

Fellowship Centre Newsletter: March 2023



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Acclaimed TV producer William Spencer Reilly created Sober St. Patrick's Day ® with the mission to reclaim the true spirit of St. Patrick's Day which, this month, is March 17. William's goal was to change the day from an occasion for binge drinking and other misuse of alcohol to a celebration of the richness of Irish culture and the legacy of St. Patrick. This issue of the Newsletter includes suggestions on ways to celebrate St. Patrick's Day without alcohol, drugs, gambling, and other activities in which you do not want to engage.

The Gratitude Potluck hosted by the Fellowship Breakfast Group was held at the Centre on February 19. Approximately 40 individuals attended and \$400 was raised to support the operations of the Centre. Most importantly, the Gratitude Potluck provided an evening of fellowship and recovery. Special thanks to the three individuals who organized the event and a big thank you to those who brought food to share, spoke at the podium, and those who attended.

Disposable dishes and cutlery are expensive and, perhaps, more importantly, not friendly to our planet. Once all disposables are used, the Centre will provide reusable dishes and cutlery. This has resulted in the installation of a dishwasher at the Centre. Those who eat and drink at the Centre must feel confident that their reusable dishes are sanitized. Thank you to the volunteers who removed the cabinet and the volunteer who installed the dishwasher. Please donate to the Centre reusable lunch plates, dinner plates, soup bowls, silverware, and coffee mugs that are dishwasher safe.

New morning AA meetings have opened at the Centre. **The Sunrise AA Meetings are at 7:00 AM every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.** Additionally, **the Sunshine Meeting occurs every Tuesday at 10:30 AM.** Coffee, muffins, fellowship, and recovery are provided. On Thursday April 6th, the 6:00 PM weekly AA supper meeting, *Dinner with Bill*, will open at the Centre. A light supper will be provided as Bill's writings are read and discussed.

Because there are 12 Steps, Promises, Traditions and Concepts, and March is the 3rd month of the year, this edition of the Fellowship Newsletter reviews Step 3, Promise 3, Tradition 3 and Concept 3. The Big Book and the 12 × 12 contain numerous passages relative to relapse. Such passages are reviewed on page 4 of our Newsletter; pages 5 and 6 outline relapse prevention skills. Once we were clean and sober and working a program, we may notice that character defects and negative emotions continue to interfere with our happiness. Bill W., the principal facilitator of 12 Step Recovery, wrote about emotional sobriety as the next frontier in recovery. His thoughts on emotional sobriety are included in this Newsletter.

Yours in service,
Editor Julia

STEP THREE

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.”

PRACTICING Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness. Once unlocked by willingness, the door opens almost of itself, and looking through it, we shall see a pathway beside which is an inscription. It reads: “This is the way to a faith that works.”

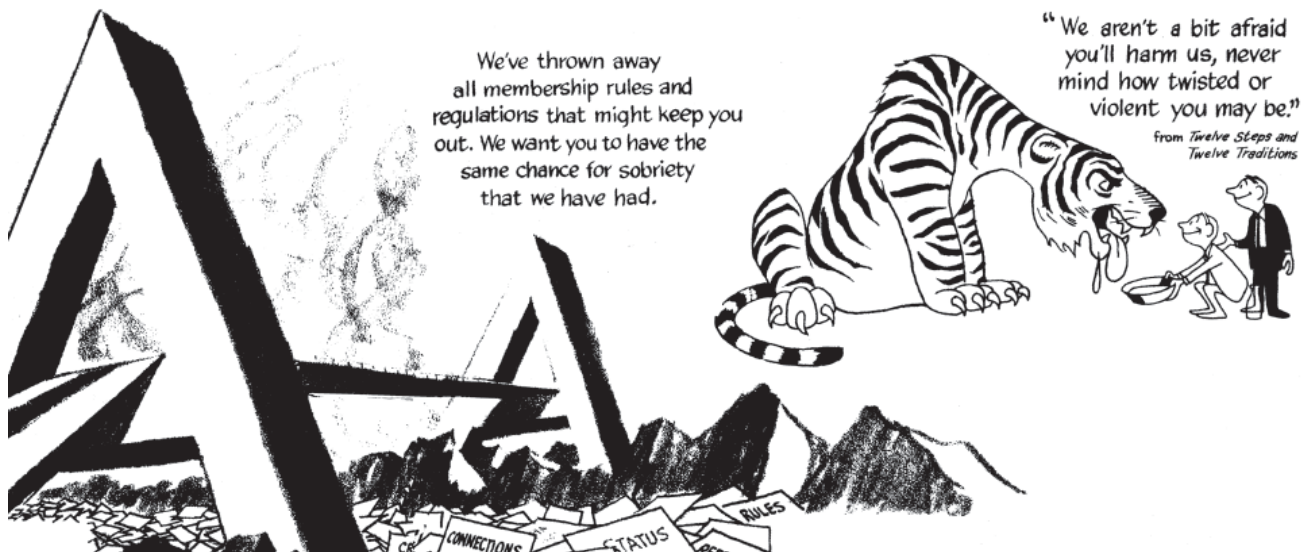
TWELVE STEPS and TWELVE TRADITIONS p. 34

