

TYPES OF AA MEETINGS

When we take a serious look at the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous, it becomes clear that it is still as effective as it was from 1939 to 1955; very effective with at least a 75% success rate. That is being reproduced today in groups and institutions around a good portion of the world where emphasis is placed on the study and application of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as outlined in the basic text "Alcoholics Anonymous" rather than on meetings. To say that our Program is not successful would be about as intelligent as walking into the headquarters of Microsoft and say, "Bill Gates isn't successful". Not too smart.

No, our Program is very solid, but the Fellowship is quite a different matter. Many segments of our Fellowship are so far removed from our Program (the life giving Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous protected by the life saving Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous) that it is impossible to recognize why they are there. It seems that in our Fellowship today, there are three basic types of AA meetings.

First, there is the AA meeting that is "**Alcoholics Anonymous**". In these meetings, we hear recovered alcoholics talk about what they were like, what happened and what they are like today. Or the meeting is a study of the Big Book, the Steps or the Traditions. Particular attention is directed toward the newcomers. These groups adhere to the Fifth Tradition. Also these groups take a "Group Inventory" periodically to assure that they are adhering to all of our treasured Traditions. Group Conscience meetings normally have to do with what the group can do to better attract and help suffering alcoholics. These groups are always successful.

The 2nd type of AA meeting is the "**Almost Anything**" meeting. There will be a few recovered alcoholics who talk about the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous, but there will be some "andas" and the discussion of issues, expression of ideas and opinions and isolated but unrelated experiences. These groups believe they don't need a "Group Inventory" and their Group-conscience meetings normally revolve around how to get enough money to pay the rent. These groups last for a period of time and then vanish from the scene.

The 3rd type of AA meeting is the "**Absolutely Awful**" meeting. These are normally discussion meetings about problems, my day and/or my way. Non-alcoholics not only sit in the meetings, but are permitted to participate. Very often these groups are bedeviled with folks who think the Big Book is antiquated needs to be replaced with one that would agree with their ideas. But you will hear little if anything about our Program (the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous). These groups seldom survive more than a few months.

The 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were the result of the failure of many groups. We claim to be intelligent people, but one must ask, "If we are so intelligent, why are we so stupid?" All of the problems with the Steps and Traditions were resolved before most of us arrived here. No one has been able to demonstrate a more reliable or effective method of avoiding death or permanent insanity from drinking than the through taking and living by the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. And no one has demonstrated a more effective way for a bunch of egotist, intellectuals, gurus, and spiritually sick people to band together and work together effectively than those who stay within the boundaries of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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Bill W. wrote,

“In the years ahead A.A. will, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, providing that we always remain willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. Our growth as individuals has depended upon this healthy process of trial and error. So will our growth as a fellowship.

Let us always remember that any society of men and women that cannot freely correct its own faults must surely fall into decay if not into collapse. Such is the universal penalty for the failure to go on growing. Just as each A.A. must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole Society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well.” (A.A. Comes of Age, pg 231)

We now know what the problem is and we know what the solution is. Unfortunately, we have not remained willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. We have been and are plagued with large doses of apathy and complacency. The problem we are trying to live with is needlessly killing alcoholics. The solution promises recovery for those who are willing to follow the clear-cut directions in the Big Book.