

Fellowship Centre Newsletter: May 2023



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

April showers bring May flowers. This saying originated in the United Kingdom, but it may not be true in central Alberta. One of the first flowers to bloom in Alberta in spring is the Prairie Crocus. Its genus name Anemone comes from the Greek word for "wind." Anemone plants are known as windflowers, because it was believed that they blossomed only when the wind blew in springtime. Cultivation and harvesting of crocuses were first documented in the Mediterranean, notably on the island of Crete. That type of crocus blooms in Autumn, and the spice saffron is obtained from its stigmas.



In honor of Mother's Day, two sober moms share their experience, strength, and hope in this month's newsletter. We have an article on choosing your friends wisely in recovery, and another on Gam-anon, a program for support of spouse, partner, family, and close friends of compulsive gamblers www.gam-anon.org. As well, you will find an article on the essential recovery concept of powerlessness as it relates to ageing and death.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rummage Sale on June 11 from 1:30 to 6:30 PM at the Centre

The Awakenings Men's Group is hosting a rummage sale to raise money to help groups at the Centre that do not collect sufficient 7th Traditions to pay their rent. Bring gently used items to the Centre during any meeting from June 4th to 10th. Large appliances, tires, cassette tapes and broken furniture are not accepted. Thank you to the Men's Group, to the many volunteers, and to those who donate items to this important fundraiser. Contact Wayne (780.394.0121) or Fred (780.438.7865) for more information.

Weekly Overeaters Anonymous Meeting Opening on May 18 at the Centre

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) is a community of people who support each other to recover from compulsive eating and food behaviors. Everyone who feels they have a problem with food is welcome to attend. A weekly OA meeting is opening at the Centre on Thursday May 18 from 2:30 until 3:30 PM. For more information contact Carla at 780.901.1149.

Happy Mother's Day

My life's greatest reward is being a sober Mom. My greatest assets I learned in Alcoholics Anonymous: unconditional love, the ability to listen, my faith that each of my kids have their own Higher Power and their own journey. I wasn't always like that. At 29, on April 8th I met my wealthy husband, a father of four (ages: 14, 12, 6, and 4). On April 23rd, we were engaged & married July 4th. Life was a big drinking party. I thought I would be like Maria in The Sound of Music, and we'd be a big happy family. But the "honeymoon" was over quickly.

Drinking was my solution and my reward. I fought to control our drinking, my husband, the kids, his ex-wife with strict schedules and rules. I raged when things didn't go my way. Life was chaotic and violent.

Within three years we had our son. The weekend of May 18th we buried my 59-year-old Dad (our beloved drinking buddy), my husband went bankrupt on Wall Street, was suicidal, and went to his first A.A. meeting. I was desperate. I couldn't live with a man who didn't drink. My drinking took off. I would take a six-pack of beer into the bedroom and nurse my seven-month-old son to sleep. He was my joy.

January 29, I found out I was pregnant again. My husband was still sober and attending A.A. meetings regularly, so that night I had ginger ale instead of beer. I realized when my husband stopped drinking, that the dynamics in the house changed. He wouldn't fight with me anymore. A friend told me to go to Al-anon and my sober journey began. I learned about the disease of alcoholism. I had the courage to attend my first A.A. meeting on a Friday night in July. I was seven months pregnant. I didn't know if I was an "alcoholic", but I knew I didn't want to drink anymore. The Third Tradition, which states, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking" kept me coming back, along with the love and honesty I heard in the rooms.

By the time I delivered my daughter Sept 15, 1988, I knew I was an alcoholic. Just because I had admitted I was an alcoholic, stopped drinking, worked a program, got a sponsor, attended meetings and connected with my Higher Power, our past problems didn't get better immediately. I was able to begin to look at my part in our many problems, I was able to make amends to my step-kids. I backed away from trying to control them and as suggested, stayed out of triangles. Doing my part and inviting God into all my relationships and problems worked. Women's meetings with babysitting saved me.

