

Booze News

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is Mental Health Awareness Month—a time dedicated to **increasing understanding of mental health, reducing stigma, and encouraging people to seek support without shame or fear.** Since its establishment in 1949, this month has served as a reminder that mental health is just as important as physical health, and that open conversation can be a powerful tool for healing.

In many ways, this message is deeply aligned with both Step Five and Tradition Five. Step Five invites us to share honestly with another human being, releasing the weight of secrets and shame, while Tradition Five reminds us that our primary purpose is to carry this message to others who still suffer. Together, they point us toward **connection as the pathway to healing.**

In this month's issue, we're exploring how honesty, vulnerability, and service support not only our recovery, but our overall mental and emotional well-being—**helping us move from isolation into a life of openness, purpose, shared strength, and professional support.**

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous can be healing in many ways but often is not the only support we need. Alcoholics Anonymous cannot diagnose or treat mental health issues, but can provide a firm foundation upon which we move forward.

If you or someone you know is struggling, you are not alone & support is available:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (U.S.) – Call or text 988, or chat via 988lifeline.org
- SAMHSA National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357), free and confidential treatment referral
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) – nami.org for education, support groups, and resources
- Mental Health America (MHA) – mhanational.org for screening tools and information

STEP FIVE

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

TRADITION FIVE

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

LONG FORM

Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

TRADITION FIVE

a checklist for groups

“EACH GROUP HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE
—TO CARRY ITS MESSAGE TO THE ALCOHOLIC
WHO STILL SUFFERS.”

1. Am I willing to firmly explain to newcomers the limitations of AA help, even though they may get mad at me for not giving them a loan? Or dating advice? Or help with a job?
2. Have I ever imposed on any AA member for a special favor or consideration simply because I am a fellow alcoholic?
3. Am I willing to Twelfth-Step the next newcomer without regard to who or what is in it for me?
4. Do I help my group in every way to fulfill our primary purpose?
5. Do I remember that AA long-timers, too, can be alcoholics who still suffer? Do I try both to help them and to learn from them?
6. Does our group ever use money from the basket for dinners or events or for memorials for members who have passed on?

**These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.*

dictionary definitions

Admit

To acknowledge or confess the truth of something, especially something that may be difficult or uncomfortable to accept.

Entity

A thing with distinct and independent existence; something that is real and has its own identity.

Primary

Of chief importance; first in rank, order, or significance.

Purpose

The reason for which something is done or created; an intended or desired result.

Spiritual

Relating to the human spirit or soul rather than material or physical things; often connected to beliefs, values, or a Higher Power.

Suffer

To experience or endure pain, distress, or hardship, whether physical or emotional.

Wrongs

Acts or behaviors that are unjust, immoral, or harmful to oneself or others.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

A HERSTORY OF RECOVERY

When Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in 1935, women were present—but barely. Early membership estimates suggest that fewer than 10–15% of AA members were women in the first decade. Back then, in the post-prohibition era it was acceptable for women to drink, but often under the supervision of their husbands. Traditional gender roles made participation in Alcoholics Anonymous less likely for women, as many were expected to remain in the home, not deviating from those duties. Societal stigma played a role in how alcohol abuse was viewed as well – a man abusing alcohol was a problem but a woman abusing alcohol was a *scandal*. Today, the number of women estimated in AA has grown significantly, with approximately 35–38% of AA members identifying as women.

Even when they were few, women played a vital role in AA's foundation and growth, not just in participation but by creating pathways where none existed.

- Lois Wilson – co-founder of Al-Anon and a steady force of support in early AA
- Henrietta Seiberling – whose introduction of Bill W. and Dr. Bob sparked AA's beginning (recounted briefly in "*Dr. Bob's Nightmare*")
- Sister Ignatia – a pioneer in medical treatment for alcoholism as well as comforts we still enjoy in meetings today – coffee and coins as commemoration for milestones.
- Marty Mann – one of the first women in AA to maintain long-term sobriety. In the second edition of the Big Book and each edition thereafter, her story is featured, titled "Women Suffer Too". She also became a pioneering public advocate—famously speaking on national radio broadcasts in the 1940s, helping shift alcoholism from a moral issue to a public health concern. Marty Mann later founded the National Council on Alcoholism, playing a major role in reducing stigma and expanding access to treatment—especially for women.

