Fellowship Centre Newsletter: January 2024



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Message from the President

Welcome to 2024! 2023 was a wonderful year for the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre marking our second year of service to 12 Step recovery. During 2023, there were three successful and much needed fundraisers including a gratitude potluck dinner on February 19th, a rummage sale on June 11th, and a potluck dinner and silent auction on October 20th. Such fundraisers are essential to subsidizing the many meetings that cannot pay much rent to the Centre. During 2023, our website was much improved, https://fellowship-centre.org and we now have a Facebook page facebook.com/SEFellowshipcentre. Such technology improves our capacity to carry the message and, particularly, to attract younger people to 12 Step recovery. During the past year the Centre purchased a dishwasher and dishes to save money on disposable dishes, but also to be gentler on the environment. Lights were installed on the north wall to increase ambiance and lights were installed under the kitchen cupboards to provide a more welcoming food display counter. We had a suspended ceiling installed, which has vastly improved the acoustics in the Centre. Acoustics are particularly important so that we can hear what each other are sharing during 12 Step recovery meetings. During 2023, as a non-profit organization, the Centre was granted

a gaming license, and we are scheduled to work a casino in December of 2024. Such funding will ensure that the message can be effectively carried on the far south of Edmonton. Many new meetings were open during the past year including the 7 AM weekday Sunrise meetings, the Sunshine meeting on Tuesday mornings, the Girlfriend Hour, Overeaters Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous Sunday Night Step Group, and the Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group. The Centre now hosts 25 weekly meetings, helping hundreds of individuals who are trying to stay sober one day at a time. On December 1, 2023, at the Annual General Meeting of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre, the existing Board of Directors agreed to stand for another year and were voting in, with extreme gratitude. Thanks to Andrew (vice-president), Adrien (treasurer), Joel (director) and Robert (director). Additionally, 20 individuals who serve as voting members of the Centre were ratified by vote.



All these incredible accomplishments could never have been achieved without the tireless efforts of many dedicated volunteers who are doing service at the Centre. Equally, we owe an overwhelming debt of gratitude to the many individuals who donate money and supplies to the Centre. My friends, look what we have done and continue to do one day at a time!

Yours in service Wayne W.

Minutes of Annual General Meeting of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre 7:00 PM, December 01, 2023, at 9122 34A NW, Edmonton (some names removed to maintain anonymity)

Called to Order with the Serenity Prayer at 7:00 PM

Approval of the Agenda: Carried

Approval of Previous Minutes (Special Meeting of the Board and Members April 26, 2022): Accepted **Welcome from the President:** Wayne welcomed everyone and gave a brief history of the Centre, explained the Centre would not have been possible except for the significant generosity of the landlord, financial contributions of many and the countless hours of volunteer help. The Centre now hosts 25 12 Step recovery meetings each week which is increasing the Centre's financial security.

Treasurer's Report: Adrien gave the financial report for January to November 2023, explaining revenue and expenses to date and propose budget for next year. Wayne explained there will be a rent increase although the rent will still be below "market value"; anticipating a 10% general increase of expenses due to inflation, fundraisers will help. Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report: Carried. Motioned to approve John Pinsent Professional Corporation for 2023 audit: Carried.

- **President's Report:** Wayne explained the need for an amended financial policy. Motion to accept amended financial policy: Carried.
- Wayne explained the need for an Operational Policy. Discussion on mentioning "special events" in the objectives in next amendment. Motion to accept Operational Policy: Carried.
- Motion for 2024 Directors and Members: Wayne explained that the five existing Board Members agree to stand for another year. Furthermore, some Centre Members were voted in via email and, in this regard, it is prudent to formally vote in and acknowledge all current 20 Members of the Centre. Motioned to accept existing Board Members for 2024, as required in by-laws, and 20 current members, not all required in by-laws: Carried.
- Wayne explained that the Centre is scheduled to work a casino in December 2024 and that the financial benefits will put the Centre in a viable financial situation for as much as three years, until another casino is scheduled. Members present shared their experience working casinos and expressed willingness to help lead the project. Motion to accept the casino as a project: Carried.
- There was agreement to have a rummage sale in May 2024 and speaker/silent auction fundraiser in the fall of 2024 and being open to any other ideas for other fundraisers.
- Wayne thanked everyone for their commitment, support, and generosity. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 with the Responsibility Pledge.

