

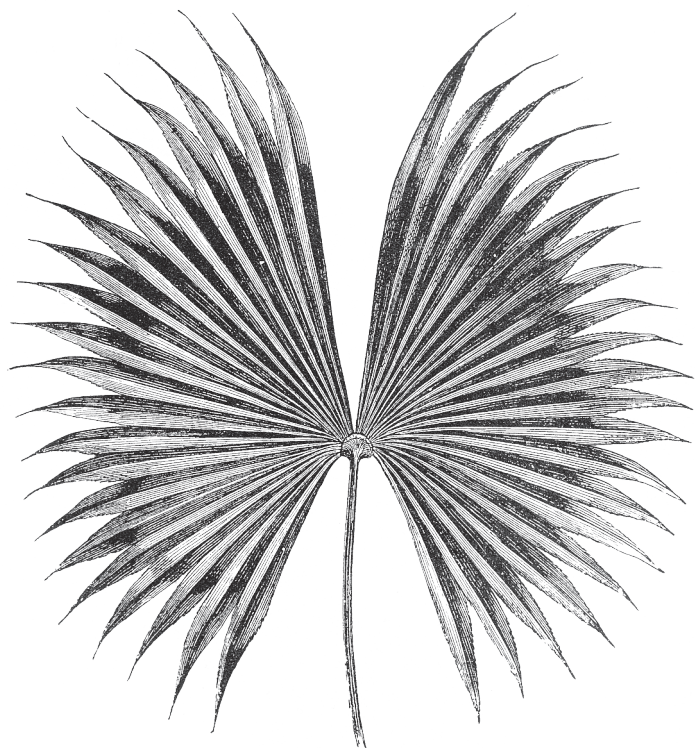
THE DAILY REPRIEVE



BY SINGAPORE AA MEMBERS,
MARCH 2011

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. 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.



The Daily Reprieve, Issue 3

Editor's Greetings

Total surrender saved my sorry soul

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol”

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Greetings and a belated Happy New Year!!

As we approach the end of February and are getting into the swing of 2011, I realise that time has flown for me. My sobriety is still something I treasure and I love going to meetings. If I had come into the fellowship on January 1st 2011 however, these past months would have felt like an eternity. As I reflect on my first 90 days, I remember meeting my Sponsor in the dingy little basement room with pale yellow walls in Damien Hall. The first 24 hours was a miracle and what followed as I worked Steps One, Two and Three was, as Bill put it, “beyond my wildest dreams”. Yes I was like a ‘born again’ member of the Fellowship. I had to dive in headfirst and work the Steps otherwise I would have listened to my disease talking to me, telling me I could still drink like a lady!

I can still remember kneeling on the concrete at the back of Damien Hall, saying the Step Three prayer with my Sponsor. A train roared past and sounded its horn; an omen perhaps- God saying my prayers were heard? What a great feeling of freedom overcame me as I rose to my feet, having entrusted my life to a Power greater than myself! May you be blessed and inspired as you read this issue on Steps One, Two and Three. Happy trudging!!

- Sharmini

Total surrender saved my sorry soul.

I DRANK (and used other mind altering substances) for a total of 23 years before the last drink that I had. For the last two thirds of that spell I had many attempts at getting sober. I literally tried everything from hospitals, psychiatric wards, treatment centres, being locked up, forced detoxes at home, doctors, priests ... The list goes on. I used to declare to those who cared to listen: "Giving up is easy, I've done it hundreds of times." Underneath that cynical statement was a person who lived in a perpetual state of dread.

It wasn't until I was exposed to the 12 step program of recovery for alcoholics that I had any way of understanding my cyclical battle with the diseases of alcoholism and addiction. You see, I had experienced many 'rock-bottoms' as we now call them; each time the bottom getting worse and deeper. When the pain was bad enough, I would reach a point where I wanted my life to be different and was willing enough to go seek help from someone. That help was always there in one form or another. Each time I sobered up, I went through progressively tougher and tougher detoxes. Then I would gradually start to feel better when the D/Ts and drug withdrawals softened their grip on my fragile body and mind. Little did I know that was when I was at my most vulnerable. In one such case, I spent 3 months in a 'therapeutic community centre' following my detox. I underwent group therapy and counseling. The day came when my mind told me it was time to leave. I left that place and 5 hours later was drinking and using drugs again. A 'sane' person does not put themselves through all that hardship only to start the whole process off again. That cycle characterised all my attempts to sober up over the years.

