# Fellowship Centre Newsletter: July 2024



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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Summer is synonymous with spontaneity—impromptu barbecues, last-minute road trips and late-night gatherings. While the season offers plenty of sunshine and relaxation, for those in recovery, the lack of structure can present challenges. Maintaining a routine is crucial in recovery, because it provides stability and predictability—two elements that can greatly reduce stress and the risk of relapse. Here's how you can keep a healthy routine during the summer months to support your recovery journey.

## **Establish a Consistent Daily Schedule**

Wake up, eat and go to bed the same time each day. A consistent sleep schedule is particularly important, as irregular sleep patterns can lead to mood swings and stress. Plan your meals for regular intervals. This helps maintain energy levels throughout the day and keeps your body's internal clock running smoothly.

## **Prioritize Daily Recovery Activities**

Whether it's attending meetings or dedicating time for meditation and reflection, make these activities non-negotiable parts of your day. The flexibility of summer might tempt you to skip these critical components of your recovery, but their importance cannot be overstated.

## **Incorporate Physical Activity**

Exercise is a powerful tool in recovery. It not only improves physical health, but also boosts mood and reduces anxiety. Set a time each day for some form of exercise. Morning jogs, yoga in the park or even walking tours while on vacation are great ways to keep active.

## **Set Goals and Review Them Regularly**

Use the summer to set short-term goals that support your long-term recovery objectives. This could involve reading recovery books, learning a new skill or improving a hobby. Regularly review your progress towards these goals.

## **Manage Free Time Wisely**

Excessive free time can be a pitfall during summer. It can lead to boredom or feelings of isolation, which are potential triggers for relapse. Fill your schedule with fulfilling activities—volunteer, join a class or start a summer project. Engaging in community activities or recovery service can also help fill your time with positive experiences and new friendships.

## **Plan For Challenges**

Summer socials often involve alcohol or other substances. Planning ahead can help you navigate these situations. Have a response ready if offered a drink, bring your own non-alcoholic beverages, and plan an exit strategy if the event becomes uncomfortable. Knowing you're prepared can reduce anxiety and help you stay committed to your recovery.

## Weekly Meetings at the Fellowship Centre

**The Girlfriend Hour** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for women only held at the Centre at 10:30 AM every Sunday. Starting as a meeting in July 2023, it recently registered as a group with AA Central Office in New York. It has seven home group members. There are usually seven to ten women at each weekly meeting. The meeting is organized around the book <u>A Woman's Way Through the 12 Steps</u>. Ladies at the meeting read aloud and discuss sections from the book.

**The Fellowship Nooners** are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held at noon seven days a week. The Nooners were the first meetings opened at the Centre in November 2021. Each day the Nooner is the responsibility of a specific individual who ensures that the doors are open, coffee is made, and someone is chairing. Attendees at the Nooners discuss key readings such as <u>Daily Reflections</u> and <u>Walk in Dry Places</u>. Attendance varies but most often is approximately 15 to 20 people.

**Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting held at the Centre at 2:00 PM every Sunday. The meeting opened in December 2023 and has, on average, ten attendees each week. The format of the meeting is guided meditation for 25 to 30 minutes followed by sharing. (In guided meditation, meditative practice is shaped by another person's voice. Because the mind tends to wander, many find it easier to focus and relax when their minds aren't entirely left to their own devices.) The meditations focus on the idea of God as a higher power.

**Sunday Night Step Group** holds a Cocaine Anonymous (CA) meeting at 6:00 PM every Sunday. The first Sunday Night Step Group meeting was held in a private residence in April 1994. After many years in a church, the group moved to the Centre in June 2023. The meeting format is based on reading and sharing on a Step from the <u>Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</u>. Books are supplied. In the winter months the meeting goes candlelight after the Step is read.

**Sunrise Meetings** are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held at the Centre at 7:00 AM Monday through Friday. In March 2023 the meetings were offered from Tuesday to Friday. In August 2023 a trusted servant assumed responsibility for opening the Monday meeting so that an early morning every-workday meeting could be offered to early risers and those on their way to work.

