Fellowship Centre Newsletter: February 2023



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy Valentine's Day (February 14) and Family Day (February 20) which correspond nicely with the Centre's Gratitude Night on February 19th, hosted by the Fellowship Breakfast Group.

Valentine's Day originated as a Christian feast day honoring one or two early Christian martyrs named Saint Valentine and, through later folk traditions, has become a significant cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and love in many regions of the world.

Family Day in Alberta was first celebrated in 1990, making it the only province to have a statutory holiday in February until Saskatchewan began observing the day in 2007. The holiday was proclaimed by Lieutenant Governor Helen Hunley, on the advice of her premier, Don Getty. Premier Getty said that it was important for Albertans to spend time with their families, and that this holiday would emphasize the importance of family values. Getty faced considerable criticism at the time; many employers felt an additional statutory holiday was an unnecessary financial burden. Some Getty critics had suggested the creation of Family Day was linked to the arrest and conviction of one of Getty's sons on cocaine-related charges. Getty himself, however, has said over the years that the two events were not related.

This edition of the Fellowship Centre Newsletter includes articles on the importance of honesty, sponsorship, laughter, and staying away from the first drink/drug/activity in recovery. There are summaries of the recent Statistics Canada report on drug and alcohol deaths during the pandemic and the Narcotics Anonymous pamphlet on social media and the guiding principles. Included are an article on Step Two from the Gamblers Anonymous perspective as well as a review of some of the basics of the Sex Addicts Anonymous program. The February calendar of meetings and event at the Centre is included.

Yours in service, Editor Julia

Meeting Times Available at the Centre

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, tea, fresh cream, cookies, hand sanitizer, etc. Weekly recovery meeting times are available all weekday mornings and afternoons, Sunday mornings, Tuesday and Wednesday at 8:30 PM, and Thursdays at 8:00 PM. Check the calendar on page 10 of this Newsletter for more details of times available weekly meetings at the Centre.

HONESTY IN RECOVERY

(AA Cleveland at https://www.aacle.org)

Honesty is one of the most respected of all moral characteristics. Those people who are trying to rebuild their life after an addiction need to pay particular attention to honesty. They need to not only be truthful with other people, but more importantly with themselves. Failure to establish honesty as a personal quality may mean that the individual will be more at risk of relapse. It could also mean that they live a life in recovery that is not fulfilling – it could lead to dry drunk syndrome.

There are several reasons why people in recovery will behave dishonestly including:

- They fear the consequences of their actions and so lie to protect themselves from these consequences.
- Lying is a habit. The more people do it the more they are likely to do it in the future.
- Dishonesty can produce desirable outcomes both socially and economically. The problem is that the long-term consequences of dishonesty are usually negative.
- Addicts tend to lie without even realizing it. This is because they are so self-deluded that they are unable to see the truth. Even those who give up alcohol and drugs can still become self-deluded again in the future.
- Some lies may be said to protect other people and so may be considered harmless. For example, if a friend pays for an expensive new haircut, it might be hurtful to say that they don't look very attractive.

Honesty is a key element of any successful life away from addiction. It is important that people develop this moral characteristic. Here are a few ways to increase honesty in recovery:

- The key to breaking away from dishonesty is to admit when it has occurred as soon as possible. Those who are in a Twelve Step fellowship will be asked to do this as part of Step 10; continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted to it. It can be difficult to own up to dishonesty, but it makes it harder to be dishonest in the future.
- Developing honesty is like building up muscles; the more people do it the more honest they become.
- Keeping a journal is a useful way to track behavior. It gives people the opportunity to reflect on their day to look for examples of dishonest behavior.
- If people do not value honesty, then they will not put much effort into living a life that is built upon it. Therefore, it is vital that the individual has a clear understanding of the importance of honesty, and the dangers of dishonesty in recovery.
- It is usual for people to play down the significance of certain lies they can justify the telling of white lies. While there are times when telling a lie might be the less of two evils it is not a good idea to view any type of dishonesty in recovery as acceptable.

