



Pass it on

OUR "MEETING IN PRINT"

A Monthly Publication of the Birmingham Intergroup Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

Depression in Sobriety: There is a solution

By: Anonymous AA Member



Overcoming Depression

According to some experts, managing depression and other mental health issues can be challenging for the alcoholic, and greater levels of success were reported by those who sought help with major depressive disorders in sobriety.

It had been about two and half weeks since I had come home from the hospital with my new, beautiful baby. I was looking out the window, wondering why I felt so down in the dumps. I had just delivered a healthy baby, my third child. I *shouldn't* feel depressed. After all, I had worked hard at sobriety and had been in recovery for many years. Had I called my sponsor? Check. Had I prayed? Check. Was I working my program? Check. What the heck was I doing wrong?

When I went in for my post-delivery checkup, the doctor wanted to know "how things were going." The truth was they were fine for the baby, but not at all fine for me.

I soon found myself filling out a questionnaire to check for symptoms of depression. It said I was "moderately" depressed. There wasn't anything "moderate" about what I was! I felt pretty darn bad, staring out the window, seeing nothing, and not wanting to do anything. The doctor, who knows all about my history, including my drinking, told me about hormonal and chemical imbalances in the brain. "Depression is a medical condition," he said. Wow, that really resonated with me. Although the term had been in my vocabulary for years, I had never understood it as a medical condition.

The doctor started treating my depression, and about a month later, I started feeling better. I wasn't depressed because I wasn't praying enough, reading enough or going to enough meetings. I had already been doing those things for years. I was depressed because of an imbalance in my brain, a medical condition. So, for other sober alcoholics practicing the program and suffering with depression: there is a solution.

Non-alcoholics who suffer from depression and other mental health issues deal with significant challenges while people who are "just" alcoholic also have plenty of trouble. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, a staggering 90 percent of them will relapse in the first four years of sobriety. Helping alcoholics who must also manage depression and other mental health issues can be even more complicated. These people are not unusual; almost 28 percent of alcoholics have a major depressive disorder. In fact, an alcoholic is 3.9 times more likely to have a major depressive disorder than a nonalcoholic

Fortunately, those suffering with depression or other mental health issues in sobriety can get help. In fact, they need to. The National Institute report states, "**If only one disorder** — either the depression or the alcohol abuse — **is treated individually without addressing the other, relapse is highly likely.**" Since an alcoholic who also suffers with substantial depression can be "extremely challenging" to treat, several reports suggest that "professional help is needed."

The National Institute of Health published an extensive report on a study that includes findings on "long-abstinent" alcoholics with major depressive disorders (MDD). It recommends that sober alcoholics with major depressive disorders should seek treatment. According to another report, "Treatment of the Depressed Alcoholic Patient," not treating major depressive disorders among this group "**doubles the risk**" of relapse.

The report "Depression of the Abstinent Alcoholic," states that ". . .this underlying depressive disorder may be a risk factor for relapse of alcoholism." According to several medical reports, while sobriety has an obvious impact on the severity of depression among alcoholics, sobriety alone doesn't always successfully treat significant mental health issues in recovery.

Continued on page 4.

AA History & Trivia

March's AA Trivia question: No one answered the February question!! Let me rephrase it.

In February 1933, Congress passed an amendment to the Constitution that must have saddened bootleggers and families of alcoholics while it made party animals ecstatic. What amendment was that, and what did it do?

Send your answer to: passitonbirmingham@gmail.com and you'll be entered in a drawing to win a free 6-month subscription!

NEWCOMER'S CORNER:

By: Tommy A., Springville Group

In an after-meeting discussion, a few members of the fellowship and I discussed using the program of Alcoholics Anonymous to solve other problems of life. Bill W. even mentions it on page 84 of the Big Book when he says, "And we ceased fighting anyone or anything--even alcohol." After I left, I began to think about using the program to solve more of life's problems besides drinking. If it were just about not drinking, then we could quit going to meetings after we had worked the steps. I always used the statement that we work the steps until the steps work us. But it is infinitely more complex than that. We work the steps until we start living them.

Dr. Paul O., who wrote the story in the back of the book, "Acceptance was the answer to all my problems," wrote a book called *There's More To Quitting Drinking Than Quitting Drinking*. In this book he talks about the four types of sobriety--physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. After we have worked through the four different types of sobriety, we are ready to live the steps.

As it says at the end of the Promises on page 84, "we will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will SUDDENLY realize that God is doing for us, what we could not do for ourselves." These are not extravagant promises. "They WILL be fulfilled among us--sometimes quickly, sometimes *s l o w l y*. They will ALWAYS materialize if we WORK for them."

Life, after a period of sobriety, will suddenly seem easier. How long does this take? As my first sponsor used to say, "As long at it takes."

"Depression in Sobriety" Continued...