A day at a time my life got better. However, around my 12th sober year, I was so busy with a thriving business and kids' schedules, my meeting attendance took a back seat (one every month). I found I was restless, irritable and discontent all the time. Finally, I asked a sponsor to take me thru the Big Book and my sobriety changed. As with all of us "life" happens but my attitude of gratitude, and my God's loving arms have blessed me with a life beyond my wildest dreams.

Sobriety has given me a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition. So I try to get to a meeting every day (these days I love my Zoom meetings). I work with others. I'm a present Mom and I'm ever grateful. My kids and now grandkids want me around. A.A. has shown me a way to celebrate all the victories: the weddings, the graduations, the births, the championship sports teams, the travels as well as the darkest hours of my child's kidney failure, my teen's suicide attempts, my young adults' arrests and their DUI's. They all go in my "God Jar". My kids have their own God Jar for their own fears. My Sponsors lilting voice reminding me, "Meg, there's only one thing to do, give it to God" No matter what, I am ever present and grateful for all of it.

Every day, routine or spectacular, for there are opportunities for growth, change, and gratitude. My kids are open and honest with me. Some of the greatest gifts have come from their words: they've told me that no matter what, they can always count on me to do what I said I will do. My son has always been

my unconditional love. He says often how grateful he is to have my husband and I for parents. My daughter, after a period of struggle and pain, so tenderly let me know I was a spiritual connection for her. She teaches yoga, meditation, and breathing. Now that's she's a mother of two boys under three, she wants me around a lot! All the kids and their families lead full and productive lives, of which my sober husband and I are an integral part.

I am ever grateful. Happy Mother's Day one and all!

Meg L., 562 Group, Haverford, PA

Learning to be a Sober Mom

I was 42 when I came into the rooms of Alcoholic Anonymous. A mom of three girls and, unfortunately, not the best mom when they were kids. I got sober when they were teenagers, and it wasn't easy to get sober and become a mother again to three teenage girls. They had to get to know a sober me and I had to get to know them.

I don't remember much of their childhood; I do know that there was a lot of dysfunction. Moving from one place to another, usually just plopping on my parent's living room furniture, dropping them off at a family member's home and leaving them there for days at a time, not getting them involved in outside activities because that would take time out of my drinking. I wouldn't drive them anywhere because I gave up driving for drinking. Everything revolved around drinking.

I had tried getting sober on my own. But, I always had this reservation that I would be able to drink like a normal person on weekends once I was looking and feeling better and able to get a job, (drinking left me unemployable). I did feel good after a couple of months and off to the bar I went and into a two-week blackout too.

When I came out of this two-week blackout, my girls had all of their belongings packed and were waiting for their father to pick them up. When I saw the girls packed and ready to go, I laughed at them until I realized that I didn't have any alcohol or any money. I reached the lowest point of my life when I found myself literally begging, pleading and crying to my middle daughter for \$20.00 to get alcohol. She refused! Their father did bring me a case of beer that day and I am happy to say that I never finished it but instead reached out once again to my sister who helped me get into rehab.

I went to rehab for the last time in March 2007 because I was beaten down, mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

What a journey, learning to live, learning to be a mom, learning to be a productive human being. I had to rely on the people of A.A. to teach me and I am grateful that I had an open mind and I was willing to take directions. I have a beautiful relationship with my daughters today which I just don't deserve but am truly grateful. They love me and respect me and they have a great respect for the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I now have seven grandchildren who never have to see me drunk as long as I keep God close, continue to work my program and live one day at a time!

— Maureen C., Tacony Group, Philadelphia



←This is your
trusty editor
who cannot
carry the load
alone!!!

Please write your story,
submit recovery joke or
puzzle, write about a
step, tradition or slogan
for this newsletter and
submit to
[editor@fellowship-
centre.org](mailto:editor@fellowship-centre.org) We want to
hear from YOU!!!

ONLY 31 PAGES LATER THE BEDEVILMENTS ARE REPLACED BY THE PROMISES

THE BEDEVILMENTS (page 52)

We were having trouble with personal
relationships.