Promise Three

“We will comprehend the word serenity.”

Tradition Three

The Only requirement for membership is a desire to stop.



(Reprinted from The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, P. 3, a publication of AA, used with permission)

Concept Three

“To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.—the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives—with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

(Reprinted from the General Service Office Service Material SM F-131)

The Culture of Drinking on St. Patrick's Day and Staying Sober in Recovery

St. Patrick's Day is one of the biggest drinking holidays of the year. While it is intended to be a celebration of St. Patrick, a patron saint of Ireland, it has morphed over time into a day largely centered on drinking beer and spirits.

If you or someone you love are in recovery from drug or alcohol addiction over the festive holiday, you may need to take certain precautions to avoid relapse. Fortunately, you can enjoy the holiday sober. Here, we'll discuss the prevalence of drinking on St. Patrick's Day and provide tips on how to remain sober and focused on recovery.

Why People Drink on St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day falls during the season of Christian Lent, a 40-day season of fasting to prepare for Easter. Every year on March 17th, Christians began gathering to celebrate the anniversary of St. Patrick's death in the year 461 AD. On this day, the restrictions of Lent were lifted, and people celebrated by drinking alcohol, eating meat, dancing, and more. This is what spurred the consumption of alcohol on St. Patrick's Day, a tradition that's continued to this day.

Staying Sober in Addiction Recovery over St. Patrick's Day

With so many people donning green clothes and accessories to head out to the bars for a night of alcohol-focused merriment, it can be difficult to get through the day without seeing people drinking. Social media makes seeing these scenes more accessible than ever, as people post pictures and videos of parties with drinking on apps like Instagram and TikTok. Though the culture of drinking can be all-consuming, it doesn't have to be. Whether you plan to spend the holiday in or go out with friends, you can stay safe and focused on recovery.

Here's how you or your loved one can stay sober this St. Patrick's Day:

- **Find people you trust:** If you choose to go out and celebrate with friends on St. Patrick's Day, choose people who know your recovery journey and can help to keep you accountable.
- **Learn about the tradition:** If you are a practicing Christian or simply want to know more about the roots of the holiday, spend time learning about the history of St. Patrick's Day and connect with the traditional aspects of the celebration.
- **Go to a parade:** You can enjoy the family-friendly aspects of St. Patrick's Day like a parade, celebrating the day without needing to drink.
- **Enjoy Irish foods:** Traditionally, St. Patrick's Day was celebrated with ham and cabbage; however, Irish Americans began a tradition of corned beef and cabbage in the 1700s. Invite friends over and make a traditional St. Patrick's Day meal together.
- **Create a plan:** Make a plan for how to handle triggers or difficult situations involving alcohol if you decide to go out. You might choose one person who is aware of this plan and can help you to exit quietly if need be.

<https://springhillrecovery.com/staying-sober-on-st-patricks-day/>

Relapse

Big Book

BB *More About Alcoholism*, p.31

In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse **relapse**.

Twelve
and
Twelve

12&12 *Step Twelve*, p.111

For example, we may set our hearts on getting a particular person sobered up, and after doing all we can for months, we see him **relapse**.

Big Book

BB *To Wives*, p.120

Though it is infinitely better that he have no **relapse** at all, as has been true with many of our men, it is by no means a bad thing in some cases.

Big Book

BB *The Family Afterward*, p.125

In most cases, the alcoholic survived this ordeal without **relapse**, but not always.

