

THE JOURNEY AT THE BEACH

A P R I L 2 0 2 1

Tradition Four - "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 146

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

"To thine own self be true"

NAME	YEARS	SOBRIETY DATE	CELEBRATING	WHERE	WHEN
Tony D	12	03/29/09		Men's 12 and 12 Step • Atlantic Club	8 pm
Frankie L	7	04/01/14		HJF Women's Step Study • Zoom	10 am
Bart S	26	04/03/95	04/04/21	CDA • Zoom	8 pm
Jeff S	11	04/10/10		Men's 12 and 12 Step • Atlantic Club	8 pm
Mike K	2	04/21/19	04/24/21	Happy Risers • Atlantic Club	9 am
Bradley S	9	04/17/12	04/23/21	Action Group • Holy Savior 17th St OC	8 pm
Diane H	31	04/27/90		Assateague Group	
Jess V	14	04/29/07	05/02/21	CDA • Zoom	8 pm

Please submit all anniversary information to Carla H at info@ocaa.org by the 28th of the preceding month of the anniversary. Include your name, sobriety date, celebration date, where and when. The newsletter is printed on the first Tuesday of every month, so if your sobriety date falls early in the month, we may put your announcement in the prior month's newsletter. Thanks!

Step Four • "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 42

Fourth Step about dealing with Fear • "The verdict through the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 68

THE JOURNEY AT THE BEACH

Living the Spiritual Disciplines and Virtues in 12-Step Recovery



Spiritual Awakening: The Concept

We noted in the introduction to this section that AA was founded on the Jungian idea that there was a particular kind of alcoholic who could not recover except through a spiritual awakening. This is not subject to debate. It is a well-documented fact of our history. Most of our pioneers seem to have been like that. No doubt there are many in AA today who are not.

Whether we are or not, whether, as the Big Book suggests, we can actually say “Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this

thing” (p.29), is for each one of us to say. What is certain is that, for many of us, the question is not that important. If we are new in the program, having a spiritual awakening is just not the uppermost thing in our minds. We just want to get sober and get out of trouble: maybe get a job or an apartment, or get back with our significant other, or get our children back, or get out of jail. If we manage to stay sober and make some progress in these and other areas, the question will remain marginal.

If we are in long-term recovery and we’re getting better and life is (all things considered) generally good, we are probably not going to bother with the question either. We are probably making some spiritual progress anyway, even if we don’t describe it in those terms. A spiritual awakening can be gradual and take place on many levels. Even a minimum amount of work with the Steps will contribute to the process and show positive results.

The question may not really get our attention until we have a crisis or a relapse (the two usually coincide). The “slip” may be of the emotional or of the drinking variety (although generally we only recognize the latter). In either case, we’ve had a wake-up call. It’s hard to go on with business as usual. We feel like we have to do something. But what? Haven’t we been going to meetings? Haven’t we been working the Steps? Haven’t we had a sponsor and our share of sponsees? Why’s our life unraveling again? That’s when some of us take another look at the opening clause of Step 12.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps . . .” Because of its grammatical structure, it is easy to miss the centrality of that clause to the Step. Upon a closer reading, we might notice that it tells us three rather significant things. First, it tells us the purpose of the 12 Steps, and therefore of the AA program that is based on them. That purpose is to have a spiritual awakening.

Second, it tells us that working the Steps will result in such an awakening. This is not so much an assertion or a promise as a conclusion: “Having had.” It is what experience has shown. Rarely, notes the Big Book (p. 58), will this fail. If we work them, we’ll have it. If we don’t, we won’t.

Third, it tells us that what follows in the subsequent two clauses—and for the remainder of our lives in recovery—is the result of that awakening: having had X, we did Y. That we’ve had it is both the message we try to carry to alcoholics and what enables us to continue

practicing the principles in all our affairs, above and beyond our problem with alcohol.

