### Fellowship Centre Newsletter: January 2023



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#### MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year and welcome to the first Fellowship Centre Newsletter of 2023. Have you made any New Year's resolutions? The practice has a very long history and reminds me of some of our Steps.

The ancient Babylonians are said to have been the first people to make New Year's resolutions, some 4,000 years ago. They were also the first to hold recorded celebrations in honor of the new year -- though for them the year began in March when the crops were planted. A similar practice occurred in ancient Rome after Julius Caesar tinkered with the calendar and established January 1 as the beginning of the new year. January is named for Janus, the two-faced god whose spirit inhabited doorways and arches. Believing that Janus symbolically looked backwards into the previous year and ahead into the future, the Romans offered sacrifices to the deity and made promises of good conduct for the coming year. For early Christians, the first day of the new year became the traditional occasion for thinking about past mistakes and resolving to do better in the future. <a href="https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions">https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-new-years-resolutions</a> It is often said in 12 step recovery rooms that we strive to be the best possible version of ourselves.

New Year's resolutions are common today and rarely associated with religious practices. Instead of making promises to the gods, most people make resolutions to themselves, and focus on self-improvement (which may explain why such resolutions are generally unsuccessful). According to a survey conducted by Time2Play, an entertainment blog, Canadians set an average of 1.7 resolutions each year and 61.9 % find resolutions beneficial. 70% do not follow through. But that dismal record probably won't stop people from making resolutions anytime soon—after all, we have had about 4,000 years of practice. 12 Step recovery has been practiced for less than 100 years. Perhaps our success rate in taking inventory and making amends is best measured *in one day at a time*, not one year at a time.

This edition of the Fellowship Centre newsletter includes a review of the 12 Spiritual Principles from the Cocaine Anonymous perspective, an article on coping with urges to use, a history of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre, and a big thank you to all those who participated in the December fundraisers. Yours in service,

Editor Julia

#### **Meeting Time Change and New Time Available**

Thank you to the *Keep It Simple* AA group for changing their weekly start time to 6:30 PM on Thursday evenings. This has allowed an 8:00 PM space to open on Thursday evenings. If you would like to start a meeting or move your meeting to the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre, please email info@ fellowship-centre.org. Rent is negotiable and includes coffee, cookies, hand sanitizer, etc.

#### The 12 Spiritual Principles of Cocaine Anonymous (and all 12 Step Programs)

The 12th Step of Cocaine Anonymous (C.A.) suggests that we "practice these principles in all our affairs." Principles can be defined as fundamental truths, beliefs, values, or philosophies. Living in accordance with spiritual principles can be a lifelong challenge, which is where the "practice" part comes in. The following 12 Spiritual Principles are common to all 12 Step recovery fellowships.

- 1. **Honesty** is the ability to differentiate the true from the false. Becoming honest takes a willingness to change our perception. In C.A, we are encouraged to be honest, open-minded, and willing. Honesty is necessary if we are to be happy, joyous, and free.
- 2. **Hope** comes from recovering addicts who have come before us. Their stories tell us what it was like, what happened and what it is like today.
- 3. **Faith** is a belief or trust in something. For some, faith is hope with a track record, and thus many C.A. members place their faith in the group until they develop a relationship with their own Higher Power.
- 4. **Courage** is the willingness to walk through our fears. It takes courage to walk through the doors of a C.A. meeting, ask for help, and look at ourselves to examine the causes and consequences of our actions.
- 5. **Integrity** results from using the principles of C.A. to guide our motives, intentions, and actions. We strive to have our actions mirror our intentions. We demonstrate integrity when we are authentic, truthful, and real.
- 6. **Willingness** is the key that opens the door to sobriety. We need willingness to let go of our old ideas. We surrender and become open to our Higher Power's will for us. We become willing to go to any lengths to stay clean and sober and to grow in our recovery.
- 7. **Humility** comes from understanding where our disease has taken us. Becoming humble is an opportunity for complete surrender to our Higher Power. We learn humility by being of service to others.
- 8. **Love** is compassion for ourselves and for others. As we work the Steps and our spirits heal, we become able to give and receive love. The spirit of love reveals our true self, which is no longer hidden by the veil of addiction.
- 9. **Forgiveness** of self and others comes as we work the Steps. Through taking our own inventory, we discover our own part in situations and become more understanding toward others.
- 10. **Discipline** means we actively work our program. We go to meetings regularly, read literature, work the Steps, and get involved in service work.
- 11. **Awareness** of our motives, intentions, and behaviours increase with regular inventories. As we continuously seek spiritual growth, our awareness also grows.
- 12. **Service** provides an opportunity to get out of ourselves and to think of others. Being of service is a good way to share our experience, strength, and hope while enhancing our lives and the lives of others. Service is how we give back what was so freely given to us and express our gratitude to C.A.

