

GRAPESCCIN

January 2024

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A Good Thought Takes a Little Work

By Jen P, Soquel

My first sponsor told me my brain was gullible. “It believes whatever you tell it,” she said. Then she suggested I give it new material to ponder – maybe even something happy. “You don’t always have to wear black, you know.”

This was a little baffling, that I could just make up stuff. I had the ability to change my own thinking. It was amazing!

I tried, put up Post-It notes of affirmations on the bathroom mirror, on the steering wheel; read Melody Beattie daily reflections, quoted Malcolm Maltz, voraciously studied Emmet Fox. I was trying to transform my thinking, to veer from that rutted road of thought through repetition and sheer will.

But it was a lot to be responsible for, monitoring my data input 24/7. Positive thoughts didn’t feel as familiar. When I left the helm and got lazy about my thinking, the ship always sailed adrift – and not to happy thoughts. I’d wake up somewhere in the Sea of Fear, having forgotten the truth of things, what I believed, and even just to pray. My creative brain was on another negative bender.

By connecting to something greater than myself, by just remembering this light, I am whole again. The disconnect is healed. I am part of you.

Thank goodness for half-assed prayers! Mumbled on my way to the morning coffee pot, they still work. *Help me get out of the way. Help me remember the truth.*

When I let myself be changed, I’m not asking some higher power to fix things – though I totally would if I thought that worked. I’m affirming that by connecting to something greater than myself, by just remembering this light, I am whole again. The disconnect is healed. I am part of you.

One night I sat in my sponsor’s kitchen after completing part of my ninth step and realized I had this life to live, something to plan for, and I needed to start making some decisions rather than reactions. It was another shocker – the idea that I was at the helm, with choices. It was a new responsibility – this minding my mind and not letting it fall willy-nilly into some sad, moody, somewhat stressful victim fiction.

On the mornings I still wake up with a monster under the bed, I try to be grateful that I have a bed. This makes the monster feel better. The rankled ego is a little tamed. I remember joy is a choice, that the heavy lifting is always willingness. I anchor in the well-tested, thought-shifting prayer: *Help me be willing to be willing to be willing. Let this life be useful.* When I crawl back to the helm and look out at the day, I find I have been steered out of the Sea of Fear and all is well. It is always a surprise.

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

St. Francis Guides an Agnostic

By Frank G., Soquel



I'm agnostic, not usually drawn to prayers and praying. One exception is the prayer of St. Francis, or "the Eleventh Step Prayer," as A.A.s have come to call it. I like it because of its poetry, and the guidance it gives me for becoming a person better than the blindly self-centered and controlling one I once was.

A.A. enshrined the prayer in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions when the book was published in 1953. The chapter on Step Eleven uses it to introduce the reader to prayer and meditation. Depending on how you count, the prayer has 11 to 14 precepts or principles.

I've made a practice of using these precepts to monitor my behavior, and trying to modify it where it is wanting. I don't do this every day, but as sticky interpersonal issues come up. Usually, the other person is my wife or another family member, the people I'm around most.

Each time, I note in my journal how the prayer helped me see the consequences of my behavior, before or after the incident. Here are some examples from the last few years:

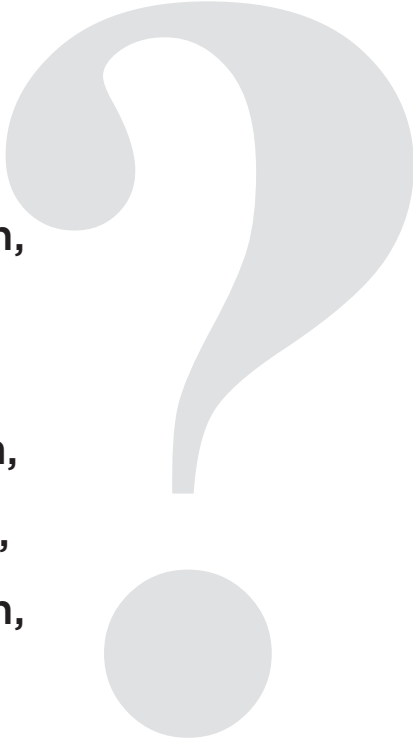
- My wife worried about our younger son's finances. I could have commiserated, sharing some troubling specifics she didn't know about. Instead, I reminded her of the positive actions he was taking. I remembered the prayer's instruction, "where there is despair, may I bring hope."
- When this son told me he'd changed his mind and was taking our grandsons to what we earlier had agreed could be a COVID-19 super-spreader event – a flag-football game for kids and parents – I remembered "that where there is doubt, may I bring faith."
- I was cleaning house one Saturday morning when our 6-year-old grandson asked to play a board game. Instead of doing what was comfortable for me and telling him to come back later – my usual response – I thought of his comfort. The prayer puts it this way: "Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted."
- I was tired. My wife was tired. It was late. But she wanted to look at our calendars to find a night when we could host our play-reading group. I just wanted to get into bed and read, but I sensed her urgency; I understood it would be better "to comfort, than to be comforted."
- "Where there is discord, may I bring harmony" is difficult for me to follow. Discord was in the air I breathed growing up in an alcoholic home. It came to mind one morning when my wife brought home four large pastries from our favorite bakery instead of just the one I'd requested. I could have been angry with her for being wasteful. But I chose harmony over discord, and kept my mouth shut. "Lord, grant that I may seek rather ... to understand, than to be understood" also came into play. It was better to understand that my wife, an emotional and generous woman, had thought the pastries looked delicious, and wanted to surprise me with them. It was less important that she understand my sense of thrift.
- The close dichotomy between "to understand" and "to be understood" also guided me in a late-night discussion about the reasons why our son's marriage failed. It opened my mind to the idea that a mother might see her child's marriage differently than a father. It helped me loosen my grip on the need to be understood, to have my reasons acknowledged as the correct ones.
- Sometimes, the best I can do is to revisit the prayer after the fact. Recently, I lashed out at my wife over a decision about grandchild care. I made amends within minutes but still felt terrible until I read again, "where there is wrong, may I bring the spirit of forgiveness" – for myself.
- My A.A. friend Tom and I meet at a café every two weeks; we have rambling conversations about sobriety and other subjects. When I notice myself self-centeredly trying to one-up him, I remember the wisdom in the prayer that "it is by self-forgetting that one finds," and then shut up and listen.
- Two of my grandsons, 6 and 11, had made an unfair trade of magic cards. Both felt shortchanged. I stepped in to help them negotiate a new deal both could live with, happily. Later that day, I thought of these two precepts: "That where there is error, may I bring truth. ... Where there are shadows, may I bring light."

I behave badly sometimes. As the Big Book says, we A.A.s are not saints. But I keep going back to the prayer of St. Francis for guidance. Like the Twelve Steps, it is a toolbox for self-improvement and a portal to spiritual awakening.

IF

By Tom D., Aptos

If “I am”
Is the answer,
And
“Who am I”
Is the question,
Then knowing
Just Is.
If Doubt
is the problem,
And
“Who Doubts”
Is the question,
“I Am”
Is the answer.
And
All else
is
irrelevant.



Rule 62 Trivia Test

By Damien M.

At November’s Central Office Open House, a trivia quiz was one of the fun things offered: 12 questions about A.A. pulled from its history, service structure, slogans, the Big Book and other literature.

Here are 12 trivia questions. And, ahh ... try to answer without peeking; rigorous honesty is the best policy.

1. What was the original name of the Big Book chapter, “Acceptance Was The Answer”?
2. Why is our book “Alcoholics Anonymous” called the Big Book?
3. Who was Lois?
4. In what year did the co-founders meet?
5. On what month and day is the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous celebrated?
6. What is our local General Service Area called?
7. What is the name of the physician who wrote “The Doctor’s Opinion” in the Big Book?
8. Name one of the two appendices in the the Big Book that deal with spiritual matters.
9. What is the URL address of Santa Cruz County Intergroup’s website?
10. When was the Big Book first published?
11. What is our local General Service District called?
12. What is the “spiritual foundation” of the Traditions?

The answers are given later in this issue.

**The Thursday 7 PM
Men’s Basic Step
Study Group in Soquel
Village announces
that its meeting will
be discontinued after
January 4th, with the
conclusion of the current
series of the Steps.**

When I Look in the Rearview Mirror

By Jill S., Santa Cruz

I was raised in a home with sober parents; that was an anomaly in the '60s. My parents had met on the A.A. campus in 1946, and they married the next year, when they claimed their respective sobriety dates. I was born in 1950. My mother had children previously but called me her first "sober" mate, breast-fed in the rooms of the first young people's meetings in Northern California.