We couldn't control our emotional natures.

We were a prey to misery and depression.

We couldn't make a living.

We had a feeling of uselessness.

We were full of fear.

We were unhappy.

We couldn't seem to be of real help to other
people.

And, most of all,

THE PROMISES (page 83)

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain
interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip
away.

We will comprehend the word serenity and
we know peace.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will
change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity
will leave us.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will
disappear.

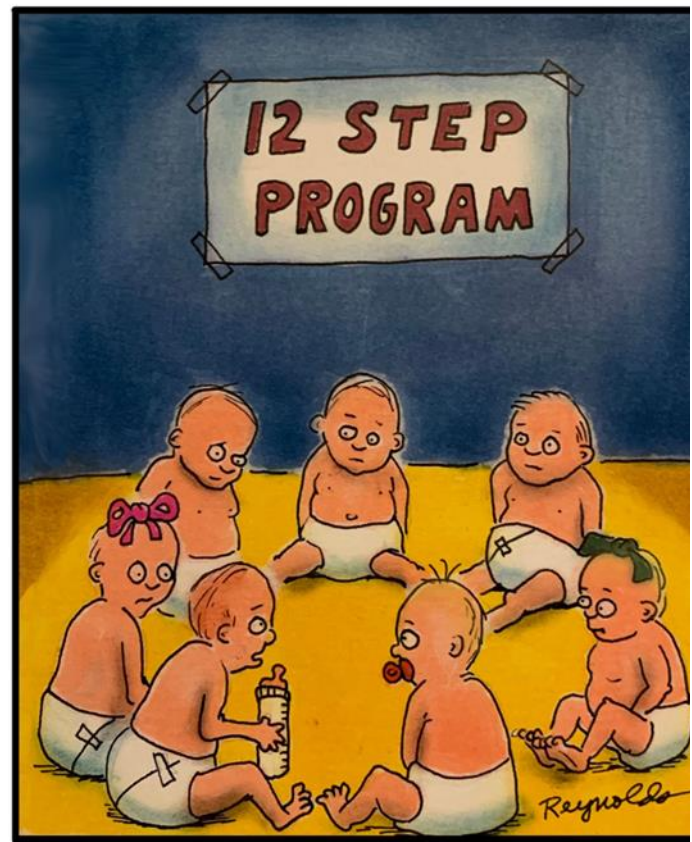
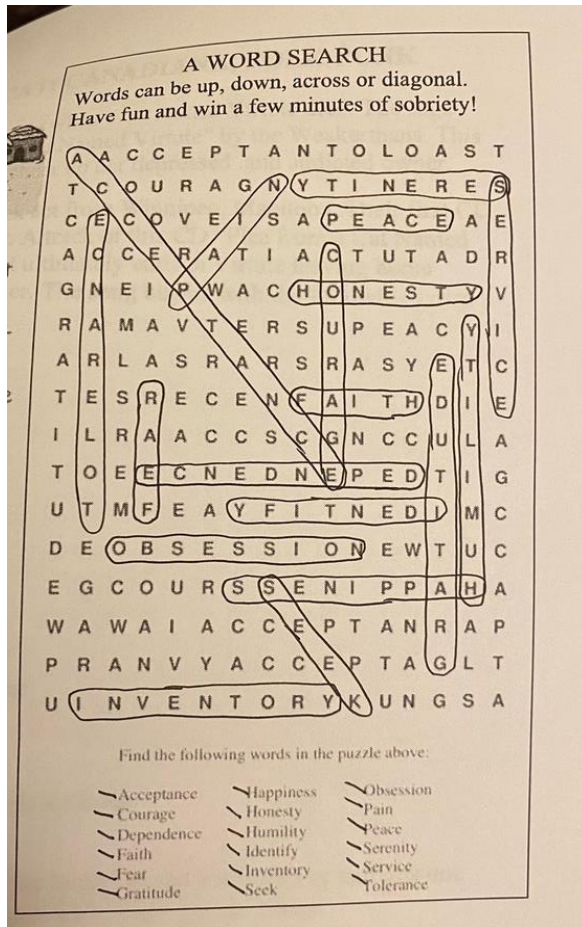
We will intuitively know how to handle
situations which used to baffle us.