#### **Coping with Craving and Urges**

In his book, *Sex, Drugs, Gambling and Chocolate: A Workbook for Overcoming Addictions*, Dr. Horvath discusses the use of a timer to cope with cravings. Here is a summary of that technique that may help you if you experience cravings for a substance or an activity that is harmful to you.

- 1. When you experience a craving, set a timer for an amount of time that you are confident you will not act on the craving. For instance, if you are confident that you can withstand the craving, however you do it, for at least 3 minutes, set a timer for 3 minutes. While the timer is on, begin doing other activities. When the timer goes off, there is a good chance that the craving will be weaker, and less of a problem. At that point, you can re-set the timer, use another technique, or act on the craving.
- 2. As you get experience with this technique, you can set the timer for longer and longer periods. At some point, the timer may be set for 20 or 30 minutes. When it goes off, you may have become so involved with something else that your first reaction might be "why was the timer on?" That craving is gone! At first, however, it is better to underestimate how long to set the timer and reset it if necessary. If you start with 3 minutes, you can gradually increase your time as your confidence increases.

The SMART Recovery encourages the DEADS strategy to combat cravings. Each letter stands for a useful approach:

**D** = **Delay**. The mental activities of cravings and urges disappear over time unless you actively maintain them with your attention. Given time, they will run their course and disappear. If they are not gone in 10-15 minutes, then chances are you are still exposed to the stimulus that cued the urge in the first place. Just don't give in no matter how bad the urge is and it will pass. All the urges you have ever had have passed. Once you have denied an urge, you know you can do it again and again. And after a short time, there will be fewer cravings and the ones you have will diminish in intensity. Waiting them out is a great step to recovery.

 $\mathbf{E} = \mathbf{Escape}$ . Just leave or get away from the urge provoking situation. Run away from it. Leave the pub so that you can stop staring at the beer taps. If there is an alcohol ad on TV, switch the channel. Just the act of escaping the trigger will focus your mind on something new – which will quickly lessen the urge.

**A** = **Accept**. Put your urges and cravings into perspective by understanding that they are normal and will pass. It is important in the recovery process to learn to accept discomfort. It won't "kill" you and will be gone quickly. You will feel good about what you are learning and achieving.

**D** = **Dispute**. Consciously challenge the urge to use. Replace your urge with counter statements such as "I have a good life. I do not want to blow my money. I know where this will lead if I use." Rationally argue with your cravings to use.

**S** = **Substitute**. When you get an urge, quickly substitute a thought or activity that is more beneficial or fun. Take a walk or any other form of exercise. Pick up something new to read or turn on something to listen to. The possibilities to substitute (and lessen the craving more quickly) are endless. Think about and write down some possibilities to have a list on hand when an urge occurs. Then just pick one to employ an effective response.

#### A Short History of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

On November 27, 2022, the Centre celebrated its first anniversary with speakers and a potluck dinner. Approximately 45 people attended, and a wonderful time was had by all. Below is a summary of the talks of the first three speakers which provide a short history of the Centre.

#### The Centre: From Idea to Reality

The idea of having a recovery meeting centre on the far south of Edmonton emerged in 2020 when the covid lockdown started. A small group of people didn't know for sure how many alcoholics and addicts would die if they could not attend in-person meetings, but they knew they could. This was many months before Alberta Mental Health and Addictions declared mutual support recovery groups an essential service to preserve life, health, and public safety.