Growing up I witnessed old-fashioned 12th step work. It meant shaking, slovenly, stinkin' drunks in our home, or going to the beat-down homes of those unfortunates who still had a roof over their foggy heads. My siblings and I often got stuck in the car, waiting for our mom to return or - heaven forbid - to go into these god-forsaken hell-holes and clean them. Not my favorite part of childhood, for sure. I would never end up like that!

Coming of age in the "Swinging Sixties" I embraced as much of the era as possible, from my white lipstick and go-go boots to my long hair and fringed moccasins. And having come of age here in Santa Cruz County, I sat on the wall in Rio drinking Annie Green Springs, buying matchboxes and taking Owsley LSD. Life was so much fun, except for those sober parents, who I'd never be like ... those old alcoholics.

By the time I graduated from high school I was married, pregnant, wearing clogs, and I owned my first home (\$8,000). There was no one to nag me about anything, thank god. My doctor prescribed DexamyI to keep me from gaining weight. I dutifully took it.

Our tiny family bought a farm and moved to Felton. We had marvelous times on our little commune, with our 40-plus animals and dozens of "friends." But after a few years, the frivolity turned dark as our house burned to the ground - a metaphor for an unhappy marriage as well.

Soon I found my new partner-in-crime over a straw of white powder at a party. We knew it was love. His addictions were attractive and hideous to me. We had a child, but it wasn't a strong enough bond to keep this crazy relationship glued. We tried, back and forth, for a seeming eternity. But it was a no go. The shining star, however, was that he got sober, and I found that attractive. That sobriety came with a plethora of new friends and a more serene life. I didn't need it, though.

I hung on the periphery for a few years, kicking up my stilettos with my new cohorts, drinking, drugging and dancing till I could do it no more. Some wild form of spirituality had begun to worm its way into my soul. On a daily basis I'd try to stop addictions to, by then, all forms of substances. To no avail.

I walked into a meeting of, believe it or not, Alcoholics Anonymous, fortified by a powder substance, and raised my hand as a newcomer. I duly raised it for 30 days, and embarked on a journey that has been right-foot, left-foot for 39 years now. I'm the same person who scoffed at my parents' way of life so many years ago. And with grace, I'll stay here till I'm pushing up daisies.

My life today is beyond my earlier comprehension, thanks to Sobriety, Sponsorship, Steps, Spirituality and Service. In this respect, I am my mother's daughter. I could have sold myself short years ago, but I've learned the hard life-lesson of holy patience.

I'm blessed to have a nurturing marriage, two exceptional children, four fabulous grandchildren, a loving extended family, a beautiful home, my sponsor of 35 years and my sponsees. Thanks to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Welcome, Newcomer!

By J. W., Aptos



Welcome newcomer!

Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous. We're glad you're here. There is a solution. Here are some helpful suggestions:

“Don't drink, and don't think,” my first sponsor told me. It helped, especially when I spent time wondering if I was in fact an alcoholic. You may find there is a little voice that follows you around, saying you're not really an alcoholic. Thank it for sharing, ignore it and keep coming back. The most important thing we do is, one day at a time, we don't drink. One minute at a time is good, too. Welcome.

Identify, don't compare. When I was new, I had a voice in my head that kept saying, “You're not that bad; you're not that bad.” Well, one day I was getting a \$5 haircut at the old Wayne's College of Beauty in Santa Cruz. In the women's restroom – painted a lovely shade of Pepto-Bismol pink – “You're not that bad” was joined in my mind by another voice that clearly asked, “Compared to what?” The suggestion to identify rather than compare is one of the most useful things I've heard in Alcoholics Anonymous. Yes, we're all different in our unique ways. But we have in common a solution for sobriety, one day at a time.

First things first. Alcoholism is a progressive, fatal disease. Ouch. And the bottom is where we stop digging. Hearing those two facts pretty much put the kibosh on my drinking. No matter what, we just don't drink.

Sponsor, Steps, Big Book and Home Group.

When all else fails, follow directions! It helps to get in the middle of the herd, to stay in the lifeboat with all the others. We are so very glad you are here. There is a wonderfully useful little A.A. book, “Living Sober.” It offers nifty, practical suggestions for staying sober, one day at a time.

Find a higher power. The beauty of Alcoholics Anonymous is that it is “God as you understand him.” Or her. Or it. We are free to choose whatever kind of higher power works for us to live this new way of life. Maybe it is the ocean, God, love, time, Group of Drunks, Great Outdoors, Jesus, your grandmother's spirit or anything else. It doesn't matter. In the privacy of our hearts, we find what is right. Your higher power is already there, waiting, and has your back 24/7. No username or password required.

