

# *Fellowship Centre Newsletter: December 2023*



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## **MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT**

In December there are many special days throughout the world including Hanukkah on the 7th, Bodhi on the 8th, Saint Lucia on the 13th, and Christmas on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Particularly in early recovery, holidays and celebrations can feel overwhelming. Your co-workers and family members may begin celebrating in early December by attending holiday parties, and you may feel like you are missing out. Re-envisioning the holidays without alcohol/drugs/compulsive activities can be a bit scary. You might be thinking, Christmas will be dull without my wine, or how will I laugh at Uncle Arthur's lame jokes without the weed? However, you will find that sobriety can be enjoyable, especially during the holidays. Instead of isolating yourself from certain situations, you can spend quality time with family and friends, and make wonderful new memories. You will see that enjoying the holidays without using or acting out is the best way to spend the festive season!

Breaking the habit of using/acting out during the holiday season can be challenging. You may not be looking forward to the holiday season because you have not spent one clean/sober in a long time. New traditions can be created that do not involve destructive compulsive behaviour and substance use. For example:

- Get involved in your community- volunteer, go Christmas caroling, or help a neighbor hang decorations and lights.
- Spend quality time with your children, nieces, nephews, or your community's children.
- Go to a holiday market or festival.
- Make your ornaments and decorate your tree.
- Make handmade Christmas gifts.
- Attend a 12-Step Holiday Party.
- Spend time outdoors, hiking, ice skating, or chopping wood.
- Host a sober potluck while sticking to your meal plan.

All mutual support recovery meetings at the Centre will proceed as always on December 24, 25, and 26. Bring special holiday treats if you are able. On behalf of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre, I wish you a clean, sober, and happy holiday season. The Step 9 Promises come true when we follow our primary purpose: to stay clean/sober and to help others achieve the same.



# NEW MEETING AT THE CENTRE

## 2:00 PM Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group

Meditation is defined as a mind and body practice focused on interactions between the brain, mind, body, and behavior. On the outside, someone who is meditating might not seem to be doing anything other than breathing or repeating a sound or phrase over and over. Inside their brain, however, it is an entirely different story. Modern diagnostic and imaging techniques show that meditation can positively affect your brain and mental health.

For thousands of years, meditation has been an important spiritual practice in many cultures as part of spiritual practice. Meditation can be practiced apart from any religious beliefs, and many people today use it for a variety of ways it can support well-being. In the world of addiction recovery, meditation can help people establish a healthy balance that supports sobriety.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and **meditation** to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, pray only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

### Types of Meditation for Alcoholism/Addiction Recovery

1. **Mindfulness Meditation** involves focusing your attention on the present moment. As your mind relaxes, it allows feelings and thoughts to flow freely. Your goal is to observe your feelings and thoughts without engagement or judgment.
2. **Moving Meditation** involves practicing mindfulness while engaging in focused movement. You can practice in your own home or in a peaceful place outdoors, such as near a lake, or in a garden, park, or forest. Choose an activity you like doing such as walking, tai chi, or yoga. Focus on the movements and how they feel and flow in your body.
3. **Mantra Meditation** involves continually repeating a mantra or simple phrase, sound, or word. It can be said out loud or silently to yourself. This type of meditation helps you achieve clarity and stillness as it calms the mind, reduces stress, and provides a deeper relaxation. It is important to find a mantra that you are comfortable with and that allows you to focus such as the Serenity Prayer.
4. **Breathing Meditation** develops inner peace and calms the mind. It is usually done while sitting in a comfortable position with eyes closed. As you breathe, concentrate on each breath as you inhale and exhale. Breathe deeply and slowly. Stay focused on your breathing as you relax your muscles. If your mind starts to wander from the present, bring it back by refocusing on your breathing.
5. **Guided Meditation** involves a facilitator that guides you through a visualization exercise. You sit in a relaxed position with your eyes closed and take several relaxing deep breaths. The facilitator takes you through a scenario as you use your imagination to feel various states such as happiness, peace, connection, or growth. This type of meditation helps you to explore your feelings, thoughts, and reactions. The Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group includes guided meditation for the first 15 minutes of the meeting.

## MEDITATION FOR ALCOHOL RELAPSE PREVENTION

Published in *The Journal of Addiction Medicine*  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4106278/>

### Objective

Meditation is a promising treatment for alcohol dependence. A 16-week meditation course was designed to gather preliminary data about the efficacy of meditation for relapse prevention.