Some of the initial planning group felt strongly that they must register as a non-profit organization like the Alano Club. Part of the application process required the development of objectives. The world had changed since the publication of the Big Book in 1939. For example, the increasing use of drugs, the recognition that addiction can take many forms including activities such as gambling and pornography, and the emergence and popularity of many different types of mutual support recovery fellowships. The initial planning group were guided by Bill W.'s written statement published in the Grapevine in 1961:

The Steps and Traditions represent the approximate truths which we need for our particular purpose. The more we practice them, the more we like them. So there is little doubt that A.A. principles will continue to be advocated in the form they now stand. If our basics are so firmly fixed as all this, then what is left to change or improve? The answer will immediately occur to us. While we need not alter our truths, we can surely improve their application to ourselves, to A.A. as a whole and to our relation with the world around us.

In the application to form a registered not-for-profit organization in the province of Alberta under the Societies Act, the stated objectives of the proposed South Edmonton Fellowship Centre read:

- to provide a meeting place in South Edmonton where recovering alcoholics and recovering addicts may gather to exchange ideas and enjoy fellowship
- to provide a site for peer-to-peer recovery meetings, workshops, seminars, and conferences
- to provide opportunities for public and family involvement in the process of recovery from alcoholism and addiction
- to provide information on alcoholism and addiction methods of recovery
- to provide recovery-oriented social activities in a non-drinking non-drugging environment
- to affect its purpose without discrimination as to race, colour, national origin, creed, gender, or sexual orientation

The Centre was incorporated under the Societies Act as a non-profit organization in the Province of Alberta on September 25, 2020. A bank account was opened, and a brochure was printed. Brochures were distributed to solicit funds so that a facility could be leased. Some AA members argued the Centre

was an outside issue because it would include all types of mutual support recovery groups. The planning group clung to what Bill W. wrote in 1965:

Let us never fear needed change. Certainly, we have to discriminate between changes for the worse and changes for the better. But once a need becomes clearly apparent in an individual, in a group, or in A.A. as a whole, it has long since been found out that we cannot stand still and look the other way. The essence of all growth is a willingness to change for the better and then an unremitting willingness to shoulder whatever responsibility this entails.

After many months of searching, the current commercial condominium was secured because the landlord supports the mission of the Centre. A lease was signed until December 31, 2022, for modest leasing payments while the Centre got established. Keys to the current commercial condominium were obtained on November 24, 2021. The South Edmonton Fellowship Centre had become a reality and it took approximately 18 months from the idea to the current reality

#### The Centre's First Year and Beyond

Having obtained the keys to the commercial condo, in their enthusiasm, volunteers immediately put daily noon AA meetings on the AA Central Office website. They thought it would take a few days for the meetings to appear of the website, but the meetings appeared that evening. Volunteers knew that they



must have a noon AA meeting on November 25 just in case someone saw it online and showed up. Quickly buying coffee and toilet paper, the Centre had its first meeting on November 25, 2021, at noon.

One of the Centre's objectives is to provide a site for peer-to-peer recovery meetings, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Currently there are 18 weekly mutual support recovery meetings at the Centre including Cocaine Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and one Indo-Canadian AA meeting.

For individuals who cannot safely consume any amount alcohol, festive occasions and functions are often difficult to

navigate, particularly early in recovery. On December 25th, 2021, and January 1st, 2022, Alcathons (i.e., continuous Alcoholics Anonymous mutual support recovery meetings and fellowship) occurred at the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre from 9:30 AM to 6:30 PM. The number of attendees varied from approximately 25 at the first meeting of the morning to less than 5 at the last meeting of the day. Some attendees brought family members. Gratitude was expressed for safe and supportive events during the festive season.

On March 6, 2022, the Centre hosted a potluck dinner with speakers. The speakers each lead a specific type of mutual support recovery meeting at the Centre which included Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine

Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and Sex Addicts Anonymous. \$965 was raised to support the operations of the Centre. Since many in recovery brought family members, particularly spouses, loved ones had an opportunity to experience the Centre and understand the efforts and challenges of their family member.

