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Alcoholics Anonymous – The Original 12 Step Program

By Scott Michaels

The original 12 Step Program is Alcoholics Anonymous – which deals with what they call the

"powerlessness" to stop drinking alcohol[1]. Although the 12 Steps have been adopted by other groups including Al-Anon for people impacted by having or having had alcoholics in their life, Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12 Steps were designed and are only intended for use by alcoholics. The only requirement for membership of an Alcoholics Anonymous Group "is the desire to stop drinking".

Other twelve-step programs are similarly fellowships which aim to aid in the recovery of the consequences of an obsession, addiction, a physical and mental compulsion, or another harmful influence on their lives, with the help of the faith-based Twelve Steps dependent on reliance on "A Power Greater than ourselves". As is said in Alcoholics Anonymous, it is not just a matter of putting the cork in the bottle, the 12 Step Program deals with the underlying mental and emotional causes of the obsession with alcohol (or other substances in other Programs based on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous).

These fellowships of men and women, a bond of loosely organized, autonomous groups, function on the basis of principles formulated in the Twelve Traditions. Synonyms are anonymous program and A-program; the original twelve-step program is Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A), which was started in the US. Today there are meetings and fellowships all over the world.

All twelve-step programs follow some version of the Twelve Steps. Members meet regularly to discuss their problem(s) and share their victories. Common among all such programs is the view that members are dealing with an illness rather than a bad habit or a maladaptive behavior, that the illness is a combination of an allergy of the body that creates uncontrollable cravings coupled with an obsession of the mind that keeps finding rationalizations for returning to that which causes the cravings, and that recovery from the illness can occur by abandonment of individual will through the Twelve Steps.

True to the Twelve Traditions, twelve-step programs do not take positions on outside issues such as medical ones. The word "illness" rather than "disease" was used by Bill Wilson, a co-founder of A.A. and the drafter of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous (which was co-written by the first hundred men to find recovery in A.A.).

One of the most widely-recognized characteristics of twelve-step groups is the requirement that members admit that they "have a problem". In this spirit, many members open their address to the group along the lines of, "Hi, I'm Pam and I'm an alcoholic" -- a catchphrase now widely identified with support groups.

Attendees at group meetings share their experiences, challenges, successes and failures, and provide peer support for each other. Many people who have joined these groups report they found success that previously eluded them, while others -- including some ex-members -- criticize their efficacy or universal applicability. Thus there is some controversy about twelve-step programs.

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Alcoholics Meetings – Know The Truth And How It Can Help You

By Steven J. Acren

My husband and I recently moved to a different city within the state we live in. My husband has casually attended alcoholics meetings for several years. The alcoholics meetings can be of great support; however it is crucial to find the one that will meet your particular needs. If the meetings are inconvenient in terms of time or location you will probably not benefit enough from them.

In my husband's case, we found that in our new community they had several different meeting times spread out within the week. My husband went to one meeting on a Monday night, but discovered that most of his peers were much younger than him. He did not feel that he would gain the support that he needed from this particular group. After the meeting he found a poster advertising that on Tuesday's a group of men over 50 met at the same location. He attended that meeting and instantly found the support and understanding that he had been accustomed to in the alcoholics meetings in our former community.

There are multiple directories that list alcoholics meetings. There are also many ways of accessing the directories. Local newspapers, area churches and visitor information centers are just a few places to look out for the listings. Good news for computer users, many alcoholics meetings are listed on the websites of cities and communities. This will usually tell you the meeting times, locations and type of group.

Alcoholics meetings are held in most communities. In the larger communities and cities the alcoholics meetings are often broken up into specialty or sub groups, for example meetings for men, women, smokers, non-smokers, gays or lesbians. There are a great number of subgroups for the alcoholics meetings, so if you have a specific interest area or need, you should be able to find just the right one. Or easily switch to another should you want to.

Most communities also offer alcoholics meetings for adult children of alcoholics as well as for significant others that may be co-dependent. In smaller communities the groups may seem very tight

knit and closed to new comers, however most meetings for alcoholics welcome new members at all times. Because alcoholics meetings tend to follow a similar agenda and beliefs it is possible to attend meetings in communities that you are visiting. Often times being away from home on vacation or at business meetings may be a time that is particularly difficult for the alcoholic to maintain sobriety, but most likely a meeting will be taking place in the community that you find yourself in. Do not miss that opportunity and let your wild drinking habits be let loose.

Alcoholics meetings are not limited only to the United States. Several countries hold meetings on a regular basis, so attending alcoholic meetings when traveling abroad is a possible option. This is a great way of not only gaining the support you need while traveling, but also a way to establish relationships and make new friends around the world.

Whether you are new to recovery, or have many years of sobriety, attendance at alcoholics meetings is a way of gaining support, giving support, and developing long term relationships with others who've suffered exactly what you are going through and want to extend a helping hand. You can emulate positive role models and learn how to rein in your persistent habits of drinking.

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