H.A.L.T. Don't get too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. This is helpful if we are new – or have 50 years sober. We are tender, physical beings recovering from a physical, emotional and spiritual disease.

Keep Coming Back. Alcoholics Anonymous is a one-day-at-a-time program, a design for living that works. Please keep coming back; we need you. And one day, after you're here for a while, you might find yourself turning to the scared, new person sitting next to you at a meeting. You'll remember being new, and you might say:

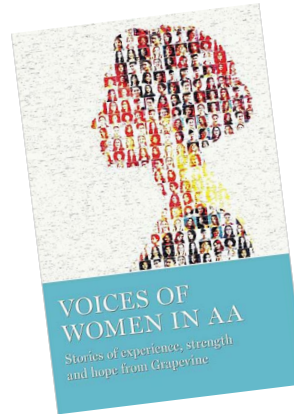
“Welcome newcomer!”

From the Central Office



Volunteers needed

- Greet visitors
- Answer the hotline
- Help with small projects
- Free coffee and fellowship
- Call (831) 475-5782 for more info



**JANUARY
Book Special
\$11**

Voices of Women in A.A.
Stories of experience,
strength & hope from Grapevine

Rule 62 Trivia Quiz Answers

1. Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict
2. The first printing off the press was larger with thicker paper than later printings
3. Bill W.'s wife; a co-founder of Alanon
4. 1935
5. June 10th
6. California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA) 06
7. William D. Silkworth, M.D.
8. Spiritual Experience | The Religious View on A.A.
9. <https://aasantacruz.org>
10. 1939
11. Santa Cruz, CNCA District 03
12. Anonymity (Tradition 12)



Thank you to **Deborah M**, volunteer at the Central Office for the last 15 years. We're truly grateful for her service. Over her tenure as Intergroup front desk volunteer, she has handled countless 12-Step calls, guided members and kept the bookshelves stocked. A bittersweet goodbye, she deserves a standing ovation for her service!

Santa Cruz County Intergroup

October-December Group Contributions

Acceptance Group Boulder Creek . . .	76.80
Bay Group	168.50
BYOB	50.00
Conscious Contact Meditation	114.00
CruzyPaa	989.86
Anonymous	109.30
Eyes on the Prize	213.30
Early Morning Spiritual	10.00
Early Risers.	719.70
Felton Thursday Night	1,200.00
Friday Night Candlelight	200.00
Friday Night Big Book & Step Study .	88.19
Friday Noon Soquel Acceptance. . .	165.00
Jade Street	935.20
Make My Day.	128.65
Mattison Lane	673.00
Mid-Town Women's Big Book Study.	249.00
Monday Men's	50.00
Mud Flats.	120.00
Nifty Fifty Plus.	146.05
Ocean View.	208.20
Out of the Blue	33.07
Shivering Denizens	157.20
Sober and Sandy	302.66
Sobriety and Gratitude	360.00
Sobriety in the Ville	564.80
Soquel Acceptance	206.70
Sought Through Meditation	159.55
Stag 11.	985.00
Spiritual Tools	100.00
Sunday Morning Spiritual.	968.74
Sunday Night Candlelight	341.00
Thumpers.	266.43
Triple Winners Zoom	110.00
Twisted Sisters.	197.40
Unidentified 724635.	63.00
Watsonville Fellowship	30.00

October - December Total: . . . \$11,460.30

SOBRIETY MILESTONES

DECEMBER

Katherine C.	December 13, 1978
Jack B.	December 8, 1980
Porter O.	December 3, 1983
Donna E	December 26, 1985
Eddie E	December 26, 1985
Sharon C	December 30, 1985
Woody B	December 30, 1986
Linda E	December 13, 1988
Dave O	December 17, 1990
Carol C	December 25, 1990
Jim T	December 20, 1991
Thomas M	December 10, 1993
Dave N	December 28, 1993
Greg D	December 4, 1996
Marion.	December 7, 1996
Gary G	December 16, 1996
Stephanie H	December 4, 1997
Michaela W	December 20, 1999
Roxanne L	December 22, 1999
Randy Nap	December 20, 2002
Julie	December 1, 2004
Clinton F	December 6, 2008
Kelly C.	December 1, 2009
Jeffrey T	December 27, 2010
Angie K	December 16, 2011
Rich G.	December 5, 2013
Paul C	December 7, 2013
Red W.	December 12, 2014
Mary P.	December 24, 2014
Cat.	December 24, 2014
Gina S.	December 26, 2014
Gretchen	December 31, 2015

IN MEMORIAM

Diane K December 24, 1989

Want to list your A.A. anniversary in the GrapeSCINN?

