

PRODUCED MONTHLY FOR AA MEMBERS IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

THE WOMEN'S ISSUE

AA began with a primarily male membership, but today, at least one third of its members are women. This May, we proudly celebrate and amplify the voices of women within AA, showcasing the ways that AA has helped to enrich their lives and empower them to thrive.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Please scan the QR Code or tap this box and you will be directed to our anonymous content submission page.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

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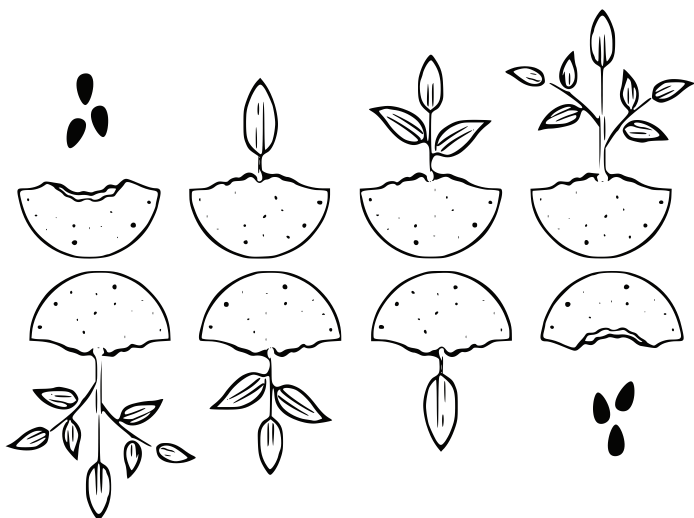
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Opinions expressed in Better Times are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

**How To Reach Us
Submit Group News, medallions, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times by the 10th of the current month for publication in an upcoming issue by email to bettertimes@aatoronto.org**

LEARNING TO LIVE EVERYDAY

I got my first buzz from alcohol at age 5, began drinking alcoholically at age 12, but didn't find the rooms until I was 42. I was definitely what they call a high functioning alcoholic, which is why it probably took so long to get here. I had a good job, I went to work everyday and was recognized for high quality of work. I had a car, had a motorcycle, and a good roof over my head (and I still have all these things). I could do anything I put my mind to, except putting the plug in the jug. Only those closest to me knew somewhat the extent of my drinking, and there weren't many of those people left due to my self-isolating.



Growing up I didn't know I was on the Asperger's spectrum, had ADHD, social and regular anxiety, and later in life, got to add CPTSD to the mix. So I always felt awkward. Like I never fit in anywhere, and constantly self-conscious. I also had my first experience with loss at age 6, when my 4 year old brother and best friend died of cancer. My first experience with gun violence was at age 7. I'm also a three time rape survivor, and suffered mental and physical abuse from my husband. I lived in fear and was full of anger. In the early years I drank because it removed all those awkward feelings, and it became my coping mechanism, my solution.

I had thought this was all my life could be, and I had resigned myself that it would be that way til the end. I thought I didn't want to live, but was unable to die despite my best efforts. The truth was I didn't want to die, but had no idea how to live.

I found the rooms, not for myself, but for my best friend who is also an alcoholic. I quickly discovered that I too was an alcoholic and belonged in the rooms. Once I had accepted this, I joined a homegroup and got a sponsor. That's when the healing began. I had to learn to make myself a priority, that I couldn't be of proper help to my loved ones if I was not taking care of myself. Self-forgiveness is a big one. I'm still working on it and I make sure that I set realistic goals for myself. I have to remember that I'm human, and I will make mistakes. The thing is to learn from them instead of beating myself up about them.

Cont'd on pg. 2

CHANGE BECAME IMPERATIVE AT 50

In life, they say we choose our parents, setting the stage for the lessons we're meant to learn. For me, addiction became a defining lesson early on.

At just three years old, rejection became a familiar taste. The Children's Aid declared me unwanted by my stepfather, setting off a cycle of displacement and abuse. Each new home brought deeper scars.

By age five, I was the solitary black child, always relegated to the back of the classroom. Rejection echoed from all sides: mother, father, stepmother, even teachers turned away.