I have an AA friend, a good and gentle soul. He recently joined one of the great religious orders, one in which the friars spend many hours a day in contemplation. So my friend has plenty of time to take his inventory. The more he looks, the more unconscious self-deception he finds. And the more astonished he becomes at the elaborate and devious excuse-making machinery by which he had been justifying himself. He has already come to the conclusion that the prideful righteousness of 'good people' may often be just as destructive as the glaring sins of those who are supposedly not so good. So he daily looks inward upon himself and then upward toward God, the better to discover just where he stands in this matter of honesty. Out of each of his meditations there always emerges one dead certainty, and this is the fact that he still has a long way to go. Bill W., August 1961, This Matter of Honesty from The Language of the Heart

SPONSORSHIP (www.theplymouthhouse.com)

When Bill W, the founder of AA, first conceived of the program, the word "sponsor" did not exist, but the concept of mentorship did. Bill was a low-bottom alcoholic who was facing his own death from alcoholism. While in the hospital, he had a white-light experience that alleviated his desire to drink. He was sober and doing well for a time, but one evening he felt a strong urge to drink. The story goes that Bill was standing in the lobby of a hotel. He looked over at the glitzy bar with people drinking merrily, celebrating, and making liquor look glamourous. He knew he didn't want to drink but felt a strong pull. Then a thought came to him: "You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!"

Instead of going to the bar, he went to a phone booth. He called hospitals looking for another alcoholic whom he could help. When he finally got through to a hospital receptive to the idea of him coming in to speak with a patient, he jetted over. He was sent to speak bedside with another man who had been struggling with alcoholism as Bill had been. That man was Dr. Bob.

Bonded by their common struggles, Bill W and Dr. Bob became the first two members of AA. The word "sponsor" was not used, but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by mentoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of AA's co-founders discovered that their sobriety relied on them helping others. They found that through serving others, their own sober lives were enriched beyond measure.

Over time the idea of sponsorship became more formalized. Now it is suggested that any

individual looking to get sober should get a sponsor to guide them through the recovery process. The AA pamphlet, Questions and Answers on Sponsorship, reads: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.

Your Sponsor:

- will guide you through the 12 Steps
- is a good reminder of the gifts of recovery
- can help you through tough situations by sharing the ways in which he/she got through similar experiences. A sponsor is living proof that staying sober through the tough times is completely possible
- will be there to lend a nonjudgemental hand when needed
- helps to keep you emotionally grounded. Active addiction does quite a number on our ability to regulate emotions in a healthy way. This is a skill that is learned over time, but it is always good to have a voice of reason readily available.
- gives you the tools you need to successfully take other people through the Steps, teaching you to pay it forward. Once you can take others through the Steps you begin to understand just how rewarding and humbling the process can be.



My sponsor and I during my first six

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAUGHTER IN RECOVERY (www.uk-rehab.com)

Here are a few reasons why you might want to make laughter a part of your recovery path.

1. Laughter can Ease Anxiety

If you are prone to feeling anxious, it could mean that your body is in a state of high alert much of the time. Chronic anxiety can suck all the joy out of recovery, being bad for both your physical and mental health. Laughter influences a part of the brain known as the amygdala, which plays a role in determining mood – laughter can move you out of the anxiety state.

2. Laughter Means You are Taking Yourself Less Seriously

If you are in early recovery, there will be a lot of serious work you need to do to build a solid sobriety. Taking this work seriously is important, but you do not want to take yourself too seriously. If you do, it uses up too much of your energy and means you will not be able to enjoy this new life as much as you should.

3. Laughter Eases the Symptoms of Depression

Laughter encourages a positive state of mind and changes the chemistry of your brain. Laughter moves your body out of the 'fight or flight' response, and this will lessen the symptoms of depression as well.

4. Laughter is an Excellent Stress Buster

Laughter is one of the best stress busters you can find, and it is the simplest to use. Stress puts your body into a state of high alertness, but laughter moves you out of this state. You may also find that after an episode of laughter, your problems feel far less threatening. Stress has the habit of causing you to make mountains out of molehills, but laughter does the opposite.

5. Laughter Boosts Mood

At meetings you probably have heard the advice to 'fake it to make it'. Even if you do not feel in a particularly good mood, you can trick yourself into being more positive just by laughing.

How many members does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but the bulb must want to change.

A woman attends a funeral for the husband of a high school friend. After the service, she walks up to the sobbing widow and asks, "What happened to Fred?" The widow responds, "Oh it was the alcohol, it finally got him". The woman inquires "That's too bad, but why didn't he just go to AA?" The Widow replies angrily "He wasn't That Bad!"



This fellow tried something called the bourbon street diet "I've only been on it a month, and already I have lost three weekends.

On the first day of college, the Dean addressed the students pointing out a few rules. Drinking and drugs in the dorms is not allowed. Anybody caught breaking this rule the first time will be fined \$60 The second time will be \$90. The third time will be \$180. The Dean then asked if there were any questions. A student replied "How much for a seasons pass?"

A hungover and anxious man entered a florist shop and said, "I need a bouquet beautiful enough to go with a very lame excuse."

Q: Why did the accountant do so well in AA?

A: He was already a friend of bills.