As more women entered AA, many began forming women's meetings—not out of exclusion, but out of necessity. These spaces have become a powerful tool in recovery.

Women's meetings can help members:

- Find a sponsor, which creates easier access to shared experience and relatable guidance
- Feel heard and seen in a space where stories are understood without explanation
- Identify more deeply through shared experiences around relationships, trauma, family roles, and societal pressure
- Practice vulnerability through greater emotional safety. This often leads to more honesty—especially crucial for Step Five work
- Additional benefits include:
 - Safety and trust, especially for those with trauma histories
 - Reduced comparison and distraction, allowing focus on recovery
 - Empowerment and confidence-building through shared growth
 - Modeling healthy communication and boundaries

In many ways, women's meetings create the exact conditions Step Five requires: honesty, safety, and connection. Early in AA, many women struggled to even enter the rooms due to stigma and fear. Today, while challenges still exist, women have more opportunities than ever to speak openly, be witnessed and experience the freedom that comes from being fully known. Step Five teaches us that we are only as sick as our secrets—but it also shows us that we are only as free as our willingness to share them. And for many women in recovery, that freedom begins the moment they realize they are not alone.

Thoughts From our Membership

Tradition 5-Spiritual Entity

Each Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group should operate as a spiritual entity with a singular primary purpose: carrying its message to individuals struggling with alcoholism. In my personal life, my purpose is broader than the group's purposes, but it encompasses my contribution to it. This requires me to stay close to my Higher Power and "perform his work well" (Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 63). This statement genuinely guides my life!

The group's main purpose is sobriety, achieved through the Twelve Steps. As Bill Wilson said, "An AA group can't address every personal issue or global problem. Its single goal is sobriety, freedom from alcohol, through the Twelve Steps." (Problems Other Than Alcohol, February 1958) While teaching and practicing these steps is central, Alcoholics Anonymous groups also raise awareness about alcoholism, work with health professionals, and support those with alcohol dependence. I've attended several meetings with medical students from various fields who genuinely want to help alcoholics. Sometimes, no one explains what AA is, which is obvious by their confused expressions. If an elder doesn't provide an explanation, I thank the students for coming and asking an elder to clarify AA's purpose.

Tradition 5 raises several important questions: What defines a group? As a spiritual entity, the group comprises of two or more alcoholics with a primary purpose. Why is it needed? Freedom from alcohol. How is an alcoholic identified? People who are suffering. Who still suffers? Alcoholics who have yet to find AA, newcomers who have yet to recover, and longer-sober people who are suffering.

Sometimes, AA membership and personal interests can dilute the group's main goal. When I share unrelated stories or vent negative feelings for relief, it distracts from the program's purpose. Topics like politics, social issues, therapy, religion, or yoga may also hinder the group's effectiveness in supporting alcoholics, even though fellowship remains important. Within AA groups, I aim to provide service and attend meetings regularly, as I genuinely value the fellowship. I contribute relevant stories to group discussions, preferring active engagement over silence. Additionally, I participate in decision-making, maintain a sponsor relationship, and support the service structure. In summary, the primary purpose revolves around giving and serving others. I hope this helps those who are still suffering.

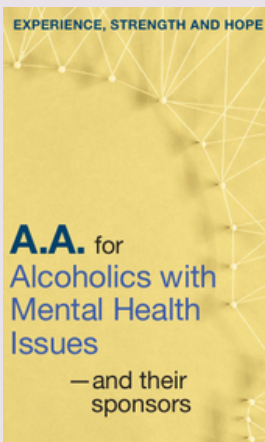
John D.

