

# The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

## That Ain't Me ~ UNTIL IT WAS!

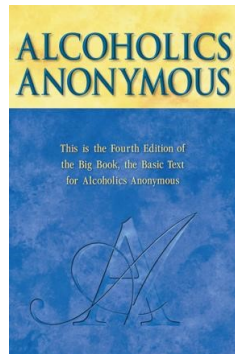
**I went to** my first AA meeting when I was 16. This followed a DUI charge I received just after getting my driver's license. My lawyer encouraged me to pursue intensive outpatient treatment. The treatment facilitator required the group to attend one meeting per week. At that first meeting, a speaker meeting, I was terrified, ashamed, nervous, and kept to myself. While waiting to walk into the church, I saw friendly "old timers" giving cigarettes to their younger friends. They were laughing, speaking in terms that seemed strange, and one came up to me to ask if I was going to the meeting.

They said "You comin' in? Everyone's waiting for ya!" as they walked by smirking and confidently waving their cane toward the front door of the church.

The meeting was in the east side of Baltimore City, Maryland. The group was diverse in culture and age, but it looked to me like everyone wanted to be there. I sure as hell didn't and questioned, "Why is everyone so nice?" I sat in the back row, slumped down in my chair, and closed my eyes to take a nap.

I was startled awake by the yelling of a slender, weathered man who was standing in front of the group. "If not for that gift of desperation, I would have never made it!" The man spoke of stealing cars, "hittin' licks." I thought to myself, "Yep, this ain't me. I'm nothing like this guy and never will be."

I felt different than everyone. I felt that I was selected, a soon to be drafted MLB prospect. I felt that no one else on earth would understand the pressure or the pain that I carried. The pain of grief from my father's death when I was 8; pain from being sexually and physically abused by family members from the ages of 5 to 12. This pain that I held reinforced, "no other person would ever know what this is like." I knew I was broken on the inside, but I also thought, "Who isn't broken these days?"



During the following 6 years, I endured homelessness, jail, lost all opportunities I had worked so hard for, lost all trust from my family, and I had tried everything possible to stay sober... except for AA. In 2012, coming out of jail and into what was my last rehab stay; I attended my first meeting where I finally

heard "MY STORY." I understood the speaker's pain, and I could see their pain as mine. I saw that I am not alone, and that I never have to be, thanks to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was 22 years old, recovering from chronic alcoholism and addicted to every substance imaginable.

I celebrated 10 years of continuous sobriety on February 22, 2024. I have my college degree, coach high school baseball, a career in human services, am married, and will soon be a father.

~Cam L.

Midtown

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# Fear Is the Conscious Decision for Me to Rely on Myself

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**Until they were** ending it, alcohol and substances saved my life. I counted on them the way a securely attached child might count on their parents. To comfort myself, I used to curl up on the floor in the bathroom and repeat to myself that everything and everyone could leave, but I could always get drunk and I could always get high. When it stopped working for me, I felt more alone than I ever had. I think that was the “jumping off place” Bill talks about in the book. Losing that sense of

regulation and comfort made me feel like a person who had been turned inside out. Even after withdrawal process was over, I was too sensitive, and everything was painful.

During the time I put together between detoxing and working the steps, I was terribly nostalgic for drinking and using. After three months of white-knuckle sobriety and trying so hard to act right and be good, I found my way back to that familiar place, using. I got kicked out of the therapy program I had joined but stayed in AA.

The meetings and my interactions with some of the people, including the sponsor I started working with, were the first places where I started to build a rudimentary sense of safety, or at least predictability. The daily routines were a framework that I could build the hours of the day around. As the old timers said, I was beginning to “act my way into better thinking.” In acting differently, the way I saw myself started to change as well. This was strengthened through my experiences with Step 3 and eventually with Step 10.

## Outdoor In Person Meeting

Sunday Morning Meditation Meeting  
Sundays, 8:00 am, Shelburne Beach,  
407 Beach Rd, Shelburne. Meditation &  
discussion. Outdoor meeting for the  
summer.

## Meeting Change

### Keep It Simple in Underhill

The start time of the Monday and  
Saturday meetings will change to  
7:00 p.m.

Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more

local stories and meeting information.

My relationship with my higher power, which I began to understand through the AA community, was where I created a capacity for trust for the first time. I grew up strictly controlling myself and was even more strictly controlled by my caretakers. The first few years of sobriety were scary, but also filled with wonder and uncertainty and freedom. I learned by watching other people in the program what it meant to reclaim the ability to feel a range of emotions, and

that doing so was, as Judith Herman wrote in *Trauma and Recovery*, “an act of resistance rather than submission.” In sobriety I had to confront, acknowledge, experience, and tolerate the despair I had squashed down with alcohol and drugs and rage. My understanding of “god” has showed up for me throughout this process, which is ongoing, through my sponsors and friends. I have survived 100% of my feelings so far. I’m learning about my ordinari-

ness and my limitations and my lovability and strengths.

I can’t write without quoting Dr. Herman because she says it best. She describes recovery as the process of coming to terms with the past, creating a future, and mourning the old self that was destroyed while developing a new one and reclaiming our world. So far, that’s what it’s been like for me.

~Anonymous  
Midtown



### **Midtown Group**

**Open ~ All Are Welcome**

**Wednesdays @ 7:00 p.m.**

First Congregational Church, Stone Room

38 S. Winooski Ave., Burlington

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

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# Miracles Do Happen

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**Today, June 23<sup>rd</sup>**, by the grace of God, I celebrated two years of sobriety from any mind altering substance. The past two years have felt incredibly long and short at the same time. It feels like I just started living again two years ago. Every choice and decision that I made since then has been a sane and sober choice. I can remember the past two years, but the six years before that are a complete blur.

While I am physically still alive today, alcohol completely took my life away from me. It stole everything from me piece by piece. Friends, family, jobs, pieces of myself that I loved, my personality, my confidence, and my sanity. By the end of my drinking, I was gone. I was a body walking around that was so empty and filled with regret, loneliness, and despair.

Growing up I was always warned that the odds were not in my favor when it came to substance abuse disorder. Having two parents who were addicts, both of whom died before I was 12, well... it just didn't look good for me. My substance use did not begin until college, but once it started, it picked up speed and continued on a long and hard downward spiral. I attempted sobriety through IOP programs, self-will, Antabuse, and more.

It wasn't until I got to such a point of despair, that I was willing and able to ask for help and hand my demons over. I knew I had only two roads: one was death, and one was sobriety. So the last day I drank, I sobbed and begged on my hands and knees for something to come save me, and something did.

Through the help of Alcoholics Anonymous and my higher power, I have grown back into the true and pure version of myself. The self that was lost during my drinking years. My life is predictable, I am reliable and trustworthy, and I am no longer a prisoner to the ball and chains of alcohol. My mental obsessions have been lifted, and I can spend time focusing on things that I never thought were possible.

Everything that I have in my life today would not be possible without my sobriety, and I am aware that it all could be taken away in the blink of an eye. It is critical that I continue to work my program, go to meetings, and connect with other like-minded individuals if I want to continue to live a sober life.

~Samantha R.  
Midtown



Submitted by Ali J., Living Sober Group

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## Eye Opener Committee

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