**Our Basic Text** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting held at the Centre every Monday at 6:30 PM. Registered as a group with AA Central Office in New York, there are currently two home group members. Started in June 2022, the meeting reads and discusses the <u>Big Book</u>, from cover to cover, referred to in the edition prefaces as "basic text of our society." Attendance is typically between five and ten people.

**Awakening Men's Group** is an Alcoholics Anonymous group for men only held on Mondays at the Centre at 8 PM. It is registered as a group with AA Central Office in New York. Started in June of 2022, there are currently nine home members. Topics for discussion alternate between a Step from the <u>Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</u> and two cards, picked by the chairperson, from the <u>Act of Surrender Recovery Cards</u>.

**Sunshine Meeting** is an Alcoholics Anonymous discussion meeting held each Tuesday at 10:30 AM. The first meeting held at the Centre was in April 2023. Attendance varies but recently has been low perhaps due to warmer weather.

## Weekly Meetings at the Fellowship Centre Continued

**ISMS** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting held at the Centre every Tuesday at 7:00 PM. ISMS refers to Interior Spiritual Melody as in alcohol*ism* or workahol*ism*. The first ISMS meeting was held in January 2022. A reading from <u>Daily Reflections</u> focuses discussion and sharing of the approximately six to ten weekly meeting attendees.

There is a Solution is a Cocaine Anonymous (CA) meeting held at the Centre every Wednesday at 7:00 PM. The first meeting was held January 5, 2021. Topics for discussion center on the solution to our common malady and are selected from the <u>Big Book</u> as read by a member at the beginning of each meeting. Currently, there are ten home group members, and attendance generally ranges from eight to fifteen people each week. The last Wednesday of each month, members meet at Pho Marble Restaurant at about 5:15 PM for good food and fellowship before the meeting. All are welcome.

**Overeaters Anonymous (OA)** is a Twelve Step meeting to support recovery from compulsive overeating. Held at the Centre every Thursday at 2:30 PM, the first meeting was held in June 2023. The meetings rotate topics: step, tradition, approved literature, leader's choice and gratitude. Attendance varies from six to ten people with six core members.

**The Steps We Took** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting that occurs every Thursday at the Centre at 6:30 PM. The meeting has shifted in name and focus since it first opened in January 2022 (originally *Keep It Simple* and, since April 2023, *Dinner with Bill*). In June 2024, the meeting shifted to a Step Discussion meeting with an increased focus on the Newcomer.

**Seeking Serenity by Candlelight** is an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting held at the Centre each Friday at 7:00 PM. The first meeting was held in January 2024. The meeting chair asks for two topics such as a Step and gratitude, or where you are at. Lights are turned off and tea candles turned on after reading the preamble. Attendance is often about ten to fifteen people.

The Fellowship Breakfast Group holds an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at 10:00 AM every Saturday. Started in April 2018, it was the first registered group to move to the Centre in November 2021. Each week discussion is focussed on a Step, Tradition, Promise, and Principle. There are 55 homegroup members and attendance is typically between 35 and 45 people at each weekly meeting.

**Gamblers Anonymous (GA)** is a Twelve Step Recovery meeting held every Saturday from 2:00 to 3:30 PM. The first GA meeting at the Centre was in February 2022. Readings, sharing, and mutual support promote complete abstinence from gambling with others who understand! "I sought my soul... but could not see... I sought my God...but he eluded me... I sought my brothers and sisters... and found all three."

**Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA)** is a Twelve Step meeting to support recovery from compulsive sexual behaviour. Held every Saturday at 7:00 PM, the first SAA meeting held at the Centre was in January 2022. In addition to the Steps and Traditions, topics are derived from the SAA <u>Green Book</u> (their version of the <u>Big Book</u>). Attendance is typically ten to fifteen people per meeting.

# Cocaine Anonymous: What it is and How it Works

(Adapted from: https://www.recoverlution.com/knowledge/cocaine-anonymous-information-meetings)

Cocaine Anonymous was founded in 1982 and is known by its members as CA. Contrary to popular belief, CA is not just for cocaine addicts. They welcome anyone with an addiction problem. The 12-Step program can be easily adapted to treat any substance abuse problem. Because most Cocaine Anonymous meetings use the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous as their basic text, many alcoholics also choose to attend CA meetings as a means of connecting with likeminded others.