Pamphlet of the Month

This pamphlet explains how alcoholism and mental health issues often coexist, and how recovery involves addressing both—not choosing one over the other. It makes clear that: "Anyone can suffer from the disease of alcoholism... anyone who wants to stop drinking can find help and recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous."

A major theme is that many alcoholics use alcohol to cope with mental health symptoms—but it ultimately makes things worse. The pamphlet strongly reinforces that sobriety and mental health treatment go hand-in-hand, that you can't effectively treat one while ignoring the other. The pamphlet clearly states that A.A. is not a replacement for medical care: "God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors... Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons." and it warns against misinformation within A.A.: "A.A. members, as such, have no business commenting on another A.A. member's medical care." And emphasizes: "No A.A. member should 'play doctor.'"

This pamphlet provides personal stories from 12 women and men who consider themselves dual-diagnosis individuals (alcoholism + mental health issues) and who have achieved sobriety in A.A. as well as an additional section with 5 sponsor perspectives. These sponsors are experienced, sober A.A. members who have sponsored people with co-occurring mental health conditions and can speak from direct experience—not theory. Sponsors are encouraged to focus on sobriety and the steps and offer support—but not attempt to replace—professional care.



This pamphlet is available for download or purchase [here](#)

A Letter from the Editor



Dear District 14,

As always, I am grateful to continue serving through this fun little newsletter and carrying the message through each issue. Though my term as Committee Chair comes to a close at the end of this year, I look forward to the months and issues ahead.

The Booze News exists to share experience, strength, and hope across our district. Our goal is to offer not only information, but also inspiration. We aim to be rooted in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, supported by our foundational literature. We hope each issue provides something that resonates, whether it's a sense of identification, a new perspective, or simply encouragement to keep going.

I also want to emphasize that the Booze News is a low-stress service commitment, and I would love to see more individuals from District 14 join the committee this year. Whether you enjoy writing, editing, organizing, or simply want to be part of something creative and service-oriented, there is a place for you here. Fresh voices and perspectives help keep this work vibrant and relevant to our district.

If you're interested in getting involved, have ideas to share, or would simply like to connect, please reach out to us via email at boozenews.d14.a21@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Austin N.

Booze News Committee Chair

Upcoming Events

Speaker & Potluck Meeting Hosted by Joe McQ Step Study Ft. Megan G.
Thursday, April 30 5 PM - 7:30 PM
New Day Recovery Club
4046 Forest Blvd, East Saint Louis

GSR Workshop - Hosted by District 12
Saturday, May 9 2 PM - 4PM
8 Henson Place, Champaign il

Fellowship, Yard Games, & Food
Saturday, May 16 1 PM - 3 PM
Hosted by the District 18 Activities Committee
Hartford Park 7th Street, Hartford, IL

So. IL Serenity Campout
May 27 - 31
Rend Lake North Sandusky Campground
8420 Loon Ln, Sesser, IL

Area Assembly
June 7, 9 AM - 2:30 PM
In-Person option at The Parish Center
1900 Richmond Avenue, Mattoon, IL 61938
Zoom Option available as well - more information can be found [here](#).

District 14 GSR Meeting
June 14 1:00 PM
In Person at O'Fallon Trailer Group
108 Carbon Hill Road, O'Fallon IL
Or online via Zoom Meeting ID: 720 074 2222

We Want to Hear
From you!

You can now submit your own content to the Booze News for publication!

There is a submission form on the District 14 Website where you can submit feedback, articles, art work, events, poetry, quotes, your favorite sober stuff, literature recommendations, sober playlists, ANYTHING!

Submissions will be reviewed & may be lightly edited for clarity or space, but the original will not be modified. Submissions may not include harmful language, images, or violent content. Being included in the Booze News is at the sole discretion of the committee. Please remember our 12 Traditions where applicable when making a submission.

FULL DETAILS FOR THESE EVENTS ARE LISTED ON THE DISTRICT 14 WEBSITE!

Reminder!

You can always reach us via email to make suggestions or comments at:
boozenews.d14.a21@gmail.com

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