Big Book

BB *More About Alcoholism*, p.35

So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a **relapse** into drinking, for obviously this is the crux of the problem.

bbb

Twelve
and
Twelve

12&12 *Step Five*, p.56

Some people are unable to stay sober at all; others will **relapse** periodically until they really clean house.

Big Book

BB *There Is A Solution*, p.26

Above all, he believed he had acquired such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of his mind and its hidden springs that **relapse** was unthinkable.

Relapse Prevention Skills

Relapse prevention skills may help you to learn to live a happier life in recovery. One day at a time, one can learn to implement these coping skills to prevent relapse and live a life beyond their wildest dreams.

Recovery is a process of personal growth with developmental milestones. At any stage of recovery, there is risk of relapsing, so it may be helpful to know and understand relapse prevention skills. Some of the most common triggers of relapse include: Boredom, Stress, Money problems, Relationship issues, Certain sights and smell, Certain people or places, Falling into old habits, Anger. According to Author Theresa Parisi, the top 10 relapse prevention skills include:

1. Self-Care

Common post-acute withdrawal symptoms when recovering from addiction include insomnia and fatigue. The New York Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) reports that these are common potential triggers for relapse. By implementing physical exercise and a balanced diet, one can improve their quality of sleep. This can be done by setting up and following a structured sleep, exercise, and eating schedule. Thus, one can retrain the body to sleep better and reduce the risk of relapse.

2. HALT

HALT is an acronym for **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, and **T**ired. Whenever feeling a craving to drink, or in general feeling anxious or “off,” ask yourself if you are feeling any of these symptoms. The most common triggers for many recovering alcoholics are hunger, anger, loneliness, and feeling tired. By doing a regular inventory of HALT, one can help prevent the risk of relapse.

When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. p. 25 BB.

3. Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a concept that teaches individuals to become more self-aware. When we are more self-aware, we are better able to cope with potential triggers to relapse.

With Mindfulness meditation, participants are encouraged to learn to “roll with” their cravings, rather than fight them. Concepts such as acceptance, letting go of personal control, and the use of prayer and meditation are hallmarks of mindfulness meditation.

4. Know Your Triggers

Triggers can be internal (anxiety, irritability, stress, anger, low self-esteem) or external (people, places, or things that remind one of their past escapades). Making a list of internal and external triggers is an efficient way to gain awareness of one’s triggers and reduce the risk of relapse.

5. Join a Support Group

Meetings provide support, accountability, education, and the ability to meet peers who understand what you are going through. A sponsor and peer support prevent relapse as these decrease feelings of loneliness and the risk of isolation, both of which can lead to relapse.

6. Grounding Techniques

A helpful relapse prevention technique is a grounding technique called the **5-4-3-2-1**. It takes you through the five senses to focus on the moment and avoid thoughts of using alcohol, anxiety, negative self-talk, and any other unhealthy thought or feeling that may lead someone to want to use to escape. The 5 steps begin by taking a few deep breaths, followed by the following:

5: Acknowledge five things you see around you.

4: Acknowledge four things you can touch around you.

- 3: Acknowledge three things you can hear around you.
- 2: Acknowledge two things you can smell around you.
- 1: Acknowledge one thing you can taste around you.

End this exercise with a long, deep breath. Focusing on your senses will help you gain self-awareness and increase mindfulness, which will help you accomplish daily tasks, overcome unhealthy thoughts or feelings, feel more in-control and less overwhelmed, and reduce the risk of relapse.

7. Deep Breathing

Breathing is central to life, as you know. What many do not know, however, is how much control you have over your life by simply changing your breathing patterns. Breathing is not only connected to various essential functions throughout your body, it also has a large effect on your brain chemistry. Breathing greatly impacts your emotions and helps regulate your overall mood. This is why deep breathing is so essential with one's mental health.

Deep breathing releases neurotransmitters in your brain, many of which trigger feel-good chemicals resulting in relaxation, happiness, and pain reduction. Deep breathing, and the resulting increased oxygen flow, also encourages your body to exhale toxins. A useful deep breathing technique is the 4 x 4. Take four deep breaths in through your nose and hold, then release for four seconds. You should feel your diaphragm moving in and out while you breathe. Deep breathing is an excellent relapse prevention technique because it can be utilized virtually anywhere without anyone knowing you're doing it.