### Method

Nineteen adult alcohol-dependent graduates of an intensive outpatient program were enrolled in the meditation course. Fifteen of these completed the 8-week meditation course supplemented by at-home meditation. To determine any changes because of meditation, relapse triggers (depression, anxiety, stress, and craving) were given before and after the course.

### Result

Nineteen alcoholics (average age 38 years) were abstinent for approximately 30 days at enrollment in the meditation course. Fifteen of these 19 alcoholics attended 82% of meditation course sessions and meditated on average 4.6 days per week; they were abstinent on 94% of days in the meditation course, with 47% reporting complete abstinence and 47% reporting one or more heavy drinking days. Following the meditation course, their level of depression, anxiety, stress and craving, decreased. The meditation course was rated as a “very important” and “useful relapse prevention tool.” Participants reported being “very likely” to continue meditating. “Gaining skills to reduce stress,” “coping with craving,” and “good group support” were the most common comments about the course value.

### Conclusion

Meditation may be an effective therapy for relapse prevention in alcohol dependence.

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## MEDITATION FOR PROBLEMATIC PORNOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION

Published in *Sexual Health and Compulsivity*  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/26929953.2023.2270620>

The Internet makes accessibility to pornography just a click away. Although most individuals watch porn for fun, a small percentage of porn users develop symptoms of addiction. This, in turn, generates interpersonal, occupational, or personal problems for the individual. The present study aimed to study the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in reducing problematic pornography use (PPU). Eight male problematic porn users practiced 20 minutes of mindfulness meditation daily for two weeks. The result showed that PPU decreased significantly following mindfulness meditation training. In conclusion it can be said that the practice of mindfulness meditation helps in reducing the PPU.

## Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

### SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

For Bill W., it was a sudden, dramatic, and life-changing event. In his autobiography, Bill recalled that he was bathed in light and seized by an ecstasy beyond words: "I stood upon a summit where a great wind blew. A wind not of air, but of spirit. In great, clean strength it blew right through me. Then came the blazing thought, You are a free man."



After that moment, Bill never took another drink. Yet in our Big Book, he explains that this kind of experience is not required for recovery. Instead, most spiritual awakening happens over time in a subtle and gradual way.

### CARRY THIS MESSAGE

The Twelve Steps are a program of attraction, not promotion. We draw people into the Steps by our own example. When the right time comes, they will ask: "How can I get what you've got?" Our message for the person who is dependent on drugs/alcohol/activities is simply this: "I once was like you. Then I had a spiritual awakening as the result of the first eleven Steps. I have not gotten drunk or stoned since then."

### PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES

The first three Steps are about honesty, hope, and faith. In Step Four, we go deeper, practicing the principle of self-examination. This means taking a "moral inventory" that shines a light on our strengths and shortcomings. In Step Five, we take what we have learned about ourselves and share it with another. Steps Six and Seven are about willingness and humility. Steps Eight and Nine are about love and discipline. The principle behind Step Ten is perseverance. Life is not always easy, and it happens every day, but we persist in walking the path we believe to be right. The principle behind Step Eleven is awareness. We are no longer alone in the universe, and we continue to awaken to the knowledge that everyone and everything is connected. The principle behind Step Twelve is service. Many of us were takers before coming into recovery; we now unselfishly give back to others what was so freely given to us.

# The WHY, the WHAT, and the WHO of it all.

- by John P. (Home Group: Fellowship Breakfast Group)

Sometimes I catch myself needing to know why things are the way they are, judging what is happening against my own understanding, and who is to blame for the present situation. Dr. Wayne Dyer penned an inspiration to help me out of this perpetual frustration when he stated, *"when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change"*. Maybe I could change my viewpoint if I thought of these three words differently.

W – **Working at** listening prior to the patterns of contemptuousness.

H – **Hearing** others with the sole purpose of understanding them.

Y – **You** rather than me, the experience of others as it really was to them.

W – **Welcoming all** new ideas from others without bias.

H – **Honouring** the humanity of all without prejudice.

A – **Attitude** of respect and gratitude for others beyond stereotypes.

