Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

Description

What is AA?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of people who have had a drinking problem. It is non-professional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or educational requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about their drinking problem..

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other than Alcohol

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Some professionals often refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as â??substance abuseâ?• or â??chemical dependency.â?• Non-alcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to AA and encouraged to attend AA meetings. Anyone may attend â??Openâ?? AA meetings, but only those with a *drinking* problem may attend â??Closedâ?? meetings.

A renowned psychiatrist, who served as a non-alcoholic trustee of the AA General Service Board, made the following statement:

> â??Singleness of purpose is essential to the effective treatment of alcoholism. The reason for such exaggerated focus is to overcome denial. The denial associated with alcoholism is cunning, baffling, and powerful and affects the patient, helper, and the community. Unless alcoholism is kept relentlessly in the foreground, other issues will usurp everybodyâ??s attention.â?•

What Does AA Do?

- AA members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or â??sponsorshipâ?• to the alcoholic coming to AA from any source
- The AA program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
- This program is discussed at AA group meetings.
    - Open Speaker meetings â?? open to alcoholics and non-alcoholics. (Attendance at an Open AA meeting is the best way to learn what AA is, what it does, and what it does not do.). At Speaker meetings, AA members â??tell their stories.â?• They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to AA, and how their lives have changed as a result of

Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Open Discussion meetings â?? one member speaks briefly about their drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on AA recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up.
- Closed Discussion meetings â?? conducted just as Open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective AAâ??s only. (Closed meetings are for AAâ??s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.)
- Step meetings (usually Closed) â?? discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
- AA members also take meetings into correctional and treatment facilities.
- AA members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about AA as part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings about AA are not regular AA group meetings.

What AA *Does Not* Do

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- Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
- Solicit members
- Engage in or sponsor research
- Keep attendance records or case histories
- Join â??councilsâ?• of social agencies
- Follow-up or try to control its members
- Made medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
- Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment
- Offer religious services
- Engage in education about alcohol
- Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services
- Provide domestic or vocational counseling
- Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-AA sources
- Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

Members from Court Programs and Treatment Facilities

In recent years, AA groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment facilities. Some have come to AA voluntarily; others, under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet, â??How AA Members Cooperate,â?• the following appears:

> â??We cannot discriminate against any prospective AA member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in AA, many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfoRte But continual exposure to AA educated us to the true nature of the illness.

Who made the referral to AA is not what AA is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.â?•

Proof of Attendance at Meetings

Sometimes, courts ask for proof of attendance at AA meetings.

Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have the AA group secretary sign or initial a slip that has been furnished by the court together with a self-addressed court envelope. The referred person supplies identification and mails the slip back to the court as proof of attendance.

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Other groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any groupâ??s involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

This proof of attendance at meetings is *not* part of AAâ??s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus alleviate breaking AA membersâ?? anonymity.

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Literature

AA Conference-approved literature is available in French and Spanish. For additional copies of this paper, or for a literature catalog, please write or call the General Service Office.

The AA Grapevine, a monthly international journal â?? also known as â??our meeting in printâ?• â?? features many interesting stories about recovery from alcoholism written primarily by members of AA. It is a useful introduction and ongoing link to AAâ??s diverse fellowship and wealth of recovery experience. The Spanish-language magazine La ViÃ±a, is published bimonthly.

For Grapevine information or to order a subscription to either the AA Grapevine or La ViÃ±a: (212) 870-3404; fax (212) 870-3301; Web site: www.aagrapevine.org.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of AA is to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety. Regardless of the road we

follow, we all head for the same destination, recovery of the alcoholic person. Together, we can do what none of us could accomplish alone. We can serve as a source of personal experience and be an ongoing support system for recovering alcoholics.

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