8. Make an Emergency Contact List

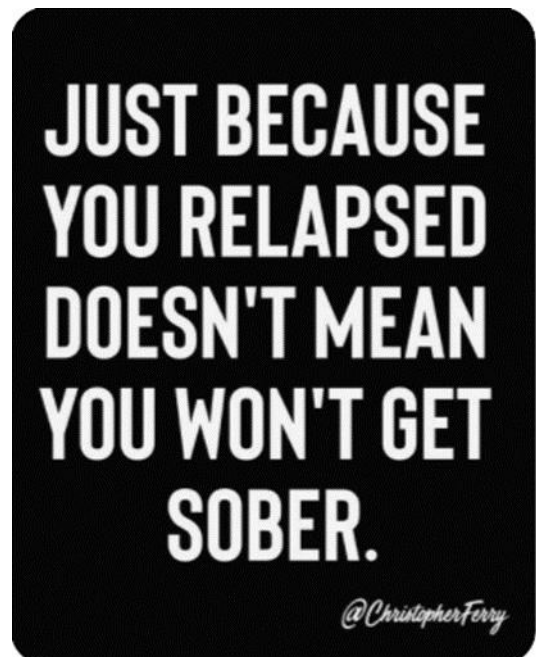
When an urge comes, it can be difficult to manage it, especially in the beginning of recovery. A very helpful relapse prevention skill is making a list of healthy family members or friends who are also in recovery that you can call for support. Having a safe person to talk to can help you get past the craving and remember why you do not want to return to previous behaviors. Keeping that list on you at all times is important because it is a readily available resource you can use by quickly calling someone safe.

9. Play the Tape Through

If you find yourself having a desire to drink, drug, gamble or, otherwise, act out and you are debating what to do, a great tool is to play the tape through first. To play the tape through, you play out in your mind what will happen in the short and long-term if you engage in these behaviors. Think of the consequences that would occur. This can help with your decision making and reduce the risk of relapse.

10. Get Help

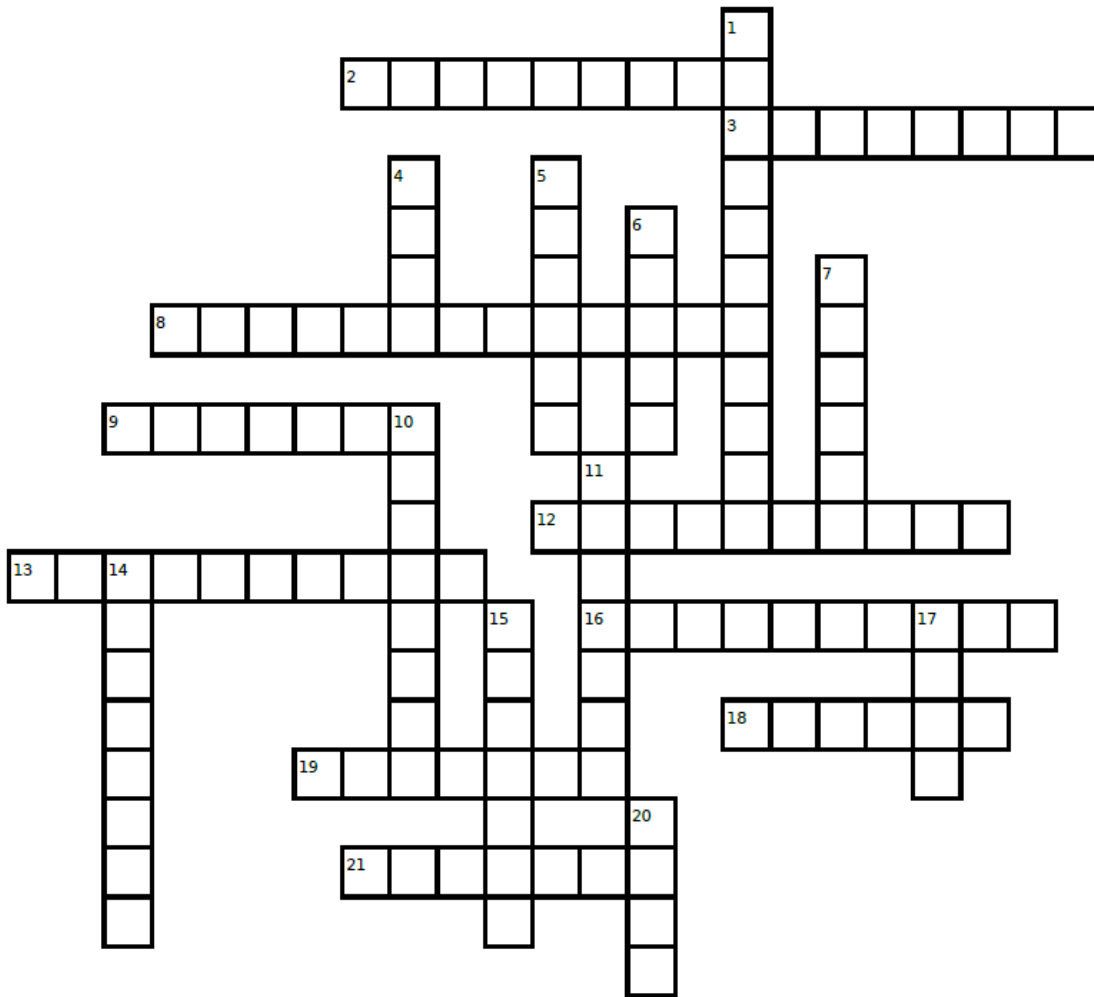
The fear of relapse can be debilitating. However, it does not have to be when you are fully prepared with a toolbox of healthy coping strategies. Implementing these relapse prevention techniques into your daily schedule can greatly help reduce the risk of relapse. Contact your doctor about inpatient or outpatient treatment programs to learn more relapse prevention skills.