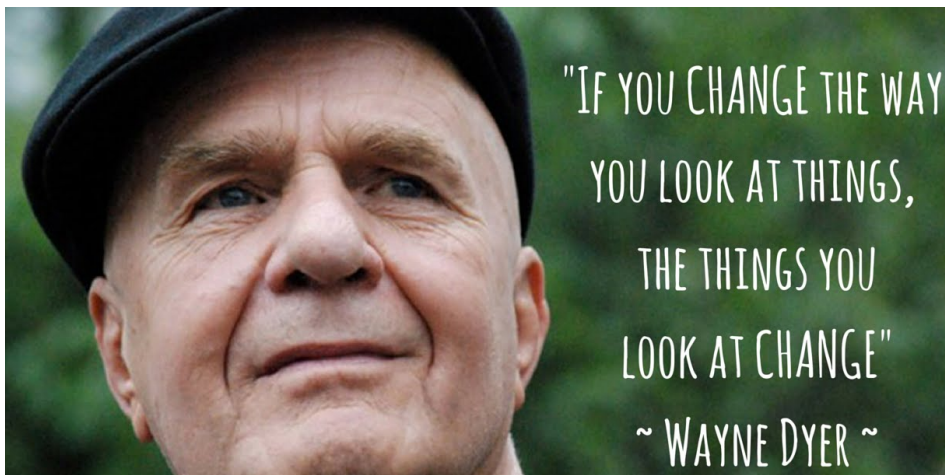
T – **Teachableness** and not given to privilege.

W – **Willing** to serve to the best of my ability for the wellness of others.

H – **Honest** to myself and others while adhering to the facts as they are.

O – **Open** to the unconditional positive regard of every human, regardless.

The power of perspective can change every situation if we choose to alter our



ideas to something beyond our current understandings, truly changing the things we look at. A welcoming change from the frustrations we once perceived.





In my early days of sobriety, I was hearing a lot of words that were unfamiliar to me and I didn't pay much attention to them at the time since I had bigger fish to fry. I had a drinking problem and everything else took a back seat to that. I was overwhelmed by marital, legal, and economic problems. Words like love, patience, spirituality, and forgiveness were foreign to me and I didn't see how they mattered when all I wanted to do was to quit drinking. I stayed close to my home group and members started calling me the fortunate one. At the age of 28, I was the youngest one in my home group and it stayed that way for quite a while as drug problems hadn't evolved enough at the time (1969) to affect the influx of younger members. I felt like the elders of my home group took a special interest in me and that endeared me to them in a special way.

I was always listening for the magic word that would inspire me and give me a purpose in life and one day it happened. Tears come to my eyes when I recall the memory of the gentle voice of an old farmer named Harlan. As he talked about all of the trials and tribulations of the past that he had endured, he explained how he had stumbled into A.A. and that all the answers were there, but he didn't understand it until he had a goal to reach for. The next words that came out of his mouth changed my life forever. He said, "ALL I WANT FROM LIFE IS PEACE OF MIND AND A QUIET HEART". The next thought that came to me was, what more could a person want? To this day, I still quote Harlan and credit him with the inspiration. He passed away in 2007 being sober for 51 years.

I have been through the Big Book and the 12×12 many times and have made a slow but very purposeful attempt to rid my mind of all the tormenting memories and regrets of the past. As I processed each and every one of them, the more I realize that peace of mind is the natural result of living by the spiritual principles. Clearing the wreckage of the past, changing those behaviors that caused it, and practicing unselfish behaviors with the help of seasoned veterans like Harlan, I move closer and closer to the promise: We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

My books are marked and hi-lighted over the years as I evolved through the Step study meetings or checked out the references to the Big Book and in the Daily Reflections. Recently I have been focusing on the word peace and underlining it, and it is amazing how often it is linked to other words that seem to get more attention. Peace of mind encompasses the spirit of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. I will be forever grateful that God saw fit to lead me to this wonderful program. Harlan, rest in peace and thank you for the inspiration.

# GABOR MATÉ'S NEW DEFINITION OF ADDICTION

Gabor Maté (born January 6, 1944) is a Hungarian-Canadian physician and author. He has a background in family practice and a special interest in addiction, having practised medicine in the east end of downtown Vancouver.



Maté's approach to addiction focuses on the trauma his patients have suffered and seeks to address this in their recovery. In his first book, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*, Maté discusses the types of trauma suffered by persons with substance use disorders and how this affects their decision making in later life.

