Alcoholics Anonymous

The basic information regarding AA contained in this edition of Higher Education comes primarily from AA publications. For complete information about AA, please contact your local AA group or AA World Services, Incorporated.

History of AA

Alcoholics Anonymous had its beginnings in 1935 at Akron, Ohio, as the outcome of a meeting between Bill W., a New York stockbroker, and Dr. Bob S., an Akron surgeon. Both had been hopeless alcoholics. Prior to that time, Bill W. and Dr. Bob had each been in contact with the Oxford Group, a mostly non-alcoholic fellowship that emphasized universal spiritual values in daily living. Under this spiritual influence, and with the help of an old-time friend, Bill W. had gotten sober and had then maintained his recovery by working with other alcoholics. On the other hand, Dr. Bob's Oxford Group membership at Akron had not helped him enough to achieve sobriety. When Dr. Bob and Bill W. finally met, the effect on the doctor was immediate. He found himself face to face with a fellow sufferer who had made good. Bill W. emphasized that alcoholism was a malady of mind, emotions and body. Responding to Bill W.'s convincing ideas, Dr. Bob soon got sober, and never drank again. The founding spark of AA had been struck.

They immediately began to work with alcoholics at Akron's City Hospital, where one patient quickly achieved complete sobriety. In the fall of 1935, a second group of alcoholics slowly took shape in New York. A third appeared at Cleveland in 1939. It had taken over four years to produce 100 sober alcoholics in the three founding groups.

Early in 1939, a basic textbook titled “Alcoholics Anonymous” was published. The text, written by Bill W., explained AA’s philosophy and methods, and at its core is the well-known Twelve Steps of recovery. The book also included case histories of some 30 recovered members. From this point, AA’s development was rapid. Today, AA has more than 2 million male and female members in 150 countries.

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General Information about AA

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who choose to share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem (alcoholism) and help others to recover. The most common abbreviation for Alcoholics Anonymous is AA. Alcoholics Anonymous’ primary purpose is to help members stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; groups are self-supporting through their own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution. AA has no relation to temperance movements. AA does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

An AA member understands that alcohol may be all right for other people, however, he or she knows it to be personally poisonous. The men and women who consider themselves members of AA know they are, and always will be, alcoholics. They have finally recognized that they are no longer able to handle alcohol in any form. They bring the problem out into the open with other alcoholics. This sharing of “experience, strength, and hope” seems to be the key element that makes it possible for them to live without alcohol.

Anonymity is and always has been the basis of the AA program. Traditionally, AA members never disclose their association with the movement publicly in print, broadcast or through any other public media. And no one has the right to break the anonymity of another member.

One of the unique features of AA as a local group and as a worldwide fellowship is the absence of rules and regulations. Membership in AA involves no financial obligation of any kind. Typically, local groups “pass the hat” at meetings to defray the cost of renting a meeting place and other meeting expenses. AA is entirely self-supporting, and no outside contributions are accepted. AA never “recruits” members and never suggests that anyone “should” become a member.

AA has no officers or executives. All group members who have a reasonable period of sobriety behind them are offered the opportunity to take part in handling group responsibilities.

The AA program of recovery from alcoholism is based undeniably on acceptance of certain spiritual values. The individual member is free to interpret those values as he or she thinks best or not to think about them at all.

Today, approximately one-third of members are women. One of the most heartening trends is that more younger men and women are being attracted to the program before their problem drinking results in complete disaster.

Most people become associated with AA simply by attending the meetings of a particular local group. Meetings can be open or closed.
An “open” AA meeting is a group meeting that any member of the community, alcoholic or non-alcoholic, may attend. The only obligation is to not disclose the names of AA members outside the meeting. A “closed” meeting is limited to members of the local AA group and visiting AA members from other groups. During closed meetings, members are encouraged to discuss problems that might not be fully appreciated by non-alcoholics.

AA members do not have to attend a set number of meetings in a given period. Attending a meeting is a matter of individual preference and need. Most members arrange to attend at least one meeting a week, while others may go without a meeting for relatively long periods. Newcomers seem to benefit most from exposure to a relatively frequent number of meetings during their first weeks in a group.

AA has a number of resources that members use to help them become sober. These include meetings, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, sponsorship and slogans. The Twelve Steps are the core of the AA program of personal recovery from alcoholism. They describe the attitudes and activities that members believe are important in helping them achieve sobriety.

The Twelve Traditions of AA are suggested principles to insure the survival and growth of AA groups.

“Sponsorship” is a relationship whereby an AA member, who has made some progress in the recovery program, shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic. A sponsor leads by example and serves as a good friend and teacher to another member.

AA emphasizes the importance of three slogans: “Easy Does It,” “Live and Let Live,” and “First Things First.”

**How to locate AA meetings and contacts:**

For a brochure listing local AA group meeting times and locations contact:

KSU Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service  
214 English/Counseling Services Building

Manhattan AA information phone number: (785) 537-8511

http://www.aa.org

**A.A. World Services, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 459  
New York, NY 10163  
(212) 870-3400
Alcoholism from the AA Prospective

Within AA, it is said "how you drink not how often" determines whether or not you are an alcoholic. Many problem drinkers can go weeks, months, and sometimes years between their bouts with alcohol. There is a saying in AA—there is no such thing as being a little bit alcoholic. Either you are or you are not.

Once alcoholism has set in, the sufferer has lost the power of choice over alcohol and he or she will never be able to control their drinking for any length of time. That leaves only two paths: to let one’s drinking become worse and worse with all the damaging results or to quit completely and develop a new pattern of sober and constructive living.

People turn to AA because they feel deep down inside that alcohol has them defeated, and are ready to try anything that will free them from the compulsion to drink. The important thing is to face the facts of one’s situation and then take advantage of the help that is available. The AA concept is that alcoholics are people who can recover if they will follow a simple program that has proven successful for others. The AA program usually will work for those who are absolutely certain they want to stop drinking and are then sincere in their efforts to stop.

The “24-hour program” is a phrase used to describe a basic AA approach to the problem of staying sober. The AA member recognizes that staying sober now is the biggest challenge! As far as drinking is concerned, the current 24 hours is the only period the AA member can do anything about.

RESOURCES
KSU Counseling Services
English/Counseling Services Bldg.
Phone: 532-6927

KSU Alcohol & Other Drug Education Service
Director: Bill Arck
214 English/Counseling Services Bldg.
Phone: 532-6927

Alcoholics Anonymous
Noon Meeting (Mon.-Sat.)
Blue Valley United Methodist Church
835 Church Ave.
Phone: 537-9260

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