January: Step One (12 Months-12 Steps)

STEP ONE: WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL—THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

If lucky, our journey has taken us to a point of surrender. For some people the road they traveled getting to the First Step has been more than enough to convince them that unconditional surrender is the only option for recovery.

Most addicts are filled with guilt, shame, remorse, and self-loathing when they come into the rooms. They have also gotten very used to keeping secrets from pretty much everyone, so talking about the nature and extent of your addictive behavior is going against the grain. But sharing your experience and the unmanageability of life lifts the burden of lugging around such secrets. Letting go of your secrets frees you to move forward with a different, better life. For many people, the act of sharing Step One in a meeting is the true start of recovery.

DOING THE "WORK"

There are a lot of things alcoholics/addicts can do to fully work Step One. Most of the work is designed to unearth your complete history of use and abuse. Inventories are a great way to work the Steps—even starting with Step One. You can make a few lists:

- A Consequences List: The easiest way to break through the fog of addiction is to create a list of consequences related to the behavior.
- Powerlessness List: Go for as many examples of your powerlessness over your addictive behavior as possible. Be as fearlessly honest as you can, starting with early examples and ending with the most recent. (A note on "Powerlessness" this is used to exemplify the cravings in an alcoholic [or any addict] that are so intense that the ability to resist is almost impossible. Once an alcoholic takes a drink, a chemical reaction occurs within that body, setting off an intense craving for more.)
- Unmanageability List: Write out the ways in which your addiction has created chaos and destruction in your life.

OUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHILE DOING STEP ONE:

- What does the disease of addiction mean to me?
- How has my disease affected me physically? Mentally? Spiritually? Emotionally? Financially?
- How does the self-centered part of my disease affect my life and the life of those around me?
- Have I blamed other people for my behavior?
- Have I compared my addiction with other people's addictions?
- What does unmanageability mean to me?
- What troubles have been caused because of my addiction?
- Have I used alcohol or drugs to change or suppress my feelings?
- What reservations about Step One am I still holding onto?
- Do I accept that I will never regain "control" over drinking/drugging/acting out, even after a long period of abstinence?
- What could my life be like if I surrendered completely?
- Am I WILLING: to follow a sponsor's direction, go to meetings regularly and give recovery my best effort?
- Have I made peace with the fact that I'm an alcoholic/addict and that I will have to do things to stay clean?

NEW MEETING STARTING JANUARY 19

Seeking Serenity by Candlelight

Each week on Friday at 7:00 PM

AA Topics Meeting. All are welcome.



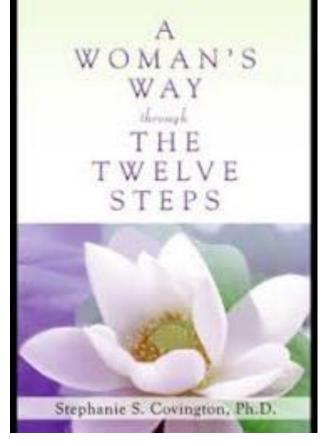
THE GIRLFRIEND HOUR

In 2024, the Girlfriend Hour, an open lady's AA meeting held each Sunday at the Centre at 10:30 AM, will work through the 12 Steps from a woman's perspective. The book, *A Woman's Way Through The 12 Steps*, will focus our year-long journey. Books will be available to purchase at cost or to use during the meeting. All women are

welcome.

The four January meetings work through Step One. We read and discuss topics such as: "Are we really powerless? Looking inside. Layers of denial. The only way out. Is life unmanageable? Looking good on the outside. A new feminine form of power."

The four February meetings work through Step Two. We read and discuss topics such "Finding something to believe in. quickly **Sometimes** sometimes slowly. Creating a personal image of God. Male, female, neither or both. The power of the group. Coming to sanity. The safety of insanity. insanity. of Real sense belonging." All women are welcome.



Getting Sober Remains My Single Greatest Accomplishment

In a recent interview, Oscar winner Jamie Lee Curtis stated that her "worst day was almost invisible to everyone else."

"I'm lucky. I didn't make terrible decisions high or under the influence that then, for the rest of my life, I regret," she expressed. "There are women in prison whose lives have been shattered by drugs and alcohol, not because they were violent felons, not because they were horrible people, but because they were addicts. I am incredibly lucky that that wasn't my path," she added.