Yet, amidst the hostility, my grandmother's room offered solace. Night after night, I mixed her drinks, forging a bond in secrecy, a flicker of warmth in a cold world.

At age twenty-one I had been violated by a male friend and received no compassion or understanding of my feelings by my stepmother and a form of dismissal by my favourite aunt. A sense of shame entered my life.

Marriage provided brief respite, but beneath unspoken burdens, it crumbled. The blame whispered by internal voices drove me deeper into addiction's abyss.

Cont'd on pg. 2

Change Became Imperative at 50 - cont'd from pg. 1

With each loss, each betrayal, substances beckoned stronger. My grandmother's death was the final blow, plunging me into a world of numbing oblivion.

Days melded into nights as bars became my refuge, each drink a temporary reprieve. Despite the darkness, I never wavered in my maternal duties, mustering strength amid sorrow.

But as walls closed in and facades crumbled, the truth emerged: I felt lost, alone, exhausted. At fifty, standing on the brink of despair, change became imperative.

Amid the wreckage, hope emerged. Witnessing so-called friends lose all to addiction served as a stark warning, a path I refused to tread further.

With a trembling heart, I embraced redemption. In a church basement, amidst unfamiliar faces and no one looking like me, isolation weighed heavy.

Yet, at that moment, a sense of belonging, of potential, stirred within. Through guidance from my sponsors in the steps, service in the program, and a renewal of my faith, I began to rebuild.

Twenty years later, I reflect on the journey with awe. Sobriety restored my voice, my worth, and my dreams.

No longer defined by past darkness, I stand testament to the transformative power within, and living proof that even the darkest nights yield to dawn's light.

- Linda R.

LIFE is TOUGH * BUT SO AM I!

I SPENT YEARS TRYING TO CONTROL MY DRINKING

My name is Carolyn O, and I am an alcoholic. My home group is the Last Chance Group, and my dry date is February 17th, 2021.

I was born in Toronto and grew up in a family of heavy drinkers. My parents are immigrants from the Caribbean, and I am the youngest of 5 children.

I feel like I was groomed to start drinking alcohol at an early age. My family liked to have parties, and alcohol was always available in the home. As a child, I was allowed to have sips of my parent's alcoholic drinks. They rarely said no, and I always wanted more.

I was sexually, emotionally, physically, and mentally abused as a child in my family. I wasn't protected and I lived with deep-seated fear, anger, and resentment. These experiences triggered a slow progression of alcohol and drug use that lasted 25 years. I was searching for ease and comfort to soothe the pain I felt inside.

I knew there was something wrong with me, but I didn't know I was an alcoholic.

I was depressed and filled with anxiety. I lied, cheated, stole, got used and abused, had affairs with married men, manipulated people, and blamed my family for all my problems.

I spent years trying to control my drinking whenever I felt it was getting out of control. I went to doctors, counselors, therapists, rehab centers, detoxes, and addiction support groups for help, but nothing stopped my growing mental obsession with alcohol and drugs.

It came to an end while I was working from home during the pandemic. After having a bottle of Prosecco for breakfast, something inside of me shut down. It felt as if a light had been switched off.

Cont'd on pg. 4

Learning to Live Everyday - cont'd from pg. 1

I just recently passed 16 months of sobriety, and my life is so much better for it. I'm also seeing a therapist for my PTSD, anxiety, and ADHD.

Today my relationship with my family is so much better. I recently attended my sister's wedding and had an amazing time - 100% sober.

I've learned to reach out for help instead of the bottle. Life isn't perfect, but I'm learning to deal with life on life's terms.

If I'm struggling with anger, fear, or resentments, I know I can go to a meeting and talk about it.

I know I'm in a safe space, and the relief I get from that is better than anything I can find in a bottle.

I used to live constantly worrying about tomorrow.

Now I've been given a second chance at life, I'm learning to live everyday.

I know I'll get through tomorrow by living today one day at a time.

- Vicky S.

