

# The Eye pener

Vol 24 No. 4 - April 2024

Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word



## Meeting Makers Make It



**“Meeting makers** make it;

meeting makers find out what happens to people who don't go to meetings.”

That's what the old slogan says, and whether it be in person or on line, meetings remain the core of a happy and relapse-free sober life.

To this day, pretty much every relapse story I've heard begins with 5 words: "I stopped going to meetings.”

Of course, meetings are just one part of a successful AA program. Of course, prayer, sponsorship, reading, service, and the like are companion key elements.

Alcoholism is a disease of isolation. Meetings help combat that feeling of anxious apartness and the attitude of terminal uniqueness. And they provide the spirit of fellowship that can save lives.

Meeting makers come in many forms. I have been inspired by people who have not let physical handicaps, personal or family tragedy, adverse weather conditions, financial or employment setbacks, or other obstacles prevent them from getting to meetings. I've seen people on the eve of imminent assignment to war zones attend meetings and take steps to meet with fellow alcoholics in the midst of front-line service. Staying sober "no matter what" is facilitated by meeting attendance.

The "I got this" mentality precedes meeting absence.

This thinking can lead to relapse and death.

One of the great things about meeting attendance is the phenomenon that one suffering invariably feels better after a meeting.

The danger of not going to meetings is the "dry drunk" syndrome, the case of mere abstinence without working the program. It is a condition of sheer unhappiness, anger, frustration, and insanity, a state of misery leading to many dangers including relapse.

As the program teaches, I am not cured; all I have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition. Meetings are an essential part of such vital maintenance. And, believe me, they are fun at times. We are not a glum lot.

God bless the old timers who would respond to my complaining by asking, "What Step are you working on?" and "What's your next meeting?" And they would go to any length to offer assistance if I needed help getting there.

The essence of the program is - one alcoholic talking to another, sharing experience, strength and hope.

A great place to talk is a meeting - whether in person or on line.

I remember the late Sam S. whose Program involved going to two meetings a day. I strive to follow his example wherever and whenever I can.

*~Dennis McM*

Brown Bag

---

THE ARTICLES CONTAINED HEREIN ARE PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCES.

---

THEY DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OR POSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EYE OPENER COMMITTEE OR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

---

---

## How an Older Couple Changed My Life

---

**I was sober** for about a week when I happened upon Charlie and Lucy-Bell G. in 1981 at an AA meeting in St. Petersburg Florida. They sobered up in the 1950's. It was a small group, maybe a dozen people. Except for them we were all youngish and went out to coffee after the meeting. There was laughing, flirting, curiosity, and sobriety. Something I desperately needed.

Several of these people were reading books that Lucy-Bell had loaned them. At first, she wouldn't give me a book. She didn't want me to confuse reading books with what she considered the mechanics of how to maintain sobriety. Namely: 1. Get a home group and attend it regularly, 2. Get a sponsor, 3. Work with new people, 4. Live in day-tight compartments (24-hour segments), 5. And initiate a daily AA contact. She said she came

by these fundamentals by interviewing people at AA meeting halls all across the country.

Eventually she gave me a book. We discussed it, and she gave me another. This went on for about three dozen books. These books came from a list of books a friend of hers recommended. He was a self-described social engineer, a futurist. (p. 3)



Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more local stories and meeting information.

You see, I was never a good student or had a teacher take an interest in me. These books, under her guidance and encouragement, seemed to hold water. I couldn't dismiss them. I was learning how a mind is developed through culture and slowly I was developing a new reaction to the world. I was hooked. But more to the point, drinking would interfere with what we were doing. This couple had a large kitchen table and AA people were constantly flowing in and out of their home. I felt safe. Here, there was no need for secrets. We could laugh at our mistakes, our nutty reactions... our weak minds. I developed an organizing princi-

ple of keeping my language in line with my behavior. I felt free. She also offered a way to loosen me up by incorporating in my talking and thinking habits these five things: 1. I could be wrong, 2. So far as I know, 3. Up to a point, 4. To a degree, 5. And... More can be said. It was here that I learned there were options to my reactions.

At some point I began questioning what exactly is a real alcoholic. My parents drank every evening, were they alcoholics? Lucy-Bell said, I can see this is making you awfully thirsty, just stick with me, we're on to something new, and besides, you have the rest

of your life to drink yourself to death, don't be in such a hurry. She followed up with, don't hold your ideas or your values so tightly, some of them are making you sick. Learning which ones takes time.

I love AA. The welcoming hand of AA is no small thing. I'm glad to be a part of it.

*~Lucky G.*

Burlington, VT

## **Brown Bag Group**

**Open ~ All Are Welcome**

Mon.-Fri. 12:00 pm | Sat.-Sun. 1:00 pm

First Congregational Church, 39 Main St., Essex Junction

Wheelchair Accessible

**Download or print the AA Vermont Districts  
2 & 11 [meeting list](#).**

---

## Working the Program

---

**There is a** four-letter word which is found many times in our literature. It is a concept alien to far too many but a necessary ingredient for success in the Program, and staying alive. That word is 'work.'

Failure to work the program of alcoholics anonymous can result in relapse, the dry-drunk syndrome, continued misery, and death. Mere abstinence from alcohol is a vital pre-condition for sobriety.

Service work is important. Working the steps is necessary. Using the many tools of the program helps to smooth out the road of recovery.

Complacency contributes to a shaking and crumbling foundation and ultimate uselessness to self and to others. Showing up late, not sharing, not pitching in with the many physical tasks necessary for meetings, and ignoring the principles of the program compound character defects, which enhance the disease's resistance to recovery and necessary change.

Combined with the universal innate defect of selfishness, both the newcomer and the old timer can go adrift or turn into an unhappy, miserable ornery dry drunk, a perilous condition which manifests itself when an alcoholic stops working the steps and other aspects of the program.

AA is not a course; it is a way of life which is a matter of survival but the gateway to being happy, joyous and free. I am grateful to the old timers who did not enable my sloth, indifference, egomania, and ignorance. Love seemed tougher in those days; techniques have changed, often deteriorated, but the key element is love.

Our literature provides many guidelines on the necessity of work. This wisdom is found not only in our standard texts but in resources such as The *Grape-*

*vine*: "AA isn't for people who need it or for the people who want it; it's for the people who are willing to do the work to get it." (*Grapevine Quote*, 3/5/2021)

As Bill W declared, "...perhaps for a time we can stay sober with a minimum of self-improvement and settle ourselves into a comfortable but often dangerous mediocrity." (*As Bill Sees It*, p. 327)

With respect to the Promises, "They will always materialize if we work for them." (*Alcoholics Anon.*, p. 89)

Suppose an alcoholic does the work; is that enough? We must extend that work to others. While carrying the message that work benefits us, "It is also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Foreword to Second Edition, p. xvi)

In *Working With Others* we are told, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much as insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 89)

'Immunity' is a very strong word. It seems fantastic in a way, but, those of us who have worked with others know that it is not merely an inoculation, a shot to the arm; it is shot to the soul in maintaining the necessary change of attitude and outlook that keeps us going "on the road of happy destiny."

Let's all get to work.

~Dennis McM  
Brown Bag



---

### Eye Opener Committee

#### *Districts 2 & 11 Vermont*

Founder	Erwin L.
Editor	Ali J.
Chair for District 11	Ali J.

---