The 64-year-old explained that sobriety made everything "crystal and clear" for her. "I was an opiate addict, and I liked a good opiate buzz," she shared. "And if fentanyl was available, as easily available as it is today on the street, I'd be dead." Curtis' addiction lasted until 1999. "I was ahead of the curve of the opiate epidemic," she told PEOPLE in 2018. "I had a 10-year run, stealing, conniving. No one knew. No one."

"Being sober is going to be a legacy, for sure," said Curtis. "Because I'm stopping what has been a generational issue in my biological family. It'll be the single greatest thing I do if I can stay sober. Because generations of people have had their lives ruled and ruined by alcoholism and drug addiction. For me, sobriety first. Always."

"My sobriety has been the key to freedom, the freedom to be me, to not be looking in the mirror in the reflection

and trying to see somebody else," said the Halloween actress. "I look in the mirror. I see myself. I accept myself. And I move on because you know what? The world is filled with things we need to do."

"I'm breaking the cycle that has basically destroyed the lives of generations in my family," she said.

Curtis has a history of addiction in her family, including her brother Nicholas, who died of a heroin overdose when he was 21 years old, and her father Tony Curtis, who also abused alcohol, cocaine, and heroin.

"Getting sober remains my single greatest accomplishment," Jamie Lee admitted. "Bigger than my husband, bigger than both of my children and bigger than any work, success, failure. Anything."



Jamie Lee Curtis Instagram

Submitted by Sharmayne (Home Group: Providence)

Meditation

Submitted by Bruce M. (Fellowship Breakfast Group)

Why Do We Meditate?

If you're in a 12-Step program, you're probably meditating (or trying to meditate) to improve your conscious contact with God as you understand Him (Step 11). What does this mean? I think this means that we are trying to quiet our self-generated thoughts so that we can hear the voice of our Higher Power. For most of us, our normal waking state consists of a panoply of mental noise that is usually focused on our personal wellbeing which totally occupies our minds. And, since our self-generated thoughts speak loudly, we don't hear the softer less obvious sounds of our Higher Power underneath.

As an analogy, one day long ago, I was walking my dogs, listening to music coming from my new iPod through my new earbuds and all was going well until I started walking over the Green Bridge, a pedestrian bridge over a freeway. I ceased to hear the music and I assumed it was because of a technical failure. When I reached the other side and got off the bridge, the music resumed and, from the point the song resumed at, it was clear that the music had been playing all the time I was on the bridge. There was simply too much noise from the freeway for me to hear it. In a similar vein, I believe our self-generated thoughts create so much noise in our minds that we are unable to hear our Higher Power even if we want to. The solution to this situation is to quiet those thoughts to make space for other things.

How Do We Meditate?

Since most of us have difficulty controlling our thoughts directly, it is often beneficial to give our minds something else to concentrate on to prevent the noise that our minds generate when they're unoccupied. One widely used technique is to observe our breath. This not only occupies our mind, but we are able to slow our thought processes down by slowing our breathing. So, while we may have difficulty slowing our thoughts directly, we can accomplish the same result by slowing our breathing. A technique that I have found particularly useful is to observe and slow my in-breath and to balance my inbreath with my out-breath, both in terms of timing and force.

Another method of quieting our mind is to concentrate on a mantra. We might use a statement like "My Higher Power is arising in me ..." on the in-breath and "... and in all others" on the out-breath. Or, if you believe that God creates only perfection and that God created you, you might use the statement "I am as God created me." The Big Book suggests that our problems are self-generated—that we create a layer on top of the perfection that we really are so, the statement "I am as God created me" removes that layer of imperfection to expose the wonder of what lies below.

A further method of reducing distraction is to engage in relatively easy tasks that don't require much concentration like cleaning and/or organizing. Such activities tend to quiet our thoughts and reduce the noise that might arise if we were unoccupied. Another relatively easy task is listening to music. Sometimes the music "carries us" which is another way of saying "breaks us out of our usual pattern of self-generated thoughts and allows us to experience an altered mental landscape".

There are various other techniques for quieting our self-generated noise, but the idea is to reduce the noise so that we can hear the voice of our Higher Power who just might be trying to contact us.

Where Do We Meditate?

