

# ***Fellowship Centre Newsletter: November 2024***



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## **Message from the President**

Thank you to the Board Members and Voting Members who attended the Annual General Meeting on October 5<sup>th</sup>. The most important and pressing issues were resolved by vote including the re-election of Board Members, confirmation of Voting Members and assignment of the accountant for 2024. I cannot help but reflect on the incredible journey the Fellowship Centre has taken during these past 4 ½ years!

In the spring of 2020, during the Covid pandemic, when the world was full of fear and face-to-face mutual support recovery meetings were increasingly rare, a small group of individuals had a vision of a dedicated space for recovery meetings on the far southside of Edmonton. That small, committed group wrote bylaws which were necessary to obtain nonprofit status under the Societies Act. None of those individuals were experts in nonprofit bylaws, but they did the very best they could at the time. The South Edmonton Fellowship Centre was registered in the province of Alberta as a nonprofit society on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In the summer of 2021, with donations from the recovery community and particularly that small group of committed individuals, an appropriate facility was planned for the fall at modest cost. The Centre opened its first mutual support recovery meeting on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. It quickly became apparent that a credit card was needed for supplies, but the bylaws did not allow the Centre to borrow money. The bylaws were amended to allow for credit card purchases which have proven, not only necessary but also convenient as demand for supplies has progressively increased with increased use of the Centre.

Early in 2022, the auditor requested copies of the Centre's financial and operational policies. That same small group of committed volunteers wrote those policies which were published in sections in various editions of the Fellowship Newsletter to elicit feedback from the recovery community. Such policies were approved by the Voting Members at the Annual General Meeting in October 2022.

As the Centre has continued to evolve, the bylaws require further amendments, most notably regarding the need for a professional accountant rather than an auditor, and the mechanisms by which members and directors are elected and re-elected. Once again, that small group of dedicated individuals are working diligently to rewrite the bylaws. After 4 ½ years of our "flying blind period" (Forward to the Second Edition of the Big Book, page xvii), we now benefit from experience and additional expertise in writing bylaws for nonprofit organizations. The proposed bylaws changes will appear in subsequent editions of the Fellowship Newsletter. All feedback is graciously welcome and eagerly anticipated. Such bylaw changes will ultimately be ratified by the Directors and Voting Members and registered with the province of Alberta.

Yours with Gratitude and in Service,

Wayne W., South Edmonton Fellowship Centre President

## Internal Reminders

Adapted from *The Ripple Effect: Using Step 10 to Work Steps Six and Seven Every Day* (pages 99 & 100)

These are quick, simple phrases you can use whenever you are in doubt, in pain, or in trouble. Recite them silently to help you ground yourself in a spirit of service, and in the here and now.

Listen up or Pay Attention. Recite this to yourself when you are bored, or when you catch your mind wandering, especially if it has wandered into obsessive self-interest.

How can I be most helpful right now? This is another quick, effective antidote for self-centeredness. Another version is *Do the next right thing*.

Let's get to work. This is shorthand for *I realize there is something I need to do, an effort or change I need to make. I'm willing to shoulder that responsibility. I will not procrastinate. I'm starting right now.*

Keep it simple. This classic slogan is especially helpful when you are confused or overwhelmed.

Don't play God, or simply Not God. Use this internal wakeup call when you have put self-centredness before service, or before the will of your higher power or higher self.

There I go again. Maybe you just caught yourself doing something unwise. Mentally recite these words, preferably with a forgiving smile, not a shameful accusation. Then stop and work Step 10. Or maybe you were able to catch yourself just before doing something you would regret later. Recite this phrase silently, take a deep breath, give yourself a quick mental thumbs up, and returned to the here and now.

Don't go there. Saying this mentally, or even out loud, will help you nip many potential problems in the bud. Stop where you are and say this phrase aloud to wake yourself up.

Pause... Relax... Take it easy. Silently repeat this sequence, a variation of the slogan *Easy Does It*, whenever you feel tense or anxious. Then follow that prescription.

Let go. Gently say this short version of the slogan *Let Go and Let God* to yourself, and then do it. Let go of your fears, your anxious hopes, your wanting to control what happens, and your desire to know or understand everything or get all the answers. Above all let go of your self-centeredness. Stay open and present, and live in the next unfolding moment, and the next, and the next.