Members of the recovery community were invited to clean out their basements and garages and contribute all unwanted but gently used items to the Centre's rummage sale held on April 10, 2022. Recovering alcoholics and addicts were invited to bring their families, enjoy free hotdogs, pop, and chips and search for treasures at the rummage sale. Over 100 people filed in and out the of rummage sale and many hot dogs were consumed. \$505 was raised to support the operations of the Centre.

Many in the recovery community express a desire to develop their ability to effectively sponsor others, particularly those early in the journey of recovery. Volunteers worked hard to develop a sponsorship workshop which included a manual, breakout groups, and role-playing activities. Spearheaded by volunteers with extensive instructional expertise and decades of recovery, the intention was to develop a package of materials and activities so that the workshop could be offered at least one a year. The first sponsorship workshop occurred on May 15, 2022, and feedback from participants confirmed that it was appreciated.

None of these events could have occurred without incredible effort on the part of volunteers, effort in donated time and donated resources. The Centre, all it's meetings and events, its entire operation, is entirely due to many dedicated volunteers.

Donations of time and resources have occurred in many ways in addition to recovery meetings and events. For example, a member donated the signs that you see outside as well as the podium. Another member donated the microwave, the responsibility pledge poster, and improved security on the entrance door. A member recently boxed in the transformer on the storage deck to reduce the sound of the hum that was noticed during meetings. He also installed lights on the north wall which the evening meetings are enjoying because the lighting is more welcoming. A member installed the wall protection on the north wall because the chairs were damaging the drywall. Other members mounted the shelving in the storage room. A volunteer assembled the cabinets that support the donated coffee machine. A skilled and dedicated volunteer has brought the Centre's website to a highly professional standard. Since June, the Centre has had monthly newsletters which are possible because of volunteers.

In addition to events and improvements that can be seen, many volunteers work behind the scenes to ensure that the Centre continues to thrive. Extensive paperwork must be complete each year to maintain non-profit status with the province. The Centre is required by law to have an annual audit of all financial processes, procedures, and resources. This audit requires meticulous recording keeping by volunteers. The Centre has paid modest rent because volunteers were successful in application for property tax exemption which is granted by the municipal government because to registered non-profit organizations. In October the Centre received incredibly good news. The Centre now has the capacity to issue income

tax receipts for federal tax deductions. The application process was overwhelming. The diligent efforts of volunteers were successful.

#### A Year of Wins and Mishaps at the Centre

To this point you might assume that there have only been wins at the Centre. In fact, there have been a few mishaps as well. A volunteer was cleaning the windows with a very high ladder that some previous workers had left at the Centre. She was making excellent progress until the ladder bent and collapsed. Two volunteers working in the Centre ran hysterically to rescue her and were relieved that she was only marginally delirious. She was able to stand up with a huge goose egg on her forehead. Remarkably, the workers wanted their bent ladder back.

Cocaine Anonymous donated a commercial coffee maker. A CA member scrubbed it with steel wool for hours to make it look clean and new. Because it was going to be connected to a water supply, a CA member paid \$50 for a part so that no one would pour water into it. Another set of cabinets had to be installed and a volunteer worked for days to install these cabinets. A member who is also an electrician ran the necessary electrical and only charged for the cost of material. The coffee machine was connected, and members were joyous, until members started to use it. There was a lot of random button-pushing on the new commercial coffee machine. This caused all sorts of problems with the water level and ultimately caused the machine to malfunction. Sparks flew when anyone tried to brew coffee. Professional repair services were needed. Once the repaired coffee machine was returned to the Centre, a member, with instructional experience, labelled the critical buttons one and two with bright yellow stickers. A whiteboard was purchased so that very simple instructions could be clearly written. Over time, members have come to understand that you press the button labelled 1 to turn the machine on and then press the button labelled 2 quickly and only once to start the brewing process.