Q: Why aren't people in recovery good dancers?

A: They lose interest after twelve steps.

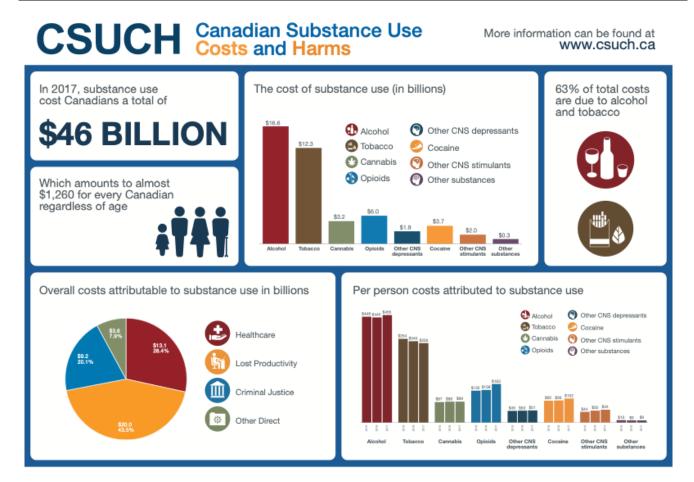


Report from Statistics Canada January 12, 2023

While COVID-19 has been a main driver of excess deaths during the pandemic, other factors are driving excess mortality, particularly among younger Canadians.

Deaths attributed to unintentional (accidental) poisoning and exposure to noxious substances, including overdose from prescription, over-the-counter and illicit substances, has risen since the beginning of the pandemic. Provisional data at the national level show that the number of deaths attributed to accidental poisoning and exposure to noxious substances was 4605 in 2020 and 6310 in 2021, and these numbers are expected to increase with future revisions of the data. In comparison, at the previous height of the overdose crisis in 2017, 4830 deaths were attributed to unintentional poisoning.

Younger age groups made up a disproportionate number of deaths from overdoses. Among individuals aged younger than 45 years, there were 2640 accidental poisoning deaths in 2020 and 3600 in 2021, while among those aged 45 to 64 years, there were 1735 deaths in 2020 and 2355 in 2021. By comparison, among individuals aged 65 years and older, accidental poisoning attributed to 230 deaths in 2020 and 350 in 2021. Alcohol-induced mortality also increased significantly throughout the pandemic. There were 3790 alcohol-induced deaths in Canada in 2020 and 3875 in 2021, compared with 3200 in 2019. The 18% increase from 2019 to 2020 was the largest year-over-year change in alcohol-induced deaths seen in at least the last 20 years. The effects of this increase were felt most among those aged younger than 65 years. The number of alcohol-induced deaths from 2019 to 2020 in this age group increased by 27% (from 1955 to 2490), compared with a 4% increase (from 1245 to 1300) among those aged 65 years and older.



STAYING AWAY FROM THE FIRST DRINK, DRUG, ACTIVITY

The Delusion of "Just One More" (from Walk in Dry Places)

A binge is a chain reaction that starts with one use. After a grim period of forced abstinence, that first use may have brought intense emotional release and a peak feeling of euphoria. For the rest of the binge, there was a continuing delusion that the next drink would help recapture that peak experience.

Delusions lead to other excesses. Some alcoholics and addicts also binge on smoking, food, sex, and power and recognition. In this frantic seeking, our basic delusion is that substances and things can satisfy what is really a spiritual need. Instead of realizing that there is a law of diminishing returns in the enjoyment of such things, we cling to the delusion that "just one more" will bring the relief and satisfaction we want.

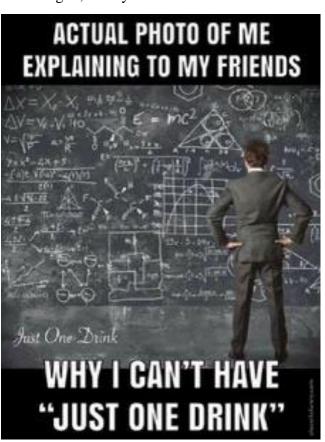
Delusions brought disillusionment, and only the truth set us free from addiction. Other excesses might not hurt us to the extent that addiction did, but the excesses of our active use carry lessons that are equally applicable to all human problems.

American Medical Association

"... Treatment primarily involves not taking a drink ..."

