

Outside the Bottle

District 16 Newsletter

May 2022



The Edge of Insanity

Melissa A.

At fourteen years old, I had no idea taking shots on New Year's Eve would lead me down such an incredible path. My friends all took one sniff of the vodka and decided they didn't want to drink it, so I took their shots as well. That was my first drink, and the obsession started from day one. In the years to come, I was getting whatever I could- taking liquor from my friends' homes and swapping out the alcohol for water in my parents' cabinets. I later learned that it wasn't how often I drank, but what happened to me when I drank that made me an alcoholic. I loved the way it made me feel. I was happy and invincible and the thrill of getting away with it was just as great. That defiant behavior carried me through a decade.

College is where everything escalated for me. I was sneaking into the bars and when my older friends got sick of me begging them to buy me liquor on a regular basis, I went as far as wiring money to Beijing, China, for two fake IDs with my picture, holographics, scanning ability and custom information I could remember when I was drunk. At that point, nothing could stop me. I was blacking out, walking around at night by myself, getting into cars with strangers who had more liquor or other drugs and putting myself in other dangerous situations. Within a span of two years, I was miserable. I was depressed, anxious, skipping and failing classes, incredibly unhealthy and all I could think to do was drink. I had no idea how to manage emotions, every-day tasks or do anything that resembled being an adult.

My parents said they couldn't recognize their daughter in the shell of what I had become. I was ruining family functions and was cautioned not to come to a few. Somehow, I graduated college with \$32 to my name and moved in with my parents out of necessity. There, I had to control my drinking, but moving out a year later made my alcoholism progress that much further. My life revolved around drinking. I was working as an advertising producer and my desk drawers were filled with bottles. At this point, my friends were sick of taking care of me and no longer wanted me around. I was determined to control my drinking and it was miserable and impossible, seeing as I had no tools for living sober at the time. I went to our college reunion and being in our old town with my old friends, it was the perfect combination of wet faces, wet places, emotional turmoil, and alcohol for me to say, "forget it". I drank myself into a blackout very quickly. I made some horrible decisions throughout the evening and ended up passing out several times and ruining most of the relationships I thought I had left. That night was April 8, 2018, and I have not had a drink since.

I crawled into Alcoholics Anonymous the next day and my life changed forever. I tried staying sober on meetings alone and white knuckling my way through the weeks. I was not only on the verge of drinking again, but I was ultimately doing myself a disservice, because the magic happened when I finally got a sponsor and started working the steps. My life has blossomed and flourished, and I can say I am happy, joyous, and free today because of the amazing relationships I have built within the fellowship. They encourage and inspire me to stay close to my Higher Power, keep working these steps and sponsoring others. I am thoroughly convinced that this fellowship and these steps saved my life and my soul. I am so grateful for all of you.

Thank you for letting me share my experience, strength, and hope!

A Spiritual Experience

Jeff Z.

I remember my fifth day at Brighton Center for Recovery when I went to my first AA meeting. I read the 12 steps on the big banner as they stared down at me. "I will do Steps One, Two, Nine and Twelve" I decided that day! I didn't really know anything about the steps, but these sounded the least intimidating to me, and I also thought, at that time, that I could navigate and negotiate my way to a sober life.

A couple of days later, after I had actually choked out, "Hello, my name is Jeff and I'm an alcoholic" I read that Second Step more carefully: "Came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity" and I considered that something in this room was working for some of these people - that there was a POWER other than Jeff that could help me navigate and negotiate some semblance of a sane life going forward. The next day in group therapy the counselor said: "everyone, look at Jeff, look at his eyes - something is different!" And - the miracle had happened, that compulsion to drink was lifted from me! I couldn't understand it, but I could feel it. For the first time in my life, I felt hope and I didn't have to rely on myself, another human being, or the bottle to fix me and my feelings.

Websters says POWER is the *possession of control, authority, or influence over others; the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.* When I plug my electric clock in to an outlet, I seek a power source that will influence the electric charge and change the clock from inert to working.

When I went to rehab the power source I once plugged in to, the bottle, was removed from me for 17 days. When I was drinking every day, I looked for some solace, some serenity, some solution to my life's problems and woes - and I'd plug my cord into a bottle of scotch! My power source didn't have much integrity, and it certainly wasn't leading me to any sane life. But it was a power source, and I trusted it. I now call this my LOWER POWER.

After doing the 12 Steps in their entirety, I now seek the HIGHEST POWER I can understand today. I call my Higher Power the *Spirit of the Universe*. A woman in my home group shared that her Higher Power was a woman with Medusa like hair, with several arms and could wield love, tolerance, honesty, and goodness in her life just from their relationship. That's when I realized I could smash the picture I had from my childhood of a bearded old guy in the sky pointing an accusatory finger at me! I like to ask myself what my Higher Power looks like to me today - a picture that is ever changing.

I also have the choice of how much power I want to give my Higher Power. I just got a new all electric car and if I use 110V or 220V charging it makes a huge difference in how many miles I can drive! I know when I'm depressed or feeling sorry for myself, when I'm anxious about something at work, and when I'm in fear about the war or my stock portfolio, I have a tendency to disengage from my Higher Power. If I do this for very long, I can get close to that feeling of needing a drink again!

So, my first step to achieving maximum power from the Higher Power is to have a conversation with that "God Guy." I say the Serenity Prayer and the Third and Seventh Step prayers throughout the day - as I often need a recharge in the middle or near the end of the day.

After eight years of sobriety, I trust that my Higher Power can relieve my obsession to drink - that's powerful! But even though I believe I'm a Spiritual being having a human experience today, in all my humanness I can often retreat from my ultimate source of Power and roll around in my fear, self-centeredness and other addictions. Thank God I don't have to look in the bottle for a Lower Power today. AA and its Twelve Steps, my sponsor and the fellowship of AA all give me an opportunity to seek the Highest Power possible today - if I'm willing to seek it each day, one day at a time.

STEPS, TRADITIONS & CONCEPTS

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Tradition Five: Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Concept Five: Throughout our world service structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

Upcoming Events

Back to Basics, sponsored by the Southfield Group

Tuesdays: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

May 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th

St. David’s Episcopal Church
16200 W. 12 Mile Road, Southfield

AA of Greater Detroit – 50 years in Ferndale celebration!

Saturday, August 13th at Noon

Harding Park Pavilion
Mapledale Street, Ferndale

Tri-County Conference – September 9th, 10th & 11th

Pre-register now for just \$20

Please visit www.tricountyconference.org for details and service opportunities!

SAVE THE DATE!!

2022 Michigan State Convention – hosted by Area 33

Auburn Hills Marriott Pontiac
December 16th – 18th, 2022

District 16 meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of every month at:

1st United Methodist of Madison Heights
246 E. 11 Mile Road
Madison Heights, MI 48071

We are self-supporting through our own contributions. The District, representing the overall conscience of 77 groups, is greatly appreciative for any and all donations. May we all be united together in spreading the message across this geographic area. If groups would like to donate funds to District 16, please mail a check or money order - *Payable to:* **District 16 of Area 33 AA, PO Box 725362, Berkley, MI 48072**

Outside the Bottle is the newsletter of District 16. The newsletter contains announcements, meeting changes, events, news & information around the district, and stories about sobriety and recovery.

Any AA member is invited to submit material to the newsletter. Please send questions/comments/contributions to: district16news@gmail.com



Thank you to all newsletter contributors and to the many people that distribute the newsletter throughout our district. We are truly grateful for your service!

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“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.”
-Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164