Cocaine Anonymous are an independent organisation and are classed as a mutual aid support group. The success of the 12-Step model of recovery has resulted in it being considered an evidence-based treatment method. Many rehabilitation treatment centers include aspects of the 12

Step program and introduce their patients to CA meetings. Based on the concept that only an addict can help another addict, Cocaine Anonymous members go through the process of the 12 Steps with an experienced member of CA. They do this not only to overcome their own addiction but also to help other addicts to find recovery.



- It is very accessible
- It is very supportive
- CA encourages anonymity
- It is free
- CA is open to all who have a desire to overcome a problem with substances
- The organisation has a sister group that offers help and support to affected family members.
- They use the 12 Step program of recovery that has stood the test of time and has proven to be a very effective recovery model
- CA provides a sense of belonging and purpose
- CA regularly holds conventions and sober recovery parties for members to attend
- It encourages a healthy recovery from drug addiction

## What to Expect at a Cocaine Anonymous Meeting

Regardless of how you attend your first CA meeting, whether it be online or at an in-person meeting, you should receive a very warm welcome. Cocaine Anonymous places importance on welcoming new people seeking recovery from addiction into their meetings.

At your first meeting, you will be encouraged to sit back and listen and keep an open mind. You can swap numbers with members of the same gender after the meeting has finished. Same-gender support is encouraged to help keep newcomers safe both inside and outside of meetings. CA meetings follow a set format that consists of their own literature readings and a personal story of recovery from one of its members. Some meetings offer meditation or big book readings. You can



find out the format of your local CA meetings by asking other members or checking on their website.

At a meeting of Cocaine Anonymous, you are likely to hear the mention of a sponsor. A sponsor is another member who has been through the program of recovery and who applies it to their daily life. As such, they can show others how they attained their recovery from addiction through the process of the Steps, and act as a recovery mentor.

Cocaine Anonymous members apply the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to their lives. This brings about a huge shift in thinking



and behaviour that enables them to stay clean from substances. The organisation also places importance on connection with like-minded others and encourages members to help and support one another.

## **Accessing Power through the 12 Steps**

When attending a meeting of Cocaine Anonymous, you are likely to hear the word God mentioned. For some people, this can act as a deterrent. This is why CA encourages new members to attend a few different meetings before deciding whether the program is for them. Whilst, like AA, CA will refer to finding a God to help overcome addiction, this 'God' is to be of your own understanding. It is important to understand that your own concept of a God does not have to be a religious one. It can be as simple as connecting to your own consciousness.

CA members use the 12-Step program of recovery to clear the mind of all obstructions and obstacles to recovery. This then frees them to connect with their inner conscience or a power that is greater than their addiction. As a spiritual program, your own understanding of God may well evolve over time and with undertaking the process of the 12 Steps. This is a very common occurrence for many who attend CA.

## What Cocaine Anonymous is Not

Cocaine Anonymous is not a substitute for medical care or professional therapy. The CA program often complements other drug treatment methods. CA cannot help you with medical detoxification if you have a drug dependence. This, you will need to address through the appropriate medical channels. CA can however provide you with support and motivation while

you try to quit substances. Something detox or rehabilitation program. If you need help with a drug detox, then you should consult a medical professional or your local drug and alcohol services for treatment and support.

## **Cocaine Anonymous Meetings at the Centre**

Sunday Night Step Group: 6:00 PM Every Sunday There is a Solution: 7:00 PM Every Wednesday

# ADDICTION:

the disease that
makes you too selfish
to see the havoc you
created or care about
the people whose
lives you have
shattered.

## The Twelve Principles of CA (and all 12 Step Programs)

The 12th Step of Cocaine Anonymous suggests that we "practice these principles in all our affairs." Principles can be defined as fundamental truths, beliefs, values, or philosophies. Living in accordance with spiritual principles can be a lifelong challenge, which is where the "practice" part comes in. The following list is by no means all-encompassing, but these are twelve essential principles of the CA program of recovery:

## **HONESTY**

Honesty is the ability to differentiate the true from the false. Becoming honest takes a willingness to change our perception. Getting honest is essential to sobriety and is a key element of making a beginning in our new way of life. In CA, we are encouraged to be honest, open-minded and willing. Honesty is necessary if we are to be happy, joyous and free.