Email your name and sobriety date to:
grapesccin@gmail.com



A festive poster for a 'New Year, New Birthday Speaker Meeting'. The background is black with colorful stars, confetti, and fireworks. A globe is on the left. The text reads: 'Saturday, January 6', 'SANTA CRUZ INTERGROUP PRESENTS', 'NEW YEAR, NEW BIRTHDAY SPEAKER MEETING', 'DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 * MEETING AT 7:00', 'MID-COUNTY SENIOR CENTER', '829 BAY AVE, CAPITOLA', 'SPEAKER: CAROL', 'SAN CARLOS, CA * 3/24/92', and 'HOSTED BY WATSONVILLE FELLOWSHIP'. There are also illustrations of party hats and gifts.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information about this month's events, visit aasantacruz.org

January 3 @ 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Intergroup Council Meeting

Meeting ID: 828 1508 0970

Passcode: 588309

January 6 @ 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm

Birthday Speaker Meeting

Mid-County Senior Center

829 Bay Ave., Capitola

January 7 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting

Harvey West Park

326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz

January 10 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

General Service District Meeting

Meeting ID: 898 9003 8938

Passcode: 121212

January 11 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Web Committee Meeting

Meeting ID: 884 7009 1801

Passcode: 2272

January 17 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Intergroup Steering Committee Meeting

Meeting ID: 861 8723 8980

Passcode: 723088

January 21 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting

Harvey West Park

326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz

January 21 @ 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

January Safety Awareness Forum

The Resource Center for Non-Violence

612 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz

January 27 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

SC Fellowship Birthday Speaker Meeting

Santa Cruz Fellowship

412 Front Street, Santa Cruz





Santa Cruz County - Area 73 Hospitals and Institutions Committee

Help Wanted January 2024

Treatment Facilities

Si Se Puede - Needs Secretaries for 2nd Saturday & 4th Saturday @7pm.....6 months sobriety, working the steps with a sponsor.

Opal Cliff Residential - Needs Secretary for 1st Saturday @1pm....6 months sobriety, working the steps with a sponsor.

Wheelock Residential - Needs Secretaries for 1st Saturday, 2nd Saturday, 3rd Saturday, 4th Saturday @10:30am.....6 months sobriety, working the steps with a sponsor.

Santa Cruz Residential- Needs Secretary for 3rd Thursday @7:30pm.....6 months sobriety, working the steps with a sponsor.

Janus - Needs Secretary for 4th Sunday @7pm.....6 months sobriety, working the steps with a sponsor.

Correctional Facilities

Salinas Valley State Prison – Needs Visiting Sponsors.....Male, 5 years sobriety

Water Street Jail/Women – Needs Secretaries.....Female, 1 year sobriety.

Water Street Jail/Men – Needs Secretaries... Male, 1 year sobriety

Roundtree Facilities/Men - Needs Secretaries..... Male, 1 year sobriety.

Blaine St./Women- Needs Secretaries... Female, 1 year sobriety

All Jail Facilities: One year sobriety, 5 years since last felony & 2 years since last misdemeanor required. Orientation and clearance required for service at both men's and women's county corrections facilities. Orientation is held at the Sheriff's offices at 5200 Soquel Ave. Santa Cruz. You must complete an application before orientation can be scheduled. Live Scan background check cost will be covered by H & I. Please advise, clearance will take 4-6 weeks.

All other H & I Facilities: Please visit fill out the volunteer form. We will be in touch with you to initiate your volunteering and assistance in placement into an open meeting.

If you are interested in any of the above service positions please email:

SantaCruzcountyHI@gmail.com

H&I holds their business meeting on the 4th Wednesday of each month in the Youth Room at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 420 Melrose Ave in Santa Cruz. Meeting begins at 7PM. All AA members are welcome.

PLEASE SEND CONTRIBUTIONS TO: H & I Committee, P.O. BOX 5131, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95063-5131

PLEASE PUT YOUR GROUP OR MEETING NAME ON THE CHECK

For more information and to volunteer please visit: HandISC.org

SantaCruzCountyHI@gmail.com