When I was finally introduced to the 12 steps of Alcoholics anonymous, step one arrived like a bolt of lightening in my life. To this day, I have always been a little fuzzy about any spiritual awakenings that I might, or might not, have experienced; but as I share my story with other alcoholics I am absolutely certain that exposure to the following words (together with an explanation of what they mean from a recovering alcoholic), represented one of the most significant spiritual experiences of my life:

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol ...

It was explained to me that I suffered from a physical 'allergy' (for want of a better word). That when I consumed alcohol, my body reacts differently to other people's in that it sets off a craving and I can not stop drinking. I learned that (for this alcoholic) the same rule applied to mind altering drugs. That bit was easy for

me to buy into; after all, didn't I have so many examples of failed attempts at stopping followed by picking up the [next] first drink and starting the process off all over again? So there you go..... I realized I had trouble stopping once I had started.

However, the real clincher for me was the next bit that my sponsor talked about as we worked through chapters like "more about alcoholism".

I learned fairly quickly that I have a mind that is capable of monumental dishonesty and obsession when it comes to alcohol. When I am in that place when I am thinking about the [next] first drink, I am capable of putting aside all of the pain and unpleasantness that I had put myself (and others through) over the course of all the prior attempts to stop – as well as the most recent attempt! I have a mind that becomes so fixated on that next drink and how it is going to make me feel better, that I can literally deny even the most basic and fundamental truth...

Alcohol just isn't good for me.

The combination of these two truths:

I have a body that can not stop craving alcohol once I take the first drink.

I have a mind that will tell me it is OK to take that first drink despite all the evidence I have that it's going to take me right back to the start of another painful process.

... were as powerful to me as it would, had been the first human being to have discovered how to make fire.

My problem starts in the mind because – left to my own devices – I am going to reach a point where a drink seems like a good idea and – at that point – I have absolutely no defense against the monumental dishonesty that my very being is capable of. My head is going to make me take that first drink (or drug).

Having taken the first drink, I am then powerless over the obsessional cravings manifested in my body.

When this awareness sinks in for me, I feel absolutely SC***ED!

The other curious yet powerful aspect of step one for me is around the word 'admitted'.

Admitting any weakness was tantamount to failure; based upon the beliefs that I brought *into* Alcoholics Anonymous. As I have continued to attend meetings and listen to other people who share similar experiences to me and as I worked through our 12 steps with a sponsor; I started to see how total admission of defeat in the face of the two truths I have just shared; has become one of the most courageous and significant 'achievements' of my life. I have done quite a lot of 'admitting' whilst I have been a member of AA. However, the most important admissions were the first ones I made in the face of step one. These admissions gave me the willingness to walk through the door that was opened in front of me by AA

and my sponsor. Without these admissions, I know that I would not be here today as, insanity, jails, institutions and ultimately death – awaited me.

Admission of my powerlessness in the face of such a cunning foe as alcohol.

Admission that left to my own devices I made no headway against my condition.

Admission that my life had become completely unmanageable.

Once I had admitted my powerlessness against alcohol, I was then able to see just how unmanageable every other aspect of my life had become. I learned that a lot of this unmanageability was due to my drinking and using. I have also learned that my life is unmanageable even when I am not drinking. This last insight has taken some time for me to buy into but today I realise the importance of acknowledging my unmanageability even though I have not taken a drink for a little while.

Working step one for me is a bit like what I believe it must feel like if a person is captured by terrorists, held in a dark room and in isolation for a long time, ultimately to be freed on a beautiful beach. When the blindfold is taken off that prisoner is presented with an awe inspiring sunset.

When I was drinking and failing to stay stopped despite multiple attempts I was a prisoner to the disease of alcoholism.

I was metaphorically placed on that beach when my sponsor walked me through step one to the point where I could accept it 100% within my head and my heart.

The sunset is my higher power, my sponsor, my fellowship with people who share my experience strength and hope. My sunset is also the 12 steps and 12 traditions of this fellowship. The *admission* that I continue to make on a regular basis, provides me with enough *willingness* to:

Work the other 11 steps to the best of my ability

To go to that next meeting

To be of service when I am given the opportunity to do so

To recognize the importance of the newcomer

To nurture my relationship with the higher power that came into my life and help me with this complete powerless and unmanageability

To work step one again

Without the admission of step one, I would not be able to do any of this.