#### **HOPE**

We find hope in the other recovering addicts who have come before us. Their stories tell us what it was like, what happened and what it is like today. Hope can be found in laughter, a hug, or the sparkle

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in someone's eye. When we realize CA offers a way out, hope opens the door to truly connecting with our Higher Power.

#### **FAITH**

Faith is a belief or trust in something. In CA, it is suggested that we find a Higher Power of our own understanding. Faith is both a practice and a journey as we discover and develop our relationship with our Higher Power. For some, faith is hope with a track record, and thus many CA members choose to place their faith in the group until they can develop a relationship with their own Higher Power. Gradually, because of attending meetings and working the 12 Steps, we acquire an abundance of faith.

## **COURAGE**

Courage is the willingness to walk through our fears. It takes courage to walk through the doors of a CA. meeting and ask for help. It takes courage to ask someone to sponsor us. With direction from that sponsor, we look at ourselves and our history to examine the causes, effects, and consequences of our actions. We develop the courage to change and to take the actions necessary to effect that change.

## **INTEGRITY**

Integrity results from using the principles of CA to guide our motives, intentions and actions. We strive to have our actions mirror our intentions. Working the Steps of Cocaine Anonymous helps us to build character. We demonstrate integrity when we are authentic, truthful and real.

#### WILLINGNESS

Willingness is the key that opens the door to sobriety. We need willingness to let go of our old ideas. We surrender and become open to our Higher Power's will for us. We become willing to go to any lengths to stay sober and to grow in our recovery.

## **HUMILITY**

Humility comes from understanding where our disease has taken us. We learn that we are not special or unique. We are finally able to see the truth about our addiction and our inability to stop using on our own. We make an effort to set aside all the things we think we know in order to become open to the sunlight of the spirit. Becoming humble is an opportunity for complete

As Step 12 Says...

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

surrender to our Higher Power. We learn further humility by being of service to others.

#### LOVE

In the beginning, others love us until we can love ourselves. As we work the Steps and our spirits heal, we become able to receive love. We begin showing love to others and to ourselves. The spirit of love reveals our true self, which is no longer hidden by the veil of addiction.

## **FORGIVENESS**

As we work the Steps, we develop the willingness to forgive ourselves and others. Through taking our own inventory, we discover our own part in situations and become more understanding toward others. Praying for those we resent and for the willingness to forgive sets us free. Forgiveness brings peace of mind and serenity.

#### **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is a new concept to many of us when we first get sober. With direction from our sponsor, we learn good recovery habits. We go to meetings regularly, read literature, work the Steps and get involved in service work. We develop a habit of checking our motives and looking at our actions on a regular basis. This is the beginning of what will become a way of life. These behaviors enhance our experience in sobriety.

## **AWARENESS**

Through regular inventory, we remain aware of our own motives, intentions and behaviors. Through prayer and meditation, we strive to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him. As we continuously seek spiritual growth, our awareness also grows.

#### **SERVICE**

Service provides an opportunity to get out of ourselves and think of others. Being of service is a good way to share our experience, strength, and hope while enhancing our lives and the lives of others. It also helps us become useful members of society. Working with others for a greater good builds friendships, unity, and helps keep us sober. Service is how we give back what was so freely given to us and express our gratitude to Cocaine Anonymous.

## Seventh Month; Seventh Step

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Seven of Twelve Step programs of recovery such as those held at the Centre are about getting rid of character defects and replacing them by practicing humility and spiritual principles. Working on the Seventh Step requires constant thoughtfulness and commitment to being honest, courageous and humble. When working on Steps Four and Five we discovered our assets and our shortcomings. With Step Six we became prepared to deal with these qualities so that in Step Seven we could be ready to act.

## **Breaking Down Step Seven**

Quitting the compulsive use of substances (drugs and alcohol) and/or other compulsive self-destructive behaviours (gambling, overeating, viewing pornography) requires fundamental and extensive life changes. Moving into Step Seven involves us in the personal change of actively letting go of all shortcomings, actions and feelings that are liabilities. This change requires effort and action.