## Eleventh Month: Eleventh Step

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

Step 11 encourages us to reach out to a source of inspiration, whether it be a God or some other spiritual or inspirational force, and work to achieve the strength to find recovery.

One of the underlying principles of the 12-Step recovery program is that nothing happens by mistake. Members are encouraged to recognize their Higher Power, to listen to that Higher Power, and allow Him or Her or It to inspire them in their journey of recovery. This is achieved through prayer and meditation.

People facing Step 11 may not understand what it means, how to apply it in their life, or may have shunned religion and spirituality altogether. However, if you want to progress to the final Step, you must integrate the Step 11 in your life. Here are some tips to live Step 11.

### Don't Get Hung Up on the Term "God"

When people are presented with the term "God", many immediately associate it with the deity of the dominant religion in their society. In Northern America, this would be the Judeo-Christian god. However, "God" is a neutral term, and it is best not to get caught up in how other people choose to define it. In the 11th Step, focus on connecting to what you understand to be God, whether that is Vishnu, Yahweh, Allah, the Great Spirit, or something else.

### Remember that Prayer Can Take Many Forms

It is generally accepted that prayer means getting on your knees and speaking to your Higher Power. If that is what prayer means to you and you are comfortable with that, then pray in that manner. Don't feel bad, though, if it doesn't. The content of your prayers is more important than how you say them. In Step 11, speak to your Higher Power as though you were talking to another person. Tell her/him/it about what is troubling you, ask for guidance, and express gratitude for the assistance you have received in your life.

### Meditation Means Listening to Your Higher Power

If prayer is the act of talking to your Higher Power, then meditation is the act of listening to her/him/it. It is a physical and mental discipline that requires you to be still and observe. Many people are uncomfortable with silence, and they will do anything to avoid it. If this describes you, then meditation may be challenging when you first begin. Rest assured, though, it will get easier each time you do it.

As part of Step 11 meditation, begin by sitting quietly for 5 to 10 minutes. Thoughts will come to you but try not to hold onto them. Let them flow in and out your mind. As a way of letting go of conscious thought, it may be helpful to observe your breathing or to concentrate on a candle flame. The goal is to connect to your Higher Power and listen for wisdom. There are many books and websites about meditation. It may be helpful to peruse them. There is a Mediation Group at the Centre every Sunday at 2:00 PM.

(Adapted from <https://alcohol.org/alcoholics-anonymous/step-11/>)

# Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome

## Another Terrible Disease with a Simple Solution

Cannabis hyperemesis syndrome (CHS) is a condition that leads to repeated and severe bouts of vomiting. It only occurs in daily long-term users of marijuana.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in marijuana binds to molecules found in the brain. That causes the drug “high” and other effects that users feel. The digestive tract also has several molecules that bind to THC and related substances. So marijuana also affects the digestive tract. For example, the drug can change the time it takes the stomach to empty. It also affects the esophageal sphincter, the tight band of muscle that opens and closes to let food from the esophagus into the stomach. Long-term marijuana use can change the way the affected molecules respond and lead to the symptoms of CHS.

### Symptoms of CHS

People with CHS suffer from repeated bouts of vomiting. Healthcare providers often divide these symptoms into three stages:

Prodromal phase. During this phase, the symptoms are often early morning nausea and belly (abdominal) pain. Some people also develop a fear of vomiting. Most people keep normal eating patterns during this time. Some people use more marijuana because they think it will help stop the nausea. This phase may last for months or years.

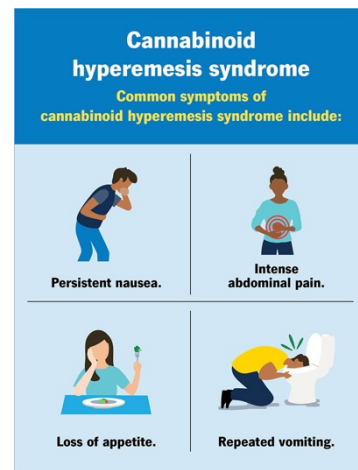
Hyperemetic phase. Symptoms during this time include:

- Ongoing nausea
- Repeated episodes of vomiting
- Belly pain
- Decreased food intake and weight loss
- Symptoms of fluid loss (dehydration)

Recovery phase. During this time, symptoms go away. Normal eating is possible again. This phase can last days or months. Symptoms often come back if the person smokes or vapes marijuana again.