We are going to know a new freedom and a
new happiness.

No matter how far down the scale we have
gone, we will see how your experience can
benefit others. We will not regret the past nor
wish to shut the door on it.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for
us what we could not do for ourselves.

Answers to Last Month's Word Game



"My name is Jimmy and I'm powerless against the bottle. Oh, and I've only taken three steps."

Happy Mother's Day



The greatest prison people live in is the fear of what other people think.

David Icke



***Be careful
who you
trust. Salt
and sugar
look the
same.***



Friendship

***True friends
are never
apart.
Maybe in
distance, but
never in
heart.***

When you returned from addiction treatment, you most likely made it a point to rid your new lifestyle of any and all things that would influence you to use again, including certain friends. Aside from their potential to cause danger to your recovery, old friends may not have much in common with you anymore. So, in order to stave off loneliness – a dangerous emotion to have in early recovery – you should establish new, healthy friendships. Here are a few tips to help you find a friend who will support your sobriety:

Be Open

It's perfectly fine to have friends who have never experienced addiction and aren't completely sober. However, you should consider where you are in your sobriety before you develop such friendships. If you feel you are in a strong place and have spoken to your sponsor or counselors about this issue, then spending time with someone who drinks casually isn't going to make you relapse. In any case, you must safeguard yourself by having set rules in place when hanging out with non-sober individuals.

Consider these rules to help you safeguard your sobriety without sacrificing friendships.

1. Make some places off limits. If a place isn't conducive to a sober lifestyle or the main focus is alcohol consumption (bars, wine tastings, and parties where you know people will be drinking heavily), you should make it clear that you can't go.
2. Your companion is not allowed to get drunk. You should never stay friends or want to establish a friendship with anyone who isn't going to respect your sobriety. Again, you need to be vigilant about your recovery and know what type of behavior will affect you negatively.
3. Your friend can't expect you to skip important appointments to hang out. You should never get in the habit of skipping a meeting to go meet your friends — no matter how great the time sounds like it's going to be. Your sobriety always comes first. Make sure you let your friends know the importance of meetings as well as your schedule of the days and times you go, so that plans can be made around the meetings. This way you won't feel like you are missing out on a good time with your friends, and they won't feel like you are ignoring them.

Meet New Friends at Sober Events

Sober events are a great place to meet friends in recovery. Find sober events that sound fun or interesting to you, and you will have plenty of opportunities to meet people who understand what it's like to be on a journey of recovery. Sober events can range from bowling parties to excursions abroad and are specifically organized to show individuals in all stages of recovery that you can still have fun and enjoy life completely sober.

Understand that Nurturing Friendships Are Important to Your Recovery

Friendships are actually a very important piece of your recovery. In the early stages of recovery, it is vital to develop a good support network. Not only that, but negative feelings, like loneliness and boredom, have the potential to trigger relapse. The right sober friends can help you stay strong in your

recovery by giving you advice on what has worked for them and what hasn't. They can ultimately become a healthy source of strength for you. They will be able to provide their support for when you need it most — and you will absolutely need that support through life's ups and downs.

<https://mountainside.com/blog/recovery/choosing-your-friends-wisely-in-recovery/#:~:text=Friendships%20are%20actually%20a%20very,the%20potential%20to%20trigger%20relapse.>

Gambling <http://www.griefspeaks.com/id115.html>

What is compulsive gambling?