Simply asking for your shortcomings to be removed does not automatically make them go away. It is up to you to be aware and make new choices. Many people in recovery find comfort that their higher power can and does remove their character defects and shortcomings when asked. While working on the previous six Steps you've been stripping away age-old layers of denial, ego, self-centeredness and other liabilities that consumed you when you were active in your disease. When we arrive at Step Seven, we are ready to stop thinking so much about what we are going to get in life and start looking at what and how we can contribute to others in the world. Our higher power never leaves us empty handed; everything we have lost has been replaced with something better. We asked to put down the drink and the drug because our higher power wanted us to pick up something greater. This is humility.

## Step Seven and Humility: The Misunderstood Virtue

"Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." – Confucius When it comes to working your Seventh Step, the quality of humility really breaks down to having a reasonable perspective of yourself. It is quite simply seeing the truth of your life and your place in the world. In recovery terms it is the practiced art of being "right-sized." When you humbly ask your Higher Power to remove your shortcomings you are recognizing that you are neither too big nor too small. Gone is your self-entitlement or grandiosity; as is your shame, regrets or unworthiness.



You have already taken your very first act toward humility, by admitting your powerlessness and unmanageability in Step One. Typically, when practicing Step Seven recovering addicts realize that humility is not a state of being in despair or groveling, but a state of peace, serenity, and acceptance of "life on life's terms."

In <u>The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</u> it is stated, "the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA's twelve steps." The Seventh Step is an ongoing opportunity for us to embrace the pursuit of humility as a fundamental aspect of staying clean and sober.

## Wishing It, Does Not Make It So: Step Seven into Action

Taking action means work. Most of us are averse to the word "work," but the kind of work we are talking about here has nothing to do with punching in a timecard and suffering through eight hours. Our work on the Steps simply means using our energy to be disciplined and committed in the pursuit of our goal of long-

term sobriety and recovery. It takes work to stand up for ourselves, to be patient or to accept the emotional discomfort of new behaviors.

Catching ourselves in our shortcomings and changing our reaction takes work. The more familiar you become with your shortcomings the more you start to notice, "this feels familiar, I'd better stop and pay attention to this!" Whenever a reaction feels involuntary, it's probably something that needs changing. The great news is that when practicing humility in Step Seven you really gain a sense of your own humanity and the ability to have compassion for yourself and for others. We are all in this together, and we are all the same.

Putting Step Seven into action means, for example, that you are working your program of recovery when you consciously gather the courage to say "no" to the request of a friend who tries to guilt or shame you into saying "yes,". When you set a boundary, pause when agitated, practice restraint of tongue and pen (this is a huge one for long-term peace), choosing not to interact with people, places and things that trigger you -- you are working on Step Seven!

## Getting Right-Sized: Step Seven Questions and Actions

Part of getting right-sized in Step Seven means making changes with the activity of our minds in addition to accepting and expressing our emotions. We learn to gradually bring the different parts of ourselves into a healthy balance as we practice new living skills. For some people a daily dose of prayer, meditation, and affirmations is very useful.

## **Questions to Help Guide you Through Step Seven:**

- How has my understanding of my higher power grown?
- How have the previous six Steps prepared me for Step Seven?
- How does being aware of my own humility help when working the Seventh Step?
- How do I plan to ask a God of my understanding or higher power to remove my shortcomings?
- How does the spiritual principle of "surrender" work for me in Step Seven?
- Am I comfortable with prayer and meditation- even if it means making up my own?
- Has my sense of perspective or "reality' been out of proportion lately?
- Have there been times when I have been able to stop from acting on a character defect and practice a spiritual principle instead?
- Are there any shortcomings that have been removed from my life or at least diminished in their power over me?

## Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding.

Amen.

## **Suggested Affirmations**

- I accept all of me, the "good" and "bad."
- Today I will develop an asset and release one shortcoming.
- I will remember that I have choices and freedom today.

Adapted from https://www.jasonwahler.com/12-steps-of-aa/step-seven-of-aa-alcoholics-anonymous

# July 2024 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA)</li> <li>8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>10:30 AM Sunshine (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM ISMs (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM There is a Solution (CA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>2:30 PM Overeaters Anonymous</li> <li>6:30 PM The Steps We Took (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM Serenity by Candlelight (AA)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>10:00 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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