

Outside the Bottle

District 16 Newsletter
SEPTEMBER 2022





I Don't Look Like an Alcoholic

Stephanie K.



"You're just pushing the envelope." This was my therapist's response. I must not have looked like an alcoholic. She was the person with whom I confided that I would take several pulls off a bottle before the rest of the house was awake, to steady myself before yoga, work, before driving my daughter to school, before I had the courage to tell rooms full of strangers.

I'm getting a little ahead of myself. My problem certainly didn't start with a drink in the morning. I started my relationship with booze and its persona, much like a little girl playing with moms' makeup in an effort to look adult, grown and "sophisticated" and ending up quite the opposite. Pretty close - I was about 13. I have always been in love with drinking, what it represented, the romance of it. I remember pouring random booze into a shaker with no idea what I was doing, but it looked like people who were "fancy" always used those in movies. My friends would sample but me, I was committed no matter how bad it tasted. This was what being grown, sophisticated and beautiful was all about. I had my first black out and police incident shortly after. Like way too many young women's stories it involved sexual assault as well. Perhaps a normal persons romance with alcohol would have ended there. Not me. I can look back over the years at what I was drinking and how it defined me. Forty oz's and blunts marked my "gangsta" wannabe teen years, cosmos and martinis were the swing dance scene in my early twenties, High Life and Jack became my mid - twenties hard partying biker persona that ended around 33. I had squeezed a marriage (to my best drinking buddy) and a baby into that time. I thought it was a bad relationship. I didn't want to be a wife or a mother. I didn't want the party to end. I realize now I was ultimately choosing alcohol over family. Wine, vodka, and craft beers defined a newly single me. Per a pattern of behavior since my teens, I coupled up with a drinking buddy. Vacations and extravagant spending stretched through the next decade. I was a part time mother - both custodial and mental. Nights when I had my daughter would be capped off usually passing out next to her while I was tucking her in. I was convinced my partner had a drinking problem and I projected all my concerns on him. He was no saint, but after a particularly explosive evening it was agreed, he would stop drinking for a while. I thought I would show solidarity. We made it 10 days and it was a miserable 10 days. This would be my only attempt to quit. My consumption was at a critical rate after this point. I was taking a few pulls off the bottle in the early morning, drinking throughout the day, and relaxing at night when you are supposed to "unwind." This went on for a few years. I had a series of fainting spells I now identify as dangerously low blood pressure. I started "hinting" to doctors and friends about my concern for myself. My personality had changed, my wit and humor had been replaced by a harder, meaner, caustic tongue and my joking had been replaced with verbally victimizing all those close to me. It escalated to physical on more than one occasion. My family tried unsuccessfully to hold an intervention. That was April of 2018. I sat through their words, tears, and pleas with a black eye that I blamed on horseplay when in reality, one of those escalated incidents was to blame. A culmination of so many circumstances, my vanity and one surgeon who said he would not take me on as a patient because he was concerned about my alcohol use led me to do something. I decided October 1st was the day. October 1st, 2018 marked my first meeting and the scariest thing I have done. The beginning of my recovery and truly trying to be honest. It wasn't and isn't easy. So much of my life had been tied to drinking I had no idea who I was. I was scared. Emotions would pendulum wildly. I felt like I had a missing identity without booze. Never in a million years would I have thought rooms of strangers would help me heal, help me regain control over my emotions, help me identify *me*. I have discovered so much about who I am, so much of this personal growth stunted decades ago. There is so much more progress still to be made. I stumble at times emotionally; my default setting is that of an addict. I want an easy out, sometimes just to escape myself, but I persevere. I listen to those around me. I know I am not alone. I know I have a big, long life ahead of me. I like me. I am generous, I am kind, and I am still funny (probably more so). None of this would be possible without the support of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Attitude Adjustment

Jim C.



Hi, my name is Jim C. and I'm an alcoholic. I had my first drink at 16, was a daily morning drinker by the time I was 20 and found myself in rehab for the first time by 21. I remember being the youngest person, by a wide margin, in treatment who was there for alcoholism which only solidified the idea in my mind that "I was just a college kid who took it a little too far." With this attitude, I took their advice, went to a meeting that night, riddled with fear, and proceeded to pick up a bottle on my way home. I conveniently forgot all the pain and misery that led me to beg my parents for help, the empty promises to myself and everyone else that "I won't do that again," and truly realizing that I couldn't continue the way I was living. I was stuck in the delusion that I wasn't like you people; that I couldn't be an alcoholic, that I could stop if I really put my mind to it. I just didn't want too yet. I knew that one day I'd magically be able to control my drinking like all my "friends" seemed to be able to do. I was doomed to continue my miserable existence, sneaking drinks all day everyday for months until the law finally caught up with me.