GRAPEVINE BOOK OF THE MONTH

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART
Bill W.'s Grapevine Writings



Scan this QR code to access [more](#) "Better Times" issues!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR MAY 25, 2024 - 9AM - 3PM

Hey!!! Yes, you,

Do you know that the AA Info Day, a cooperation of your GTA Intergroup and the 8 G.T.A. districts of A. A. is on

Our delegate will report on what happened at the New York conference plus all the committees involved in the GTA will do a presentation on what their committees are doing and how you can help.

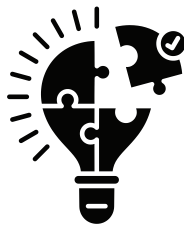
Have you ever wondered what it is like to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic outside the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous? How does AA carry the message to Treatment Centres? Hospitals? Correctional facilities? How do we educate the public, or professionals such as Doctors, Police officers, and educators?

It is up to us, the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, to ensure that the hand of AA is always there, whenever anyone reaches out for help. Service in our community is our responsibility. For this reason, every May for the last 45 years, GTA Intergroup and the 8 Districts of AA in Toronto have come together to put on INFO AA Day, a one-day event where members can come and find out more about the service structure of AA beyond the homegroup.

Oh!!!

Before I forget, the tickets are \$10. You can E-transfer to johnmay1954@gmail.com to pay your tickets mentioning Info AA Day in the message and pick them up at the door or communicate with me at 647-622-6127 (Bert) and I'll direct you to someone who has tickets in your district.

The day includes coffee, FELLOWSHIP, and snacks during the day but also a potluck lunch and a New York General Service Office staff member who is the Group Service Desk Coordinator. Karina is also the Central Service Intergroup liaison so if you have questions about your group and what is happening at the General Service Office, she will be able to answer most of your questions.



Information AA Day Committee

Reserve the date Saturday May 25th 9am to 3 pm
Bloordale United Church,
4258 Bloor St. West, Etobicoke.

GTAI/DISTRICT - MAY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Accessibilities - Sun. May. 19 – 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

Archives - Fri. May. 10 – 7 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

Communications - Tues. May 21 – 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

CPC/PI - Mon. May 20 – 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

Correctional Facilities - May 07 – 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

Self-Support - Meets every other month.

Next Meeting: May 30 - 6:30 pm

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

Treatment - May 19th - 4pm

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

Twelfth Step - Wed. May 08 – 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

IT Subcommittee - Tues. May 14 - 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

Information AA Day - Mon. May 27 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

MAY MEDALLIONS

Dean V., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 10 years,
May 2nd

Paul McA., Beaches Group, 55 years, May 7th

Meagan, High Park Group, 1 year, May 12th

Stacy V., Royal York Group, 5 years, May 14th

Nathalie R., New Anchor Group, 1 year, May 15th,
Celebration Date: May 16th

Marilyn M., Thorncliffe Park, 1 year, May 17th

Curt R., Willowdale Shepherd Group, 1 year, May
23rd

IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Please send your medallion details to

bettertimes@aatoronto.org

in the format of:

name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety - medallion
date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20...)

ARCHIVES CORNER

Did you Know ?

From Dec. 1934 to May 1935, Bill W. (dry date Dec. 11, 1934) worked with alcoholics, but failed to get any of them sober.

On May 10, 1935, a business deal brought Bill W. to Akron. He was in Akron to attend an annual stockholders meeting of the National Rubber Machinery Company in order to take over the company. However, he lost the proxy fight. He stayed at the Mayflower Hotel, very discouraged and worried that he might drink. On May 11 1935, in poor spirits & tempted to enter the hotel bar, Bill W. realized he needed another alcoholic. He phoned clergy members listed on the Mayflower Hotel (Akron, Ohio) lobby directory. He reached Rev. Walter Tunks who referred him to Oxford Group member Norman Sheppard who then referred Bill to Henrietta Seiberling. Bill called her and introduced himself as "a member of the Oxford Group & a rum hound from NY." Henrietta asked Bill to meet that afternoon at the Gatehouse at Stan Hywett Hall on the Sieberling estate. She viewed Bill's arrival as the answer to her prayers for Dr. Bob. She called Anne Smith (Dr. Bob's wife) and arranged a dinner the next day.