The explanation that seems most acceptable to Gamblers Anonymous is: compulsive gambling is an illness, progressive in its nature, which can never be cured, but can be arrested. Before coming to Gamblers Anonymous, many compulsive gamblers thought of themselves as morally weak, or at times just plain 'no good'. But, compulsive gamblers are really very sick people who can recover if they will follow to the best of their ability a simple program that has proved successful for thousands of men and women with a gambling or compulsive gambling problem. (Gamblers Anonymous www.gamblersanonymous.org)

Gam-anon: Support for spouse, partner, family and close friends of compulsive gamblers www.gam-anon.org

The self-help organization of Gam-Anon is a lifesaving instrument for the spouse, family or close friends of compulsive gamblers. We come into the group feeling alone, frightened, helpless, desperate, and ashamed. We hesitated to share problems and failures, fearing none could understand. The Gam-Anon group is warmly accepting, and it offers the new member identification. The message we receive is: "Come join with us, we too were alone, afraid and unable to cope with the problem; we will share with you a new and fulfilling way of life". Gam-Anon's purposes are three-fold: To learn acceptance and understanding of the gambling illness; to use the program and its problem-solving suggestions as aids in rebuilding our lives and, upon our own recovery, to give assistance to those who suffer.

In Gam-Anon the member will experience relief from anxiety by accepting the fact of powerlessness over the problem in the family. The heavy load of responsibility for the gambling problem is lifted and the agonizing guilt in regard to failures is gradually alleviated. The energy wasted in attempts to stop loved ones from gambling can be channeled into more useful methods of problem solving.

The program suggests that we refuse to be responsible for the gambler's behavior. The prevailing idea is, "The gambler will pay as long as someone else will pay."

In Gam-Anon we learn the appropriate way of relating to the gambler as an equal rather than as a "mother." This involves the process known as "letting go" or giving up the control. To be an adult is to give warmth and love in an equal role with the gambler.

It is important to recovery that the member see compulsive gambling in its true light, as an emotional illness. At this point, we will understand that obsessive compulsive behavior, acting out and game playing are symptoms of a serious illness. Although we may have been a pawn in game playing, our hurt was a side effect of this illness, not deliberately intended. After years of accumulated hurtful experiences, it will be difficult for us to give up anger and resentment. The recovery program of Gam-Anon offers help in working through and in resolving these feelings.

If the gambler and member seek help jointly the recovery process will be enhanced. But even then, there is much for us to learn. We will need to be aware that the gambler's recovery cannot be hurried. It is important that we encourage the gambler, but we must refrain from pushing. Our expectations of the

gamblers should be limited to their ability to respond. Although it proves to be their Waterloo, gambling is their "first love", to give it up will be a tremendous undertaking. They may at times be irritable, unreasonable and difficult to understand. It will be necessary that the gambler expend time and effort in the struggle to stop gambling. This may include many nights away from families as the gamblers attend group meetings according to their needs. Our understanding is required, and it should be explained to the children because they, too, will need to understand.

The members who come to Gam-Anon and remain to find help for themselves regardless of the gamblers' refusal to respond, are greatly to be admired. Their role is one of extreme difficulty. The gamblers may resent Gam-Anon attendance and may see it as an attempt to interfere with their lives. Hopefully the gambler will be motivated to seek help, but recovery should not depend upon the gambler.

Young people who become addicted may suffer the same character changes and consequences that mark older compulsive gamblers. Some become deceitful and resort to stealing money; some obtain money under false pretenses from family and friends; some may withdraw from family life, developing an obstinate sullenness; and some may isolate from close friends only to befriend new acquaintances who share their "new interests." The lives of family members are affected and disrupted by these changes in behavior. Distraught parents may disagree as to how to deal with these financial and emotional problems.

As the gambling escalates, so does the indebtedness. Desperate gamblers often need increasing amounts of money to finance their addiction. Some parents have mortgaged their homes or sacrificed their life savings to rescue their child. Unfortunately, any financial rescue enables the gambler to continue gambling and eliminates the motivation to change.

More and more parents of gamblers come to Gam-Anon to understand the problem and help their child. Members support and help each other by sharing their experiences, wisdom and strength. At weekly meetings, parents educate themselves and learn new and appropriate methods of dealing with the gambler. In the process, they learn a better way of life for themselves.