In some cases, professional help was not only needed, but "critical." Addiction Psychiatrist Dr. Charles O'Brien, at the University of Pennsylvania, has conducted extensive research on alcoholics with major depressive disorders. He found that high success rate occurred with depressed alcoholics addressing their depression in sobriety. "The best results occur when you treat both simultaneously," O'Brien said in a news report.

NOTES:

This article is not intended to be medical advice. If you feel you may be struggling with depression, please contact your primary medical provider or a licensed mental health care professional.

Information and statistics used in the report were obtained from published material from organizations including the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute of Health, *The American Journal of Psychiatry* and *Psychology Today*.

STEP OF THE MONTH—STEP 3:

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

TRADITION OF THE MONTH—TRADITION 3:

"The only requirement for AA Membership is a desire to stop drinking."



Birmingham Central Office

NEW HOURS FOR CENTRAL OFFICE

EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 1ST

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
and Saturday 9:00 AM—3:00 PM
Wednesday and Sunday—Closed

WELCOME HOME!

Are you new to the AA program? If so, welcome! We are glad you are here! Do you need a little more information? Check us out at: www.birminghamaa.org or call us at the Birmingham Central Office (205) 290-0060.

KEEP COMING BACK!

Please submit articles about anything related to **recovery, sobriety, or alcoholism**. Share your experience, strength and hope! *Send your work to:*

passitonbirmingham@gmail.com

LOCAL AA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Steering Committee

- Melanie S., Committee Chair
- Steve P. (Moody Crossroads), Co-Chair
- Russel M., Secretary and Manager of Central Office
- Mary G. (Day by Day), Treasurer
- Bill M. (Moody Crossroads)
- Mark L. (Hope on Highlands)
- Myron E. (Hope on Highlands)

Meeting Changes

The Came to Believe Meeting has moved across the street to below Wild Roast Coffee in the basement. The meeting will return to the outdoors in the spring. Chairs are needed, so bring a chair to share!

Starting January 6, 2020, Warrior AA Group will Begin at 7:00 PM on Mondays at the Warrior Community Center.

JASPER AA GROUP ANNIVERSARY

SATURDAY MARCH 7 TH

CHURCH ON JONES DAIRY ROAD
JASPER AL.

2 PM FELLOWSHIP

3 PM ALONON SPEAKER

4 PM BARBECUE DINNER

5 PM AA SPEAKER

50/50 raffle after AA SPEAKER

**Sunday@2
AA**

1st Anniversary

**Sunday
March 22, 2020
2:00 PM**

@
JAFI Clubhouse
2012 - 14th Ave South
Birmingham, AL 25205

Look for Similarities, Not the Differences

By: Jason C. Trussville Group

In coming to Alcoholics Anonymous ... again. I was told to look for the similarities, not the differences. All of the times I had been exposed to A.A. in years past I had never quite identified. I was different. I might have gotten close to relating or identifying but then the disease would chime in and tell me “yeah - but they don’t understand”. It would tell me that y’all weren’t as bad as I was, or that y’all were worse. Pride would jump in and say they haven’t been through the things you have. It would tell me whatever it needed to so that I wouldn’t keep coming back. What I know today is that my disease feeds off of my ego. It wants me to feel separate - different - a part from - alone. It wants me to feel unique, terminally unique. It is when I feel this way that I will believe the other lies it tells me like “you will never change so what’s the point”... and I drink again.

One of the things that helped me see the similarities was reading the stories in the back of the Big Book. I started with “Our Southern Friend.” This was a story by someone who at a glance was most like me. After reading through a good portion of the stories I realized I had highlighted more from the stories like “Student of Life,” who was someone that was at a glance nothing like me.

Another thing that was crucial was that I started to get to know people. In the past I would be in the back of the room & bolt as soon as the meeting was over. As uncomfortable as it was I started getting to the meeting a bit early & staying a bit late (the meeting before/after the meeting). The wall started to come down a little at a time week after week, month after month.

It would still tell me things like “they don’t like you “ & “they don’t really want you there”, but I took that characteristic defiance and turned it on its head. I told myself, ‘I don’t care if they don’t like me. I’m going anyway’. Of course they did want me there, I was just battling old ideas and John Barleycorn wanted to get fed.

Over time I began to get a little comfortable with people in the meeting. I even went and watched a football game at another member's house. I started going out to eat with some of the other members when it was offered. While these don’t sound like life-saving decisions, and I was little more than a warm body and too awkward to interact, they were decisions that helped me become more connected to the other people in A.A. The more connected I became the more I saw the similarities and could feel *a part of* and not alone. I began to become a part of the fellowship. If not for the fellowship I would not have come back enough to take the steps. If not for the steps I would not be here to have the fellowship. An old timer I think a lot of said in a meeting once, “when an active alcoholic dies, they die thinking “I’m different”. That is the terminal uniqueness that almost killed me.

Today I like to think of us all as puzzle pieces. We are all different shapes and sizes - and we all have different assets and liabilities, but when we are put together we make a beautiful picture! What is important for me today is to put my focus on the similarities. The things that make us alike are what make us a community - with common goals: *To stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.*