Staying Away from the First Drink (from Living Sober)

Many of us, when we first began to drink, never wanted or took more than one or two drinks. But as time went on, we increased the number. Then, in later years, we found ourselves drinking more and more, some of us getting and staying very drunk. Maybe our condition didn't always show in our speech or our gait, but by this time we were never actually sober. If that bothered us too much, we would cut



down, or try to limit ourselves to just one or two, or switch from hard liquor to beer or wine. At least we tried to limit the amount, so we would not get too disastrously drunk. Or we tried to hide how much we drank. But all these measures got more and more difficult. Occasionally we even went on the wagon and did not drink at all for a while. Eventually, we would go back to drinking -- just one drink. And since that apparently did no serious damage, we felt it was safe to have another. Maybe that was all we took on that occasion, and it was a great relief to find we could take just one or two, then stop. Some of us did that many times. But the experience proved to be a snare. It persuaded us that we could drink safely. And then there would come the occasion (some special celebration, a personal loss, or no particular event at all) when two or three made us feel fine, so we thought one or two more could not hurt. And with absolutely no intention of doing so, we found ourselves again drinking too much. We were right back where we had been -- overdrinking without really wanting to. Such repeated experiences have forced us to this logically inescapable conclusion: If we do not take the first drink, we never get drunk.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Narcotics Anonymous Pamphlet Applicable to All 12 Step Recovery Fellowships

The Eleventh Tradition states: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." The language of the Tradition is broad enough to apply to new types of media, including social networking. In 2011, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) published a pamphlet dealing with the relationship between social media and anonymity. This pamphlet is timely and useful for all 12-Step recovery fellowships.

Maintaining Privacy and Anonymity when using Social Media

- Familiarize yourself with the security features of the social networking site you are using and set up your account in a way that respects the principle of anonymity. For example, if the site allows you to segment your friends into lists and to restrict the visibility of your posts by such lists, make use of that feature. Thus, if you had a work list, an NA list and a family list, you might restrict certain NA-related posts or photos to only your NA list.
- Be thoughtful about the names of photo albums and event pages and try using generic names for photo albums and captions, so that photos are not specifically identified as having been taken in an NA context. This is especially important if an album will be more widely visible. "Last weekend in Anytown," for example, might be a more appropriate reference than "Anytown Regional NA Convention." The same is true for event pages, to which members can respond electronically and may therefore be visible to non-members. Carefully selecting names, or private events, can help members to preserve their anonymity.
- Be thoughtful about comments you make on an NA member's non-NA-related posts. Perhaps they structured a post to have no identifiable reference to NA and posted it widely to their friends, family and co-workers. You should not then post an NA-related or addiction-related comment under that post.
- Be mindful of what and who is in the background when you take photos. Is there someone in the picture who has not given permission to be included in an online photo album? If you are posting this more broadly than to only NA members, are there NA logos or banners in the background that might identify the event as an NA setting? If you are taking photos that you intend to post to a social networking site, ask anyone you photograph, "Do you mind if I post this on [name the site]?" Always respect the wishes of anyone who prefers not to be included in posts, regardless of whether you are confident that their anonymity would be protected by your security practices.
- In general, do not tag people in photos that may be seen as NA-related, especially when you did not set up the security level of the photo album, and when you are not certain about the person's anonymity concerns regarding social media. While some sites allow individuals to untag themselves from photos or require approval before a tag appears, it is safest to let people tag themselves.
- Some people restrict their friend list to only NA members, and use social networking sites strictly as a way of networking and communicating within NA. As long as you protect others' anonymity in your online interactions, this approach can help significantly reduce anonymity issues, especially if your privacy settings do not allow your photos to be reposted by others.

The widespread use of social media by our fellowship indicates that these forums are resources that can serve to facilitate greater communication and interactions among NA members. The ability to network with other recovering addicts and share in mutual support of one another's recovery offers many members a way to enhance their relationship with the NA Fellowship. Still, some members may choose to forego social networks altogether or limit their online activity to interactions with non-NA members. It is crucial that those who choose to use these resources take great care in doing so.

SEX ADDICTS ANONYMOUS (SAA 7:00 PM Saturday at the Centre)

Our Lives Before

We were sexually compulsive people. Despite our most heroic efforts and solemn promises, we were unable to turn away from behaviors and obsessions that were ruining our lives. We interpreted our lack of control as proof that we were bad or defective people, so we sought comfort by justifying our behaviors and sometimes reveling in them, or by denying our sexuality, and hiding in our shame. Our compulsions were at once our worst enemies and our most familiar sources of comfort.

Why We Came

We could no longer deny the pain that our compulsive sexual behaviors had caused in our lives. Many of us experienced such dramatic consequences as divorce, disease, jail, or financial ruin before seeing that our lives had become unmanageable. Others among us were confronted about our behavior by family, friends or counselors, and were given a choice to seek help, or face yet more loss in our lives. When we learned of SAA, we began to hope again that our lives could be freed from our sexual compulsivity.