On May 12, 1935 (Mother's Day), Bill W. (age 39) first met Dr. Bob (age 55), his wife Anne, and their son Smitty (age 17) at Henrietta Seiberling's gatehouse in Akron, Ohio at 5 pm. Dr. Bob was so badly hung over he could not eat dinner and planned to stay for only 15 minutes. Privately, Bill told Dr. Bob of his experience with alcoholism in the manner that had been suggested by Dr. Silkworth. Dr. Bob opened up, and his planned 15 minutes turned into 6 hours, as he and Bill talked until after 11 pm.

On May 1, 1939, Bill & Lois left their 182 Clinton Street home. From 1939-1940 Bill & Lois moved 51 times.

On May 10, 1939, the Cleveland, OH group, led by pioneer member Clarence S. (story in Big Book "Home Brewmeister"), announced that they would meet separately from Akron & the Oxford Group. After almost 4 years, this was AA's third group. Their first meeting was at 2345 Stillman Rd., Cleveland Heights in the home of Grace & Abby G. (story in Big Book "He Thought He Could Drink Like a Gentleman). There were 16 members present. This was the first group to call itself Alcoholics Anonymous. The Clevelanders still sent their most difficult cases to Dr. Bob in Akron for treatment.

On May 8, 1941, Ethel M., (story in Big Book "From Farm to City") was reported to be the first female member in Akron, OH to sober up. Ethel spoke at the ORC in 1953.

On May 15, 1942, Bobbie B. (2nd National AA Secretary) sent a letter to AA groups announcing "A Plan for AA's in the Armed Service." The NY Office had started a file with the names & addresses of those serving in many parts of the world. The list was intended for mailing & to help AA members in the military to get in touch with each other.

In May 1946, the long form of the Twelve Traditions were published in the AA Grapevine.

On May 8, 1971, Bill W. was buried in a small private ceremony in East Dorset, Vermont.

On May 3, 1980, the 1st Information AA Day was held in Toronto. It was a combined effort of Toronto Intergroup & the 6 Districts in and around Toronto. (Today, GTA Intergroup Operating Committee members, Sub Committee Chairperson's & 8 GTA Districts plan this annual event). This year the event will be held in-person on Saturday May 25, 2024 at Bloordale United Church, 4258 Bloor St. W. from 9am-3pm, tickets \$10.00.

Greater Toronto Area Groups That Started in May

- May 8, 1946 - Kingsway Group
- May 25, 1960 - Port Credit Group
- May 16, 1978 - Kipling Group
- May 5, 1980 - Bellamy Group
- May 2, 1981 - Lansing Group
- May 1985 - Half Century Group

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT ARCHIVIST
EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or archives@aatoronto.org
OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.

I Spent Years Trying to Control my Drinking - cont'd from pg. 2

I was no longer able to function at my job because all I wanted to do was drink alcohol.

At that moment I knew that I could not stop drinking on my own, and that it would eventually kill me.

I took time off work and decided to get sober. A guy that I knew told me about an AA group in my community. I started going to zoom meetings and immediately found comfort listening to people share their experience, strength and hope.

I heard stories that sounded like mine. This is what kept me coming back to the rooms of AA.

I had no idea how or if AA was going to work for me. I just kept going to meetings and felt less alone.

Eventually I was ready and willing to try the 12 Step program of AA as a solution to my problems. I started working with a sponsor, got involved in service and began working with other women.

My recovery from alcoholism was as slow and progressive as its onset. I had to be patient, surrender my will and consistently work at the 12 Steps to find a Higher Power of my understanding, who could do for me what I couldn't do for myself. I also used outside help to deal with my trauma.

It is a miracle that I am sober!

I never imagined that I would now be able to face my problems and have fun without needing a drink or drug.

My relationships with family members have improved, I actually have real friends, and I finally fit in with a fellowship of caring people who support me no matter what.

For those who are new or coming back, keep going to AA meetings even if you are still drinking.

Listen to the stories that sound like yours and keep an open mind.

AA really does work if you work it!

- Carolyn O.