You may have CHS if you have all of these:

- Long-term weekly and daily marijuana use
- Belly pain
- Severe, repeated nausea and vomiting



For correct diagnosis and treatment, it is important to be honest with your healthcare providers about the length of time and the amount of marijuana you use. If you have had severe vomiting, you might need to stay in the hospital for a short time. During the hyperemesis phase, you might need these treatments:

- IV (intravenous) fluid replacement for dehydration
- Medicines to help decrease vomiting
- Pain medicine
- Proton-pump inhibitors, to treat stomach inflammation
- Prescribed medicines that help calm you down (benzodiazepines)

Symptoms often ease after a day or 2 unless marijuana is used before this time. To fully get better, you need to stop using marijuana all together. Quitting marijuana may lead to other health benefits, such as:

- Better lung function
- Improved memory and thinking skills
- Better sleep
- Decreased risk for depression and anxiety

(Adapter from <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/health-library/diseases-and-conditions/c/cannabinoid-hyperemesis-syndrome.html>)

## **A New Support Group at the Centre The First Group that is Not 12-Step Recovery!**

The Centre's operational policy requires that any reoccurring meeting that is not 12-Step recovery must be approved by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors unanimously approved the following meeting to start this month.

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**Name of Meeting:** Mental Health and Addiction Support

**Target Population:** All those with interest in mental health and addiction recovery.

**Time:** Sundays 3:30 to 4:30 PM

**Start Date:** November 3, 2024

**Meeting Facilitator:** Bruce M., a voting member of the Centre, who runs the Sunday Afternoon Meditation Group and who has been an active member of AA for 10 years.

**Rent Paid to Centre:** Donations solicited from attendees to pay rent (to a maximum of \$50/hr). Any excess will go to offsetting the costs of offering the service.

The purpose of this weekly meeting is to find commonality in mental health and addiction topics. By finding commonality, we can search for common remedies which bring us together to hopefully enable solutions to our individual issues. Topics for discussion might include:

- **Mindfulness Practices:** Introduction to mindfulness meditation and its benefits for mental well-being.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Enhancing emotional awareness and self-regulation.
- **Stress Management:** Techniques for recognizing and managing stress in daily life.
- **Building Resilience:** Strategies for developing resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks.
- **Anxiety and Panic Management:** Coping strategies and relaxation techniques for managing anxiety and panic attacks.
- **Depression Awareness and Coping:** Understanding symptoms of depression and exploring coping mechanisms.

While not 12 Step recovery, the meeting satisfies four of the six objectives of the South Edmonton Fellowship Centre as specified for nonprofit status under the Societies Act. Specifically:

1. to provide a meeting place in South Edmonton where recovering alcoholics and recovering addicts may gather to exchange ideas and enjoy fellowship;
3. to provide opportunities for public and family involvement in the processes of recovery from alcoholism and addiction;
4. to provide information on alcoholism and addiction and on methods of recovery;
6. to affect its purpose without discrimination as to race, color, national origin, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

## Procrastination

Procrastination is the act of delaying or putting off tasks until the last minute or past their deadline. It's not just a time management problem. Researchers suggest that it's a failure in self-regulation that leads us to act irrationally.