It was previously mentioned that a volunteer donated improved lock security on the outside Centre door. What was not mentioned was why such increased lock security was needed. It would appear that a few of our members with long-term sobriety never worried about forgetting their key to the Centre because they had skill getting into building without a key. Other members, no doubt with similar skills, recognized the telltale signs of scratches around the lock and promptly reported to the president the lack of security on the Centre's entrance door. Fortunately, a member knew a locksmith who would work in exchange dinner.

The Centre's first monthly newsletter was published on June 1, 2022, and there are currently 39 subscribers who receive the newsletter on the first of every month in their inboxes. Credit for the belongs not only to the volunteers who contribute to the newsletter, but also to the Centre's current webmaster. The Centre has had three webmasters in its short history. The first was a young man in Toronto who charged very little and, indeed, the Centre got what it paid for. Once the Centre had a bit more money, a web developer in Edmonton was hired and things improved although there were difficulties with the site that were not fixed because that second webmaster rarely returned calls. Finally, a member who is a software engineer volunteered to help us with the Centre's website. The Centre' now has a beautiful, functional site!

#### THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING CENTRE FUNDRAISERS

Fundraising ensures that the Centre remains open so that groups can carry the message that there is a solution to alcoholism and addiction. Fundraising events also build a sense of community which is essential to those in recovery (see proposed 2023 budget below). Gift baskets, Christmas décor, and indigenous art were donated to the Centre by generous individuals (see photo below). \$1034.51 was raised by the sale of these items. Several big-hearted individuals donated valuable items to the Centre that were auctioned (see photo below). \$1032.51 was raised. Thanks to everyone who donated and purchased these items for the two fundraisers.



SOUTH EDMONTON FELLOWSHIP CENTRE						
PROPOSED BUDGET FOR UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR						
INCOME						
Fundraising	\$ 3,000.00					
Donations	\$ 4,000.00					
Rent from recovery groups	\$22,000.00					
TOTAL INCOME	\$29,000.00					
EXPENSES						
Bank charges	\$ 60.00					
Computer hardware/software (including accounting)	\$ 500.00					
Condominium fees	\$ 3,600.00					
Supplies (coffee, cleaning, office, literature)	\$ 4,500.00					
Telephone	\$ 430.00					
Utilities (water, electricity, gas)	\$ 5,000.00					
Rent for facility (below market value for 2023)	\$18,000.00					
Insurance (as required by landlord)	\$ 515.00					
Auditor Fee (as required of non-profit societies)	\$ 2,500.00					
Repairs/maintenance	\$ 300.00					
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$35,405.00					
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# FEBRUARY 19, 2023 GRATITUDE POTLUCK DINNER

at the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

- ☐ Hosted by the Fellowship Breakfast Group
- □ Dinner & Fellowship from 5:00 to 7:00 PM
- ☐ Dessert & AA Meeting from 7:00 to 8:00 PM
- ☐ Please donate at least \$10 per person
- **☐** Proceeds support the Fellowship Centre

For more information or to contribute to the potluck contact Frances at franceskb@outlook.com

## **BRING YOUR BEST DISH**



## JANUARY 2023 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 □ 10:00 AM Sunday Morning Survivors (NA) Men Only □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)	2  12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA)  8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	3  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	4 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)	5  12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	6  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA) in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu  □ 8:00 First Response to Recovery (NA)	7  □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
8  □ 10:00 AM Sunday Morning Survivors (NA) Men Only □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)	9     12:00 PM Fellowship     Nooner (AA)     6:30 PM Our Basic Text     (AA)     8:00 PM Awakenings     Men's Meeting (AA)	10 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	11  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)	12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) ☐ 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	13  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA) in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu □ 8:00 First Response to Recovery (NA)	14  □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
15 □ 10:00 AM Sunday Morning Survivors (NA) Men Only □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)	16  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA)  □ 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	17 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	18 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)	19 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	20 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA) in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu □ 8:00 First Response to Recovery (NA)	21  □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
Description   D	23  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA)  □ 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	24  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	Description   25	26 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	27  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA) in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu  □ 8:00 First Response to Recovery (NA)	28  □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
29  □ 10:00 AM Sunday Morning Survivors (NA) Men Only □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)	30  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA) □ 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	31  □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)  □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)				