If you're beginning, the best place is a quiet place where you're not going to be distracted. Any distraction will act as a magnet for the very self-generated thoughts that we're trying to quiet. If you're beginning, it's good to have a place and time where you can practice your meditation regularly. Meditation is like exercise, the more you do it, the better you get. Like the muscles that you strengthen when you exercise, your mind becomes better able to quiet itself as you continue your meditative practice.

Should We Meditate in a Group?

The Big Book suggest that we should ask others to join us in our meditation if possible. For me, meditating in a group adds a new dimension. It enables a subtle but deep connection with the others present. We sense their being in many ways – from the flow of their breath, their movements, and the soft, subtle noises that they make but we're too busy to notice. And, since the opposite of addiction is connection, I believe this connection is very important.

Come Join Us

The Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group meets on Sunday at 2:00 PM at the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre. All are welcome so come and join us.

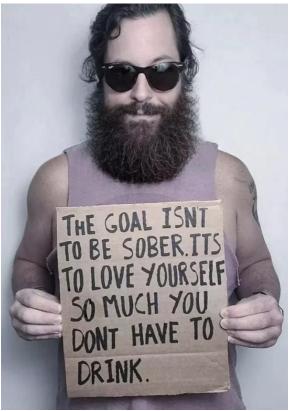
Self-Love and Recovery

Submitted by Genevieve J. (Home Group: Our Basic Text)

Many recovering addicts tend to struggle with low self-esteem and doubts about their self-worth. Having self-love is especially important for someone recovering from addiction because it empowers them to take responsibility for their actions and to simply enjoy life. A person who truly loves themselves and holds themselves in high esteem has a more positive outlook on life. Self-love also promotes a generally positive mindset that can strengthen the individual against relapse triggers and stressors. Coping with negative feelings is one of the most common problems addicts face in recovery. They break down a person's fortress against relapse and cause them to fall back into a downward spiral.

Ways to Practice Self-Love in Recovery

- 1. When exercising self-love in recovery, it is important to pay attention to your thoughts. Thinking negatively of yourself will only bring down your mood. We all have moments when we are mentally attacking ourselves. When you experience this, think of your successes and how far you have come.
- 2. We tend to feed off the energy of others, especially if we hold them in high esteem. It's normal to want to feel loved, accepted, and included among your peers. Considering this, another way to practice self-love is to be wise about who you spend time with. You may come across people who may discourage you and want to see you fail. It's sad, but it happens. Dedicate your time to those who are loving and supportive of you and your recovery.
- 3. Forgiveness is a tough nut to crack for many people recovering from addiction. Forgiving yourself means you must accept the wrong you've done and let it go; for good. Your addiction may have caused you to hurt the people you love the most. But those feelings of guilt and shame are roadblocks that will prevent you from moving forward. Forgive yourself by making amends with others and acknowledging things that you love about yourself.
- 4. Negative self-talk sounds a little like this: "Why did I do that? I'm so stupid" or "I can't do anything right". Chances are you wouldn't say this to a friend, and you wouldn't want someone to say this to you, so why would you say things like this to yourself? Negative self-talk doesn't build you up, so avoid it. Catch yourself when you start thinking or speaking this way and instead remind yourself that you're human and you're always learning something new.
- 5. When we like how we look, we feel better. Our clothes not only express our style, but they are also meant to suit our bodies and our tastes. If you like the 1950s style, then change up your closet. If you feel the most confident in heels or ties, don't be afraid to wear them on even the simplest of occasions. There are so many thrift shops that sell quality pieces that can help you develop your style without breaking the bank.
- 6. Everyone is different. Recovery is a journey that is made up of a person's unique decisions, experiences, setbacks, and achievements. Comparing yourself to other people, whether they are in recovery or not, is the number one way to attack your mind and break yourself down. Learn how to be happy for others and consider their achievements as motivation for your own journey in recovery.
- 7. Self-love is influenced by the things we love in our lives. Whether they be people, places, or things, there are certain things we are particularly grateful for that make us extremely happy. Make a list of things you are grateful for as a reminder of the good things in life. Keep this list where you can see it every day.



Fellowship in Recovery

Fellowship in recovery is critical to understanding that we are not alone. There are many people who care about us and our recovery who have been through addiction themselves, and who are now in recovery as well. Fellowship helps ensure that we do not walk the 12 Step path alone. We can learn from those who have shared their experiences, including what to avoid and what to embrace as we work toward success in recovery.