- Anonymous of Singapore

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol”

IN AA I have come to the realization that I am powerless. But powerless is not the same as worthless, useless or hopeless ...

I started out as a young adult feeling very powerful. I was smart, educated, attractive and capable. There was always a man around to feed my ego and provide drama and thrills. People convinced me I could do whatever I wanted. I never questioned my behaviour or my right and ability to judge people, places and things. In fact, I wanted to make a career of it as an art critic.

How did I end up at 52 feeling worthless, useless and hopeless? Why didn't I ever follow through on the many opportunities that were presented to me? How did I come to be such a disappointment to myself and others? The answer is, of course, “pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization” due to drug and alcohol abuse. Seems so obvious now! But for 20 years I couldn't see it. From 16 to 36 I attributed all my problems to outside circumstances: my alcoholic father, my location, my controlling boyfriends, my frail mental health, etc. To cope with these situations I drank and used. At 26 it seemed like time to grow up, so I gave up drugs. No problem! But the drinking only increased to fill in the gap, and after sinking into a pit of self-pity and misery in which I set my house on fire and became unable to drive a car, I finally saw in the mirror what I had become. My father. I was horrified, but still waffled for many months until daytime blackouts forced me to admit to someone else that I was an alcoholic.

That person, my doctor who also knew me socially, felt that I must be exaggerating the problem and maybe I should talk to an analyst. Then maybe I should talk to a gastro-enterologist. With their help and lots of medication I managed 2 years sobriety, hating myself and the world. Then I came to Singapore and drank again for 6 years before finally, as a last resort and with no more money for psychiatrists, I dragged myself to a Saturday morning meeting of the Serenity Sisters.

Now, for a voluntary contribution of \$2 per meeting, I know that I am powerless over alcohol, and that is a good thing for me to know and to believe. But it ain't easy. It's something I have to think long and hard about and remember every day, because it's the only way for me to make enough room for my Higher Power to come into my life and show me how to climb out of the pit. Today I know that I can be useful, worthwhile and full of hope. If I want it. If I'm willing to do whatever it takes.

- Claire

Step One

*"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol- that our lives
had become unmanageable"*

"Step one is pretty straightforward; I can't drink and I have trouble not drinking"
- Clancy I.

"That dash between the sentences in the First step is small but incredibly important. I'm powerless over alcohol, and in addition to that, my life is unmanageable. I first read it that my life was unmanageable because of alcohol. If that was the case, it would be manageable again once I stopped drinking. And it most definitely wasn't."
- Patti O.

Step Two

*"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could re-
store us to sanity"*

"I began to see that insanity is not the crazy, stupid things I do when I'm drinking. It's the crazy, insane idea that this time it's going to be different. The idea that: only two drinks, that's all I'm going to take. Or: one drink won 't hurt me."
- Charlie P.

"An alcoholic is a fellow who is trying to get his religion out of a bottle, when what he really wants in unity within himself. Unity with God."
- Bill W.

"GOD stands for – Group Of Drunks."
- John L.

"What first appeared to be a flimsy reed turned out to be the loving and powerful hand of God."

– Big Book p.28

Step 3

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives to the care of God, as we understood Him”

“Alkies aren’t the type who go around surrendering on every street corner”

- Chuck C.

“ It says in Chapter Five: ‘If you have decided you want what we have.’ Decision. ‘And are willing to go to any lengths to get it’. Action. As far as I can tell, that summarises everything in life: Decision, Action, Result.

—Cubby S.

“And when the pain was so great it was do or die and I had no choice, it was a simple matter to make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. I’m happy to tell you that the decision I took didn’t become a reality until I took the actions of Step 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.”

—Patti O.

Step One- I can’t

Step Two- God can

Step Three- So I’ll let Him/Her

A Good Friend Dies

JIM WAS a talented playwright, a beautiful writer. He was also a terrible drunk for a lot of his life. The kind that woke up, grabbed a bottle of Vodka off his night stand and gulped down half of it before he could swing his feet over the edge of the bed and even think about getting up. Once he joked with me about his morning routine. Sitting on his bed, he'd think about a shower. But then he'd remember he needed to buy more booze so forget the shower. But where could he get more booze? He'd have to go out and buy some. But first he had to get dressed. OK, that meant he'd have to put on pants, shirt, socks and shoes, overwhelming tasks. But if he never got started he'd never get to the booze. So he lurched over to his closet, rummaged through a pile of clothes'were they dirty or clean?'and found a pair of pants. But how to get them on? He fell on the floor several times trying to put one leg in and then the other. Often they ended up backwards, the zipper in the back. Once Jim managed to get dressed he had to find his keys. This took at least an hour. Then finding his car: another hour even though it was parked right in front of his house. He never killed or hurt anyone driving, thank God. Miraculous.

