 26, 1985
Kathy C . . . . .	July 7, 1986
Linda M . . . . .	July 15, 1986
Alison G . . . . .	July 29, 1988
Cynthia Sp . . . . .	July 23, 1989
Carl P . . . . .	July 5, 1990
Mick Helmet . . . . .	July 24, 1993
Jana M . . . . .	July 4, 1994
Mark M . . . . .	July 4, 1994
Vickie B . . . . .	July 3, 1996
Jose D . . . . .	July 17, 2000
Zach . . . . .	July 5, 2001
Carrie . . . . .	July 20, 2001
Johnny R . . . . .	July 23, 2001
Carla P . . . . .	July 16, 2002
Carol H . . . . .	July 12, 2003
Kim P . . . . .	July 17, 2009
Michelle B . . . . .	July 22, 2012
Julie W . . . . .	July 24, 2012
Rachelle S. . . . .	July 2, 2013
Nicole B. . . . .	July 27, 2014
Kristain B . . . . .	July 29, 2014
Richard P . . . . .	July 5, 2016
Amber J. . . . .	July 22, 2017
Kimberlee K . . . . .	July 12, 2019

## IN MEMORIAM . . . . .

Damon McG. 29 yrs. . . . .	July 3, 1988
Alisa V . . . . .	July 4, 1999



**Want to list your A.A. anniversary in the GrapeSCINN? Email your name and sobriety date to: [grapesccin@gmail.com](mailto:grapesccin@gmail.com)**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INTERGROUP PRESENTS

## THE BIRTHDAY SPEAKER MEETING

SPEAKER: CORRINE B - HALF MOON BAY - 35 YEARS  
HOSTED BY THUMPERS

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2**

7:00 PM - DOORS OPEN 5:30  
MID-COUNTY SENIOR CENTER - 829 BAY AVE. CAPITOLA



# AUGUST 2023 EVENTS

For more information  
about this month's events, visit  
[aasantacruz.org](http://aasantacruz.org)

August 2 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**Intergroup Council Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 828 1508 0970  
Passcode: 588309

August 5 @ 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm  
**Birthday Speaker Meeting**  
Mid-County Senior Center  
829 Bay Ave., Capitola

August 6 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
**CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting**  
Harvey West Park 326 Evergreen St  
Santa Cruz

August 9 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**General Service District Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 857 1510 3072  
Passcode: 524168

August 10 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
**Web Committee Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 884 7009 1801  
Passcode: 2272

August 12 @ 9:00 am - 5:00 pm  
**CNCA Summer Assembly**  
Redwood Acres Fairgrounds  
3750 Harris St. Eureka 95503  
Zoom: 632 553 607 | Password: 1935

August 12 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
**4th Step Workshop**  
Ben Lomond Fellowship  
9496 Hwy 9, Ben Lomond

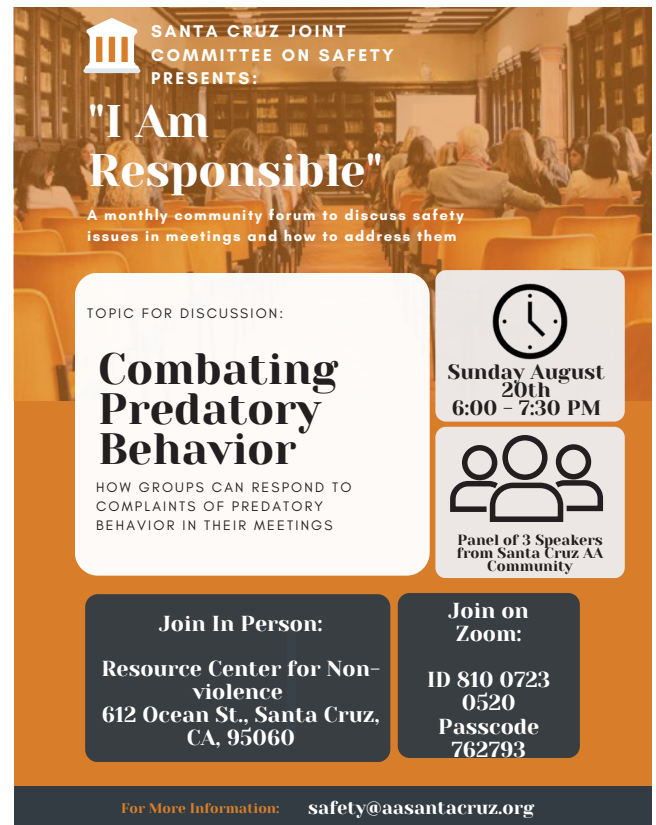
August 16 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**Intergroup Steering Committee Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 861 8723 8980  
Passcode: 723088

August 20 @ 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm  
**"I Am Responsible" Monthly Forum**  
Resource Center for Nonviolence  
612 Ocean St., Santa Cruz  
Meeting ID: 810 0723 0520  
Passcode: 762793

August 20 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
**CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting**  
Harvey West Park  
326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz

August 26 @ 12:30 - 1:00 am  
**CRUZYPAA Meeting & Rave**  
Hope Church  
4525 Soquel Drive, Soquel

August 26 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
**Santa Cruz Fellowship Birthday Speaker Meeting**  
Santa Cruz Fellowship  
412 Front Street, Santa Cruz



SANTA CRUZ JOINT  
COMMITTEE ON SAFETY  
PRESENTS:

**"I Am Responsible"**  
A monthly community forum to discuss safety  
issues in meetings and how to address them

TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION:

**Combating  
Predatory  
Behavior**

HOW GROUPS CAN RESPOND TO  
COMPLAINTS OF PREDATORY  
BEHAVIOR IN THEIR MEETINGS

Sunday August  
20th  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

Panel of 3 Speakers  
from Santa Cruz AA  
Community

Join In Person:

Resource Center for Non-  
violence  
612 Ocean St., Santa Cruz,  
CA, 95060

Join on  
Zoom:

ID 810 0723  
0520  
Passcode  
762793

For More Information: [safety@aasantacruz.org](mailto:safety@aasantacruz.org)

9AM ONLINE DAILY WOMAN'S MEETING OF A.A.  
PRESENTS

## 12 Concepts: Women in Service

An introduction to the Twelve Concepts of A.A.  
and how to apply them at every level of service.



### 2023 Workshops

3rd Saturdays July - Oct  
2nd Saturdays Nov - Dec  
10:30 am - 12:00 pm PST

JULY 15: Herstory of Service  
AUG 19: Concepts I - III  
SEP 16: Concepts IV - VI  
OCT 21: Concepts VII - VIII  
NOV 11: Concept IX - X  
DEC 16: Concept XII

Zoom I.D: 718 349 933 Email [Sign-in](mailto:Sign-in@dailywomensmeeting.com) Required  
More info at [dailywomensmeeting.com](http://dailywomensmeeting.com)