Adapted from Author **Theresa Parisi**

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/community/top-10-relapse-prevention-skills/>

Recovery Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. I am _____, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help...
4. Keep an _____ mind.
5. The only requirement is a _____ to stay sober.
6. Think, Think, _____.
7. I pray that you now remove from me every single _____ of character
10. Be part of the _____, not the problem.
11. Our common _____ should come first, ...
14. One drink is too many, and a _____ is not enough.
15. My _____ I am now willing that you should have all of me.
17. Don't get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired.
20. Sobriety Lost Its Priority.

Across:

2. Practice an attitude of _____.
3. Grant me _____ as I go out from here to do your bidding.
8. Principles before _____.
9. Stick with the _____.
12. Progress, not _____.
13. Each group should be _____ except in matters ...
16. Alcoholics Anonymous is a _____ of men and women...
18. _____ asked him to remove our shortcomings.
19. Free me from the _____ of self, that I may better do thy will.
21. We admitted we were powerless over _____, ...

The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety

by Bill Wilson

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I think that many oldsters who have put our AA “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance—urges quite appropriate to age seventeen—prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I’ve taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse! Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.



How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy, and good living—well, that’s not only the neurotic’s problem, it’s the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That’s the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it’s a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden “Mr. Hyde” becomes our main task.

I’ve recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones—folks like you and me—commencing to get results. Last autumn [several years backed.] depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I’ve had with depressions, it wasn’t a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, “Why can’t the Twelve Steps work to release depression?” By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer, “It’s better to comfort than to be the comforted.” Here was the formula, all right. But why didn’t it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence – almost absolute dependence – on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependency meant demand—a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words “absolute demand” may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the current can't flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

Spiritual calculus, you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any AA of six months working with a new Twelfth Step case. If the case says “To the devil with you,” the Twelfth Stepper only smiles and turns to another case. He doesn't feel frustrated or rejected. If his next case responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn't feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his one-time prospect is sober and happy. And if his next following case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance) then the sponsor is most joyful. But he well knows that his happiness is a by-product—the extra dividend of giving without any demand for a return.

The really stabilizing thing for him was having and offering love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In the first six months of my own sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not a one responded. Yet this work kept me sober. It wasn't a question of those alcoholics giving me anything. My stability came out of trying to give, not out of demanding that I receive.

Thus I think it can work out with emotional sobriety. If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

Of course I haven't offered you a really new idea—only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own “hexes” at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

March 2023 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA) 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 6:30 PM Keep it Simple (AA) 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
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