Fellowship Means People Who Care

Fellowship is not just the process of going to meetings. Fellowship is about the people we interact with throughout our clean and sober life. Fellowship is about sharing experiences and supporting one another in recovery. Developing fellowship with others can benefit our mental and physical health as we start to live clean and sober. Being with people who care can help prevent loneliness and provide the support we need. In turn, we can offer fellowship to others to help them through their struggles.

Fellowship with other individuals can increase our sense of purpose and our sense of belonging. It can improve our sense of self-worth as well as our self-confidence. Knowing we have others we can lean on can help us stay strong as we avoid unhealthy habits related to addiction. Overall, quality fellowship can increase our happiness and reduce our stress levels.

Beyond the encouragement and support we gain from fellowship with others, we will probably learn from their experiences as well. Those individuals who have been through what we are going through can offer their experience, strength and hope in many areas of the recovery process. Others in our support group can share what they have learned from certain situations in their life that are probably very similar to ours. Likewise, we can share some of the lessons we have learned to help support them in their recovery.

All of this may sound great to you, but you are wondering how you will find people who can be part of your fellowship circle in a positive way. It is no longer healthy for you to be around your former "friends" who used drugs or alcohol or acted out with you, or possibly even supplied the substances to you. Finding a new circle of supportive individuals is critical for moving forward toward a healthier life. Twelve Step recovery meetings and functions are a sure-fire way of finding your fellowship circle of support.

Big Book Chapter 2: There is a Solution

We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together, as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action.

ADDICTION TREATMENT SUCCESS

Different governmental bodies give different perspectives on what treatment should achieve. *Success* is defined differently by different rehab facilities. Government agencies generally accept the following signs that a person is making progress in their addiction treatment:

- Addiction decreases in intensity and frequency, with more time passing between relapses.
- Better employment or school attendance
- A reduced number of doctor's visits indicates better physical health.
- Improvements in mood, demeanour, and conduct are signs of better mental health.
- Improved connections with others such as family and friends.
- Better compliance with the law, either through fewer offences or the completion of probation.
- Reduced risk of harm, as in, fewer injuries and accidents.

One study reported that the longer one stayed in rehab, the better the results. Substance abstinence rates were five times higher among those who stayed in rehab longer than the minimum required time. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that ninety days of therapy is necessary for most addicts for treatment to be effective, although treatment requirements may differ depending on the individual. For example, someone with a minor addiction may be able to start with an intensive outpatient program rather than inpatient care. Unfortunately, research reports lesser success rates in drug rehab among patients who undergo only detox. Since detoxing the body does nothing to address the underlying causes of substance abuse, further treatment is nearly always required after detox.

Success in Alcoholism Treatment

One study found that just 25% of alcoholic patients were sober for at least a year after therapy (on average), although the patients cut their drinking by 87% and were sober an average of 3 days per week. The same study established that attending 12 Step meetings increased people's percentage of sober days from 20% to 80% after one year. And it increased the percentage of people who eventually didn't drink by 19%. Another study indicated that after sixteen years of sobriety, 67% of those who attended 27 weeks of AA were still sober. In contrast, only 34% of those who didn't participate in AA remained sober.

Success in Cocaine Addiction Treatment

One study reported that 42% of those who went through treatment reported using cocaine in the year before a five-year checkup, with 25% admitting weekly use. In addition, long-term residential therapy (90 days or more) was associated with improved outcomes at one year compared to shorter treatment durations. The National Institute on Drug Abuse Collaborative Cocaine Treatment Study reported that active 12 Step participation in each month predicted less cocaine use in the next month. Moreover, addicts who increased their 12 Step participation during the first three months of treatment had significantly less cocaine use in the subsequent three months.

Success in Sex Addition Treatment

Treatment for behavioural addictions, including sex addiction, has shown some benefits in the short term, but limited benefits in a long-term. A study of 80 individuals attending Sexaholics Anonymous reported that the more Steps completed, the higher was reported ratings of positive feelings and life satisfaction. The researchers concluded that "spiritual growth, rooted in the 12-step program, promotes recovery from compulsive sexual behaviour disorder."

Sources

 $\frac{https://addictionhealingcentre.ca/what-is-the-success-rate-of-drug-rehab-in-canada/https://akjournals.com/view/journals/2006/9/1/article-p14.xml?body=contentSummary-20487https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10943-023-01892-7$

January 2024 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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