With the help of a probation officer breathing down my neck and the threat of jail hanging over my head, I was able to stay dry for well over a year; going to a few meetings and white knuckling it. Thinking that, if anything, the alcohol was the problem and as long as I wasn't drinking, I was doing fine. I had absolutely no defense against the first drink and inevitably picked up right where I left off. Eventually I got caught drinking while on probation and, after another stint in rehab and knowing they would throw the book at me this time, showed up to my court hearing under the influence of alcohol. My judge took this as a personal sign of disrespect and sent me straight to jail without passing go. While sitting in OCJ, I had plenty of time to think about the events that transpired to land me behind bars, and got out with a new vigor for sobriety, never again wanting to end up where I had just been.

I hit the ground running, attending several meetings a week, getting a sponsor, and working the steps... or at least my version of "the steps," cherry picking the things that I thought would have an impact on my drinking. I was still clinging to the delusion that I was different from "you people," and I was fine as long as I wasn't putting alcohol into my body. I slowly became more and more complacent, going to less and less meetings, never getting honest with myself or anyone else, and eventually picked up after several years of dry time and found myself back in that sad, lonely existence once again.

I finally had a moment of clarity and woke up to the fact that the way I was going about sobriety was just as insane as my drinking, trying the same thing over and over expecting different results. After one last time of waking up with the "four horsemen" (terror, frustration, bewilderment, and despair) sitting on my chest, I surrendered. I stopped fighting. I became willing to do what my sponsor told me which included many things that made me uncomfortable, like calling strangers and openly sharing what was really going on in my life. One of the most important things I learned was how to have intimate relationships with people in my life which opened the door for much needed change and hope. Today I know that I am powerless over alcohol. What that means to me is that on my own power I have no defense against the first drink. With how much alcohol I was consuming and how often, I definitely had a drinking problem, but I like to describe my alcoholism as a staying sober problem. Without God, the steps, and the fellowship I am unable to face life sober. If left unchecked, my own mind, in my own voice, will convince me that I need that immediate relief that I experience from alcohol. The best way to describe my spiritual awakening as the result of working the steps is an attitude adjustment. In aviation, your attitude is your angle of approach. Today I approach life differently. My relationship with God and helping the newcomer are the most important things in my life today. If my sobriety does not stay my priority, I truly believe that I will lose everything I value in my life today. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous has given me a life I didn't even know was possible and it keeps getting better if I continue to do the uncomfortable things I don't want to do but know I have to do to keep my sobriety. It has been 13 years since my first meeting, and I sit here today with 2.5 years of sobriety. Today, I value the quality of my sobriety over the quantity.



Bus Tour of Detroit's A.A. History

Saturday, September 17th at 9:00 a.m.

\$30.00 per seat

Register now at: EventBrite.com

Don't miss out! Limited seating available!

Non-A.A. members are welcome!

Bill T. will be your guide!

STEPS, TRADITIONS & CONCEPTS

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Tradition Nine: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Concept Nine: Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Madison Heights Group's Taco Fiesta – Kite Day!

Saturday, September 3rd from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Civic Center Park, 360 W. 13 Mile Road, Madison Heights - Contact for more info: 1633mhgaa@gmail.com

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

Registration Fee: \$25 Online or at the Door / Saturday Night Banquet: \$40

Reserve your spot online at: tricityconference.org

AREA 33 SERVICE FAIR

“Service Beyond the Group – Are you ready?”

Date & Time: Sunday, September 18th from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Location: Clawson-Troy Elks Lodge – 2549 Elliot Ave., Troy, MI 48083

Back To Basics – A.A. Beginner's Meeting

Tuesdays 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. – September 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th

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

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 Church 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!

Editor: Tracey T.
Cover Art: Melissa A.
Distribution Chair: Kelly L.

AA of Greater Detroit:
248-541-6565

AA of Oakland County:
248-332-3521

AA of Detroit
Wayne County:
313-831-5550

“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