We often come up with several excuses or rationalizations to justify our behavior. The following are just a few of the common reasons why people tend to procrastinate:

- Not knowing what needs to be done
- Not knowing how to do something
- Not wanting to do something
- Not caring if it gets done or not
- Not caring when something gets done
- Not feeling in the mood to do it
- Being in the habit of waiting until the last minute
- Believing that you work better under pressure
- Thinking that you can finish it at the last minute
- Lacking the initiative to get started
- Forgetting
- Blaming sickness or poor health
- Waiting for the right moment
- Needing time to think about the task
- Delaying one task in favor of working on another



You might find yourself wondering, “how can I stop procrastinating?” Fortunately, there are several different things you can do to fight procrastination and start getting things done on time. Consider these your procrastination exercises:

1. Make a to-do list: To help keep you on track, consider placing a due date next to each item.
2. Take baby steps: Break down the items on your list into small, manageable steps so that your tasks don't seem so overwhelming.
3. Recognize the warning signs: Pay attention to any thoughts of procrastination and do your best to resist the urge. If you begin to think about procrastinating, force yourself to spend a few minutes working on your task.
4. Eliminate distraction: Ask yourself what pulls your attention away the most -- whether it's Instagram, Facebook, or the local news -- and turn off those sources of distraction.
5. Pat yourself on the back: When you finish an item on your to-do list on time, congratulate yourself and reward yourself by indulging in something you find fun.

(Adapted from <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-psychology-of-procrastination-2795944#:~:text=Procrastination%20is%20the%20act%20of,leads%20us%20to%20act%20irrationally>)



## FEAR APPEARS MANY TIMES IN THE BIG BOOK AND THE 12 X 12

We review our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We ask ourselves why we have them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was even worse (Big Book page 68).

### Kahlil Gibran

#### “FEAR”

“It is said that before entering the sea  
a river trembles with fear.

She looks back at the path she has traveled,  
from the peaks of the mountains,  
the long winding road crossing forests and villages.

And in front of her,  
she sees an ocean so vast,  
that to enter  
there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.

But there is no other way.  
The river can not go back.

Nobody can go back.  
To go back is impossible in existence.

The river needs to take the risk  
of entering the ocean  
because only then will fear disappear,  
because that's where the river will know  
it's not about disappearing into the ocean,  
but of becoming the ocean.”

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us (Big Book page 84).

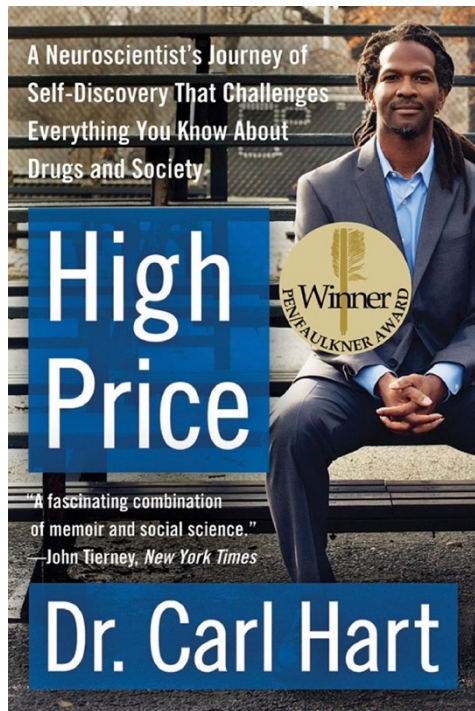
All these failings generated fear, a soul-sickness in its own right. Then fear, in turn, generates more character defects. Unreasonable fear that our instincts will not be satisfied drives us to covet the possessions of others, to lust for sex and power, to become angry when our instinctive demands are threatened, to be envious when the ambitions of others seem to be realized while ours are not. We eat, drink, and grab for more of everything that we need, fearing we shall never have enough. And with genuine alarm at the prospect of work, we stay lazy. We loaf and procrastinate, or at best work grudgingly and under half steam. These fears are the termites that ceaselessly devour the foundations of whatever sort of life we tried to build (12 x 12 page 49).

We have seen that we were prodded by unreasonable fears or anxieties into making a life business of winning fame, money, and what we thought was leadership. So false pride became the reverse side of that ruinous coin marked “Fear.” We simply had to be number one to cover up our