The awakening has solved that problem, and a continuing awakening through an ongoing practice ensures that the problem doesn’t arise again and that recovery doesn’t degenerate into a holding operation where we just abstain and stay dry. Practicing the principles as a way of life can, not only “expel the obsession,” but “enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole” (12&12, p. 15). “As a way of life” is key. The principles are to be lived. That’s how we experience them. That’s how they effect the awakening. The Big Book makes this perfectly clear: “The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it (p.83, emphasis in the original).

There’s obviously a lot—everything, in fact—riding on the idea of a spiritual awakening. Yet AA is not a theological, philosophical, or psychological program, even though it borrows from all three disciplines. It is first and foremost a program of action. Therefore, our two texts don’t spill a lot of ink trying to explain what a spiritual awakening is. Instead, they focus on explaining how it works and what the results are. Work the Steps and practice the principles, they say, and you’ll have one. Utilize, don’t analyze, as the slogan would have it.

But if we can’t utilize and are not getting anywhere, maybe we do need to analyze. If we’re not lacking in desire, willingness, or effort, maybe we are lacking in understanding. If so, we may need to go back and see what our two texts actually say. If we do, we’ll find that they give us enough material to get a handle on the concept and put it into practice. Most of this of course is descriptive, but we can infer the conceptual building blocks if we do the work.

The passages we need to consider are in the Big Book’s “There Is a Solution” and “Appendix to a Spiritual Experience,” and in the 12&12’s Step 12.

In “There Is a Solution,” a spiritual awakening is described as a radically transforming spiritual experience: “The great fact is that we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences* which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God’s universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves” (p.25).

Note that the passage stresses the term “fact,” a curious fact itself, given the nature of its content. Still, it says it twice. This highlights a crucial idea: a spiritual awakening is not about beliefs or creeds, but about actual events experienced by the alcoholic. The events are what cause the transformation.

The asterisk after “spiritual experiences” above references the Appendix (pp.567-568), where following William James’s Varieties of Religious Experience, we’re told that the awakening or the experience “has manifested itself in many different forms” and that, contrary to the impression given in the first edition of the book, they do not have to be “in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals” (such as Bill himself had experienced at Towns Hospital). Most are gradual, or of what James called “of the educational variety, because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

THE JOURNEY AT THE BEACH

Still, these can bring about a “profound alteration” in the alcoholic’s “reaction to life,” a change that “could hardly have been brought about” by the alcoholic alone.

The implication of course is that some can de sudden, though they need not be the thunder and lightning variety like Bill’s (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p.63) or Fitz M.’s (*Big Book*, p.56). The alcoholic can also experience both (as was also the case with Bill). In either case, central to the awakening is a growing “awareness of a Power greater than ourselves,” a “God consciousness.” Again, awakening connotes experiencing.

The 12&12 (pp.106-107) echoes the basic message in the Big Book Appendix, declaring that “There are as many definitions of spiritual awakening as there are people who have had them,” but that what all genuine ones have in common, and what constitutes its most important meaning, is that the person “has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being.”

The 12&12 goes further, however, directly linking the concept to some of the spiritual principles whose source and whose practice are instrumental in the awakening. “In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable. What he has received is a free gift, and yet usually, at least in some small part, he has made himself ready to receive it.”

“A.A.’s manner of making ready to receive this gift,” concludes the 12&12, “lies in the practice of the Twelve Steps in our program” (pp. 106-107). We are thus brought back to the opening clause of Step 12.

The two books’ understanding of a spiritual awakening is, in terms of its results, the same as that of Jung and James. Such an awakening brings about a radical transformation which enables us, not only to overcome hobbling handicaps like alcoholism, but to otherwise significantly change our life for the better.

Our books are specific about the spiritual principles and the ultimate source of the transformation, the spiritual Power at work. Jung is specific about what seems to happen psychologically: the experience involves “huge emotional displacements and rearrangements” which transform the ideas, emotions, and attitudes, which had governed our lives, replacing them with “a completely new set of conceptions and motives.”

As the two books make clear, and as we will discuss in the next two posts, this gives us an entirely different outlook on life, one that is anchored in the entirely new motivation suggested by Step 11: a desire to do God’s will for us.