Through the years I knew him, when he'd had enough booze to get himself going but not too much to incapacitate himself, Jim wrote beautifully. He was also as good a friend as anyone can be who drinks that much. One night, at a writers' retreat--Jim had been drinking all day and night as usual--he and I sat together on a bench looking at the stars and talking about our day's writing. I had been drinking since five that afternoon so I was hardly sober either. Jim's words got more and more slurred and finally he wasn't making sense. Then he put his hands over his face and began to weep. "I know I should stop drinking," he wailed. "But I just can't face life sober. It's too painful. I just can't do it." He leaned over and put his head in my lap like he was a little child, and he wept while I stroked his head. I knew life would be much better for us both if we got sober, but I didn't know how either of us could do it. "I'm dying," he said then. "I know it. But I'd rather die than get sober."

A year later, Jim did almost die. He was in the hospital, his kidneys and liver shutting down. A doctor detoxed anyway hoping against hope Jim might survive, that his organs might start functioning again. Jim did survive. A miracle! The doctor told Jim about an AA meeting in the basement of the hospital not expecting Jim to care. But then another miracle happened, this one larger than the first: Jim got himself into a wheelchair and rolled himself to that hospital AA meeting. And he never drank again.

When I got sober a year and a half ago, I called Jim who announced, 'I haven't had a drink for 416 days.' Many people in the program have helped me stay sober; Jim has been a major one. From my first day sober on, Jim and I spoke once or twice a week on the phone and emailed in between. We saw each other when I visited the States. We drank orange juice together while the other writers got sloshed. We talked about sobriety, told stories about our drunken idiocies, thanked God together for our new lives, discussed the meaning of it all, theology, books, films plays. Jim listened to me as my marriage came apart. He told me to keep sober day at a time and everything would be fine. His own happiness helped me know I'd be happy, too, if I just kept following the program and had faith. Jim helped give me that faith.

In the two and a half years Jim was sober, he became a beautiful man, the man he would have been without the booze: deeply intelligent, sensitive, a truly great writer, fun, playful, wickedly witty. He was a beacon of light to me leading the way into living day by day sober. (If J can do it so can I, I kept telling myself.) About two months ago his emails and calls got spottier. I thought he'd found a romance, didn't have as much time for me, though he denied it when I asked him. Three weeks ago he stopped answering his phone altogether. Didn't answer emails, either. I got worried and called a mutual friend, Meir, who told me Jim wasn't feeling well and didn't want to talk until he was better. I should have known then it was serious, but I wanted to believe: Hey, Jim stopped drinking. His body is fine now. He'll live a long life. But his organs were too damaged. He was sober, but his body just couldn't get back to healthy. The drinking had hurt him too badly. And today his body just stopped. Everything failed. Jim is gone. He was sober to the end. He experienced his life clearheaded to the end. I sense him with me now. He's happy and free of his body that wasn't working so well after being pickled so long. He's happy he got the few years he had to experience his life sober. I miss him. I just can't believe I can't call him tonight. I love you, Jim. Rest in peace.

- February 18, 2011

A Changed Life

I STARTED drinking at 26 for a period of 25 years. Things were going well and I worked from an office boy to a regional sales manager. During my last 2 years of drinking, my drinking progressed from evening to the afternoon sessions. During this period 3 of my close relatives died, starting from my sister and a close uncle. My drinking started to get heavier. Soon after, my mother died and it really took an emotional toll. I became a round the clock, daily drinker. I was drinking to escape from life and to numb my feelings.

The round the clock drinking continued for one whole year. No matter how I tried to stop, I just could not stop. Depression set in and the only way I thought I could stop was to end my life. I was also a heart attack survivor and under my doctor's advice and recommendation, I decided to go for treatment for my alcohol addiction. In the treatment centre, the doctors detoxed me and made me attend some programmes for 5 weeks. Soon after, I was discharged and left on my own. The obsession for drink was still very strong and it was recommended that I attend AA meetings.