Compulsive gambling is the obvious symptom of an emotional disorder. The emotional factors involved are: inability or unwillingness to accept reality, emotional insecurity, basic immaturity, and lack of self-esteem. The gambler finds that he or she is most comfortable when gambling. Many psychiatrists feel that the gambler has an underlying need for self-destruction.

Compulsive gambling brings despair and humiliation into the lives of countless thousands of men, women and children. The compulsive gambler is a person who is dominated by an irresistible urge to gamble. Coupled with this is the obsessive idea that a way will be found not only to control the gambling, but to "make it pay" and enjoy it besides. This disease causes deterioration in almost all areas of the person's life.

The compulsive gambler attempts to create an image as a philanthropist and an all around "good fellow". Much of the time the gambler lives in a dream world which satisfies his or her emotional needs. The gambler dreams of a life filled with friends, new cars, furs, penthouses, yachts, etc. Pathetically there seems never to be big enough winnings to make even the smallest dream come true; probably because whatever monies won are, to the gambler, sacred. He or she must always return to win more; no amount is sufficient. Ultimately the gambler gambles in reckless desperation and his or her dream world brings no relief. The gambler destroys himself or herself and everyone the gambler touches. When the compulsive gambler reaches the point where he or she is willing to admit to having a problem and has a desire to stop gambling, the gambler will find help through Gamblers Anonymous.

Powerlessness is our friend



Your Turn

Connie Mason Michaelis
USA TODAY NETWORK

I have often quoted Topeka's own Father Richard Rohr, author of 127 books and my favorite, "Falling Upwards, Spirituality for the Second Half of Life."

He is my favorite spiritual guide, although I have never met him. His most recent writings address the issues of aging, and my favorite quote has always been, "Aging is enlightenment at gunpoint."

Just as we might surrender ourselves to someone holding us at gunpoint, life demands the last word, which is death.

Now don't get depressed or angry about this topic. I think it is important to address the surrender to the end of our journey on earth so that we can live life to its fullest while we are here. Inspired by the Bee Gee's song "Stayin' Alive," my husband says, "Stay alive while you are alive!" He is such a philosopher!

Unless we are liberated from our ego and our fears about getting old, we are not free to live life to its fullest.

The founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Dr. Bob and Bill W., discovered that step No. 1 to recovery and freedom is admitting we are powerless. What a simple but profound truth. We are powerless when it comes to aging. It makes no difference how many marathons you run; the only people who do not suffer from this are already gone.

We can ignore it, resist and fight it, but it is our destiny, and we share it with every living thing on the planet.

I think that all of this resonates if you have pursued a spiritual path during your lifetime and, if not, maybe it is time to start that path — it is never too late. Because life only makes sense if there is another chapter at the end.

The Rev. Billy Graham said, "When you're prepared to die, you're also prepared to live."

"Death is not an outrage," said Ram Dass, an American spiritual teacher, psychologist and writer.

Montaigne, a renowned French Renaissance philosopher, said, "Premeditation of death is premeditation of freedom."

We go about our daily lives thinking we'll live forever — it is our defense mechanism. But as we grow old, we are faced with the fact that we have limited time. It is just a fact; we are at gunpoint, as Rohr describes. So, acceptance and surrender become our friends and, when we do that, fear has no place to reside.

I'm not saying it doesn't raise its ugly head on occasion.

Even if you do not believe in another chapter after this life, it makes more sense to surrender to this powerlessness and quit fighting it. Fear is a tragic way to spend our last years. Even in my years working in hospice, we knew that hospice was not about dying; it was about living to the fullest until the end.

And many of those beautiful people I met in hospice were some of the most liberated of all. It seemed all they cared about was love and forgiveness.

What a great note to end on.

Find Connie's book, "Daily Cures: Wisdom for Healthy Aging," at www.justnowoldenough.com.

May 2023 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA) 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA) 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 10:30 AM Sunshine (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 7:00 PM ISMs (AA) 	3 <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) 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 6:00 PM Dinner with Bill (AA) 	5 <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) 	6 <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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