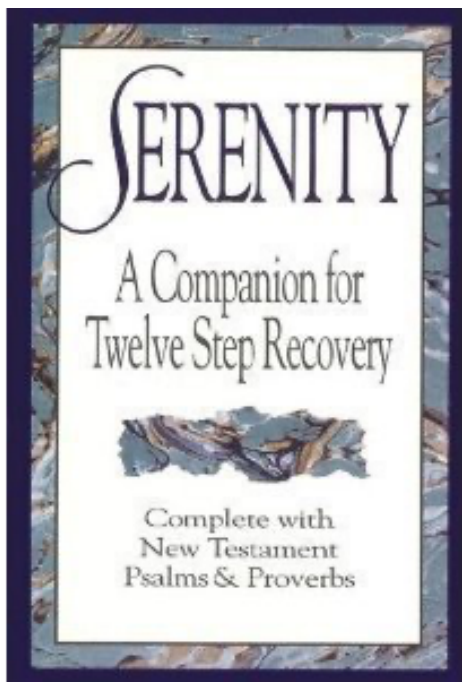
deep-lying inferiorities. In fitful successes, we boasted of greater feats to be done; in defeat we were bitter. If we didn't have much of any worldly success, we became depressed and cowed. Then people said we were of the “inferior” type. But now we see ourselves as chips off the same old block. At heart we had all been abnormally fearful. It mattered little whether we had sat on the shore of life drinking ourselves into forgetfulness or had plunged in recklessly and wilfully beyond our depth and ability. The result was the same – all of us had nearly perished in a sea of alcohol (12 x 12 pages 123–124).

If all those rules had been in effect everywhere, nobody could have possibly joined A.A. at all, so great was the sum of our anxiety and fear. We were resolved to admit nobody to A.A. but that hypothetical class of people we termed ‘pure alcoholics.’ Except for their guzzling, and the unfortunate results thereof, they could have no other complications ... Maybe this sounds comical now. Maybe you think we oldtimers were pretty intolerant... Well we were frightened. Naturally, we began to act like most everybody does when afraid. After all, isn't fear the true basis of intolerance? (12 x 12 page 140).

## The Fellowship Library: Something for Everyone in Recovery



As a youth, Carl Hart didn't realize the value of school; he studied just enough to stay on the basketball team. At the same time, he was immersed in street life. Today he is a cutting-edge neuroscientist -- Columbia University's first tenured African American professor in the sciences -- whose landmark, controversial research is redefining our understanding of addiction. In this provocative memoir, he recalls his journey of self-discovery. He examines the relationship among drugs, pleasure, choice, and motivation, both in the brain and in society. His findings shed new light on common ideas about race, poverty, and drugs, and explain why current policies are failing. Determined to make a difference, he tirelessly applies his scientific research to help save real lives. But balancing his former street life with his achievements today has not been easy -- a struggle he reflects on publicly for the first time. This powerful story of hope will alter the way we think about how we can effect change.



*A Companion for Twelve Step Recovery* contains a wealth of material that Christians may find useful for spiritual healing and growth. You will find within the pages of *Serenity* an introduction to the Twelve Steps of recovery, called "Steps to Serenity", which describes the principles embodied in each step and integrates the Twelve Steps with Scripture. With each step is a listing of recovery meditations and related recovery scriptures, highlighted in the text for easy reference.

As recovering persons, we may use our support groups and recovery literature as springboards toward spiritual and emotional growth. We will probably reach a level, though, at which we hunger for an even deeper contact and communication with God. This is where the organized church, the Bible, other Christian literature, and prayer and meditation become indispensable tools for lasting spiritual growth for some people. Bill Wilson, for example, found

great peace and encouragement through Christian literature and the Bible. In fact, one of the books he came back to again and again was Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest*.



## “WE AREN'T A GLUM LOT.” – BIG BOOK PAGE 132

In the journey toward sobriety, the road is often fraught with challenges, emotional turbulence, and a sense of gravity that can sometimes feel overwhelming. Scientifically speaking, the act of laughing and experiencing joy releases endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemicals. These endorphins act as natural stress-relievers and mood lifters, which can be particularly beneficial for individuals navigating the complexities of recovery. Moreover, humor has been shown to improve cognitive function, enhance problem-solving skills, and even boost the immune system—factors that are crucial in any recovery journey.



# November 2024 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<b>1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7:00 AM Sunrise (AA)</li> <li>12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA)</li> <li>7:00 PM Serenity by Candlelight (AA)</li> <li>8:30 PM Dolly Cleans the Centre</li> </ul>	<b>2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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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