After coming to AA for awhile, I learnt that I was suffering from a disease which is cunning, baffling and powerful. When I start to drink, I simply cannot stop. I started to go for regular meetings and stuck close to fellow members. I thought I was a completely hopeless daily drinker. It was then that I started to admit that I am an alcoholic, and that I cannot stop on my own, and I needed the help of others. I soon got a sponsor and worked the first 3 steps of the programme. During the next 6 months, I started seeing people going back to drink and it really gave me a wakeup call to the seriousness of alcoholism. I started to do my step 4 after almost 2 years in the programme and for me it was the best thing I have ever done for myself. My life really started to change after this process and I thank my sponsor for guiding me to look into myself.

Today, I am grateful for what I have. My sobriety date is November 6th 2003. I have stayed sober for 7 years through the help of the fellowship. The biggest asset I have gained is learning to be honest, open-minded and willing to share the bright and dark sides of my life. I am doing my best as a human being and I am not perfect. I still need to confide in and receive guidance from my Higher power--which never fails me. I always will remember from where I came from and above all these, it is only one day at a time. Just do it, it is not easy but we all have to work for it.

- Naga

Thoughts on Steps Two and Three:

I WAS pretending to be an atheist when I came to AA.

After 2 years of frequent relapses, I decided AA wasn't the cure for me after being discharged from a treatment centre. I decided to do it my way. Amazingly, I stayed sober for 10 months without AA, but remained a dry drunk with white-knuckle sobriety. I picked my first drink thinking, 'I can manage it this time.' It progressed rapidly. Eventually, I came to AA after a 3-day binge, beaten badly by King Alcohol.

My second day in AA I spoke to a visitor about the steps. He told me that by deciding to come to AA, I'd already taken steps 1 and 2 consciously, and I need to sincerely practice step 3 on a daily basis. What he meant was, by coming to AA, I admitted I am powerless over alcohol, and consciously believed that AA will help me to relieve from alcoholism, and restore me to sanity. And that I need to let go on a daily basis.

Initially I gave lip service to my belief. 'Just fake it for the sake of staying sober.' I asked HP to help me stay sober for that day; in the evening I thanked him for keeping me sober. This went on fine for a while.

Well, subsequently I relapsed 2 more times. I realized later I had been away from the meetings a few days before my relapse, and did not ask for help by calling someone. Nevertheless, after each relapse I decided to return back to AA. I believed sincerely and whole-heartedly that AA can help me to stay sober. After my last drunk, on a daily basis, I continue to turn it over, and I remain sober till today.

A little later I did step 2 thoroughly, to the best of my ability. After completing step 2, I realized that someone was protecting and taking care of me all along—from all the troubles and shortcomings. I had known people in AA and outside AA devoured by King Alcohol. I don't have the answer why I was looked after all along; this fact helps me to be grateful towards my HP and AA.

In sobriety, I got my family back and a new pathway in recovery. I came to believe that someone kept me sober. And this power continues to help me when I sincerely follow directions and do whatever I need to do to stay away from alcohol. Also, I had the opportunity to see new-comers come in, stay sober, and start a new life in recovery. This strengthened my "Came to believe."

Being an alcoholic and prone to 'self will run riot' I did not have the faith and trust that HP will help me in other aspects of my life. Being a self-centered and ego-centric I was not willing to let go of self will. Whenever I revolted against "Thy will," I was always beaten and reduced to size. Tormented by emotional and

mental despair, and continuing to see dear ones and myself being hurt, I was willing to change.

When I accepted my powerlessness over my limitations, deformities, and people, place, and things, I realized I needed help to get release from them; I turned towards my sponsor and friends in AA. They asked me seek HP with humility and an open mind and ask for help and pray for the willingness to do the next right thing in life. I followed directions to the best of my ability and it helped me live life on life's terms. Today, I continue to do that in recovery since I do not know what else would work for me.

I have heard in AA that humility, open mind, and willingness can lead to faith. In my view, this is the foundation for "Come to believe." And my experience showed me absolute faith in HP (of my understanding) and actions help to restore oneself to sanity. It needs to continue on a daily basis—at least for me—to work.

- Anonymous member of the Singapore AA Fellowship

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The AA Responsibility Pledge



**I am Responsible
When Anyone, Anywhere
Reaches Out For Help
I Want The Hand Of A.A.
Always To Be There
And For That,
I am Responsible**