[Image: Rowland H., link in spiritual chain from Carl Jung to Oxford Group to Ebby T. to Bill W. to Dr. Bob.]

http://practicetheseprinciplesbook.com/spiritual-awakening-the-concept_552.html

Maryland General Service, Inc. Area 29
invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting

Mini-Conference
April 10, 2021
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Zoom Meeting opens at 8:30 am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3352329265?pwd=ZTIDcUx6aTUwWXIyaXNndm1tbWszZz09>
Meeting ID: 335 232 9265
Passcode: 164
One tap mobile
+1-929-205-6099,,335-232-9265#,,,,*164# US (New York)
For questions contact altdelegate@marylandaa.org

Speaker—Racy J.
(Serves on Public Information Desk at General Service Office)

SAVE THE DATE!

Baltimore Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous

2021 VIRTUAL SOBRIETY SHOW

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2021

Meeting ID & Passcode TBA

5:30 PM Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
6:00 PM to ??? Video Performances

A fundraiser for the Baltimore Intergroup.
No admission charge. 7th Tradition contributions & raffles.
Contribute at: baltimoreaa.org/contributions/

Interested in performing? Schedule your audition on any Wednesday in February between 6-9 pm.

Contact: 2021baltimoresobrietyshow@gmail.com

THE JOURNEY AT THE BEACH

Virtual Meetings

District 32 and the **Ocean City Area Fellowship Intergroup** meet every first Tuesday of the month at the Atlantic Club, 11827 Ocean Gateway, Ocean City, MD 21843 (Route 50 Westbound). For now, we will meet via Zoom. Contact info@ocaa.org for a link if you would like to attend.

Next meeting is **May 4th**
General Service Reps **5:30 pm**
Intergroup Reps **6:00 pm**

Meetings • Groups are slowly reopening in-person meetings in accordance with Mayor Hogan's guidelines. Please visit the [Meetings Page](#) for the latest updates. Listed below are Virtual Meetings taking place in the Ocean City Intergroup. Visit Ocean City Fellowship Intergroup of AA's website at ocaa.org/update for real time revisions to the following schedule.

Monday

- **6 pm Happy Hour** via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89390852132> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 893 9085 2132 Password: 494142

Tuesday

- **Noon Happy Joyous and Free Women's** group reads "As Bill Sees It" via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86421946835?pwd=cytBUmJLVndrMVhRQVQycFhhWHh0Zz09> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 864 2194 6835 Password: 010397

Wednesday

- **7 pm The Promises** via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/217995249?pwd=cXlZK21CanRtY2pqOE9hSG4rNG9HUT09> Dial in: +1 301 715 8592 Meeting ID: 217 995 249 Password: 382990
- **7 pm Al-Anon • Bayside Beginning Ocean Pines** via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82512805793?pwd=VjJsOUt4anJcTIyY0pBRWhTZDI2QT09> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 825 1280 5793 Password: 058548
- **8 pm Free To Be Women's** group via Zoom: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/358229631> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 358 229 631 Password: 9S1PSg

Thursday

- **7 pm Primary Purpose** group Big Book Study Meeting via <https://ppgmd.org>

Friday

- **10 am Happy, Joyous and Free Women's** group via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84631768850?pwd=S0F3a2xtRWN5WE9QMFlrbCtDRmRZQT09> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 846 3176 8850 Password: 313033

Saturday

- **7 pm Saturday Night Live!** Apr 11, 2020 via Zoom <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/954508347?pwd=TDJ0UnNuYmZlYm9Ed1pHQmxEWHR0Zz09> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 954 508 347 Password: 646266

Sunday

- **8 pm CDA (Chemical Dependents Anonymous) • Step To It!** via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86011984838?pwd=RHdSaTdJSUhpNk5tUE0zcUloZnJmUT09> Dial in: +1 (301)-715-8592 Meeting ID: 860 1198 4838 Password: 611310

OCAA Help Line Phone Schedule 410-600-5219

April - Positive Attitude May - Happy Risers June - Action Group July - Fresh Air