Our Recovery

We began to attend SAA meetings. We heard stories like ours, and we heard how others in SAA were abstaining from their compulsive behaviors. We learned of the Twelve Steps of recovery, and when we began to apply them in our lives, we discovered that we, too, could abstain from our compulsive behaviors, with the help of our fellow addicts. We acquired the faith and courage to make appropriate changes in our lives, and to accept our daily problems as steppingstones for spiritual growth. As we continue in our recovery from sexual addiction, one day at a time, we are developing healthier sexuality, a stronger sense of personal integrity, and an ability to truly enjoy our lives.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sex Addiction

What do sex addicts do?

They may engage in one or more of the following: voyeurism, exposure, adultery, pedophilia, pornography, prostitution, Internet cruising, compulsive masturbation, or other behaviors.

What's wrong with masturbation?

There is nothing "wrong" with masturbation itself. There are those among us for whom masturbation is not a problem. But when it becomes addictive sexual behavior, it can create intense feelings of loneliness and isolation for the addict. It may also cost the addict thousands of dollars for magazines, videos, or phone sex services.

Why don't they just stop?

Sex addicts are powerless over their compulsive sexual behavior. In most cases, their lives have become partly or completely unmanageable. They probably have tried to stop, but they can't.

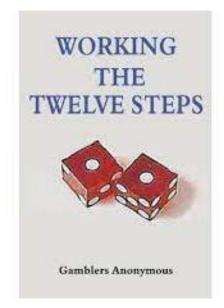
Why don't we hear more about sex addiction?

Very few people like to discuss their sexual practices, especially those for which they feel shame. A person might admit with some pride that he or she is a recovering overeater or alcoholic or even drug addict, but there is still a powerful social stigma attached to the man or woman addicted to sexual behavior. It is unpleasant, difficult, and often risky to discuss this subject in most circles. In addition, there are still many counselors and therapists who have a limited or incomplete understanding of this addiction and who are not yet skilled at diagnosing it.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS STEP TWO (GA Meeting at 2:00 PM every Saturday at the Centre)

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living.

Having been convinced of our powerlessness over gambling and the unmanageability in our lives in Step One, we are now told that only a power greater than ourselves could restore us to a normal way of thinking and living. (THIS MEANS WE CAN'T DO IT BY OURSELVES.) At this point, we must begin to develop openmindedness. For only by beginning to be open-minded, can we start to understand the true meaning of the Step. Most, if not all of our members, have found a resistance or a reluctance to deal with a higher power. The idea of a power greater than ourselves, restoring us to a normal way of thinking and living, does not come easily to us. However, if we truly believe that we are powerless over gambling and have an illness that will progressively destroy our lives, then we desperately need a solution to our illness.



In this Step, we are told that there is a solution. Our solution is living a spiritual recovery program. This Spiritual Recovery Program is brought about by a progressive character change that cannot be accomplished through willpower. We need a source of power that is greater than ourselves to bring about this change. The change will take place by proceeding with the work required in the remaining Steps. What will come with the work is an understanding and practice of **kindness**, **generosity**, **honesty**, and **humility** within ourselves and with others that will lead us eventually to a belief in a power of our own understanding.

Here, many of us had to examine why we refused to believe in a power greater than ourselves. We found that some of the obstacles preventing us from attempting to believe were pride, ego, fear, self-centeredness, defiance, and grandiosity. In order to recover from our illness, these obstacles must be eliminated. Here, our sponsors can be of assistance. They can share with us their experiences as to how they overcame their resistance to believe in a higher power. We found that writing about our resistance is a good method to help us. We had to put on paper how the obstacles blocked us and led us to refuse to accept a higher power.

Most of us did not fully understand what this higher power was. At this point, it was only necessary to accept that there was one. Many of us used our sponsor, other members, or the fellowship as a higher power, but eventually, as we proceeded with the work required in these Steps, we came to believe this higher power to be a God of our own understanding. We must have the honesty to look at our illness, the open-mindedness to accept the solution being told to us and the willingness to apply this solution by proceeding on with the recovery process of these steps.

HOW - Honesty, Willingness, Open-Mindedness!

February 2023 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)	2 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	3 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu) □ 8:00 PM First Response to Recovery (NA)	4 □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
5 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)	6 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA) □ 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	7 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	8 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)	9 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA)	10 □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 6:30 PM Indo-Canadian Living Sober (AA Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu) □ 8:00 PM First Response to Recovery (NA)	11 □ 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
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