In Maté's latest book, *The Myth of Normal, Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture*, he does not entirely support the disease model popular in 12 Step recovery. He argues that a disease model suggests that the problem is only in the person's physiology and neurobiology. I am currently reading *The Myth of Normal* and am quite impressed with the big tent definition of addiction that Maté proposes. Here it is from pages 224 and 225.

*Addiction is a complex psychological, emotional, physiological, neurobiological, social, and spiritual process. It manifests through any behaviour in which a person finds temporary relieve or pleasure and therefore craves, but that in the long term causes them or others negative consequences, and yet the person refuses or is unable to give it up. Accordingly, the three main hallmarks of addiction are:*

- 1. short-term relief or pleasure and therefore craving,*
- 2. long-term suffering for oneself or others, and*
- 3. an inability to stop.*

According to Maté, his definition is not restricted to conventional notions of alcoholism and addiction. Excessive shopping, gaming, eating, working, extreme sports, relentless exercise and compulsive relationship seeking all fall under his current definition of addiction.

Yours in Service,  
Genevieve J. (Home Group: Our Basic Text)

# WE ARE NOT A GLUM LOT



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

A: He was already a friend of bills.

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Jim is told by his sponsor that he needs to participate more in service work. So he applies for the position of treasurer. They hold a group conscience and ask him "What is nine multiplied by four?" He thinks quickly and says "Thirty-three." After the interview, he realizes his mistake. He's surprised when they inform him that he got the service position, despite there being four other candidates.

"But I got the wrong answer," he protests.

"Yeah, we know. But you were closest."

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I was addicted to soap once.  
Now I'm clean.

I used to be addicted to Thanksgiving leftovers.  
I had to quit cold turkey.

I used to be addicted to time travel.  
But that's all in the past now.

What does a law student and a recovering alcoholic  
have in common?  
They both must pass the bar.

I just got over my addiction to chocolate,  
marshmallows, and nuts.  
I won't lie, it was a Rocky Road.

My wife says I'm addicted to auctions but she's  
wrong.  
I stopped after going once... going twice...

I'm a recovering optimist.  
I'm getting worse day by day.

Did you hear about the addict who fell into the  
upholstery machine?  
He is fully recovered.

A recovering alcoholic asked me if I wanted to  
hear a joke...  
I said, "Nah man, I don't do the dry humor."





# Financial Statement January to November 2023

	TOTAL
INCOME	
Donation	
Anonymous Donation	1,869.96
Donation (CRA Receipt)	5,505.00
Group/Meeting Donation (in lieu of rent)	30,466.10
<b>Total Donation</b>	<b>37,841.06</b>
Fundraiser	
Gratitude Dinner	382.00
Oilers Tickets Raffle 2023	510.00
Rummage Sale 2023	1,525.25
Silent Auction/Dinner 2023	1,853.00
<b>Total Fundraiser</b>	<b>4,270.25</b>
GST Refund	584.11
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$42,695.42</b>
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>\$42,695.42</b>
EXPENSES	
Bank charges	96.19
Computer Hardware/Software	
Accounting Software (paid monthly)	508.00
Microsoft Office (paid annually)	148.99
<b>Total Computer Hardware/Software</b>	<b>656.99</b>
Condo fees	4,624.54
Insurance	533.00
Legal and professional fees	1,400.00
Rent or lease payments	16,500.00
Repair and maintenance	9,142.29
Supplies	
Cleaning/Hygiene Supplies (soap, tissue, mops, etc.)	333.64
Kitchen Supplies (coffee, cookies, dishes, etc.)	1,716.23
Program Supplies (literature, printing, coins, etc.)	2,848.60
<b>Total Supplies</b>	<b>4,898.47</b>
Telephone	430.58
Utilities	5,115.20
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$43,397.26</b>
<b>PROFIT</b>	<b>\$ -701.84</b>

# December 2023 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>31</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10:30 AM Girlfriend Hour (AA Women Only)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>2:00 Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group (AA)</li> <li>6:00 PM Sunday Night Step Group (CA)</li> </ul>					<b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> </ul>	<b>2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10:30 AM Fellowship Breakfast Group (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous</li> <li>7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous</li> </ul>
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