

Possibility for Better Relationships: The Gift of Working Steps 4 and 5

I got sober through the program of AA at 52 years of age. My alcoholic behavior started fairly late in life, around 41, and progressed rapidly. An interesting aspect of my alcoholism is that I was aware of what was happening because I was educated about the disease. So, I didn't spend much time in denial about it (which is not the same as choosing to make it public knowledge!) I did see-saw between letting it really rip (especially on weekends) and then expending a lot of thought and energy trying to moderate my use via the typical ploys. Prior to that I had engaged in other addictive behaviors (eating disorders, pot, organized religion) to divert my attention from the intense emotional distress that I was struggling with. About halfway into my decade-long drinking career, I managed to quit for 2 years using the white-knuckle method. Other than maintaining continual employment, isolation became a way of life for me because interacting with other homo sapiens was just too painful. For a long time I coped by simply distancing from others, if not via actual physical distance then by withdrawing emotionally through depression. Eventually there was nobody left on whom I could blame my drinking and depression. It finally dawned on me that I was my problem.

Hopelessness became my constant companion as it became clear that I was not going to be able to stay sober on my own. One Saturday night I sat in an AA meeting where the topic was the importance of getting a sponsor. I had been dabbling around the edges of the program for several months. (Later I learned that many members thought I was sober long-term and just new at those meetings. Evidently I was good at "putting on the show".) I listened to the urging of my Higher Power that night and secured a sponsor before going home. She told me to attend 90 meetings in 90 days, call her every day, call someone else in the program at least once a day, read the Big Book every day starting at page one, and meet with her weekly. The first time we met, she had me begin working the steps by writing 3 to 5 pages about step one. The next time we met I read those pages to her. Next I wrote 3 to 5 pages about steps two and three, and I read those to her at our next meeting. Then she instructed me how to do step 4 by making columns. The first column was for listing the people, places, and things regarding which I held resentments. The second column was to state the why behind each resentment, and the next to indicate how it affected me.

It's hard to imagine that anybody really likes to look at himself or herself this closely; I certainly didn't. In all the therapy I had undergone, none of the therapists had suggested that I examine my resentments, let alone chart them in detail and tell my deepest shame-filled secrets to another person. Counseling sessions had always involved focusing on how others had hurt me and encouraging me to do a lot of emoting about the pain that I was still carrying around from that damage. To a degree this was helpful for

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April 2009

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Emerald Valley Intergroup
1259 Willamette St.
Eugene, OR 97401-3509
(541) 342-4113

AA Meetings

Now Offering Child Care:

Sunlight of the Spirit
1250 W. 18th Ave.
(Emmaus Lutheran Church)

Mondays 7-8 pm

Canceled Meeting:

Grateful We Aren't Dead
Jesco, 340 Blair
Fri & Sat, 8-9:30 pm

New Meeting:

Jesco Back to Basics
Jesco, 340 Blair
Wed 6-7 pm

New Meeting Guides available in May

(perhaps, maybe, possibly)

Please remember to let us know of your group changes by submitting the NEW OFFICIAL FORM at the EVI office. Thanks!

Need meeting space?

Temple Beth Israel
29th and University.
485-7218 ext. 104

JESCO Club
340 Blair Blvd.
688-0538

Please be aware that the EVI News staff is always looking for worthy submittals! Articles having to do with your AA experience / wisdom, etc., are always welcome. Keep in mind that editing for appropriateness and length may occur.

E-mail submittals to:

evinews@yahoo.com

not later than the last Monday of the month, or mail/drop it off at the EVI office c/o EVI News.

Please include a contact phone number.

EVI Business Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2009



6:30 PM: Meeting convened at EVI office with Wes H. chairing. Opened with the Serenity Prayer. Quorum present (45 signed roster). Chair asked for announcements and committee reports from people who had to leave early. There were none.

Open positions:

Recording Secretary

Teffany nominated Martha S., who elected unanimously. Martha immediately assumed the duties of the position.

Treasurer Co-chair

No nominations or volunteers. EVI representatives asked to announce this to their groups.

CPC-PI Co-Chair

Lyndee nominated Brandon (EVI Representative for Attitude Adjustment). He was unanimously elected.

Meeting Guide Co-Chair

Ric H. (current meeting guide chair) is rotating out at the end of the month and Bill A. (former meeting guide chair) is willing to take the position. After some discussion about whether Bill A. could be elected in absentia, the body elected him to the chair position.

The co-chair position remains vacant. Please announce this to your groups.

Members at Large

Three member-at large positions are open, all identical in requirements. Tricia nominated Andre (EVI representative for Saturday Night Stag), who was available and willing to serve. Breyer P. (GSR and Alternate DCM for District 19) indicated her willingness to stand for member at large. Greg D. (active in H&I) volunteered to stand for the third position. All three were elected unanimously.

Co-Chair of EVI

There were no nominations or volunteers. Please announce this position to your groups. It is important that Wes have a backup and that someone be prepared to step into the position when he rotates out.

Office Coordinator Co-Chair

No nominations or volunteers. Please announce this position to your groups. This is a position in which having a backup is particularly critical.

Archivist

No nominations or volunteers. Please announce this position to your groups. This is a good position for someone who is active in AA and has some time to devote to service but has difficulty committing to a specific time slot.

Old Business: EVI Inventory: No EVI group inventory has been done and none has been scheduled. Michael, the office volunteer coordinator, is collecting materials and suggestions for use in setting up an inventory. The EVI Representative from Tuesday Night Freedom of Choice said his group follows the format in the pamphlet "The AA Group." If you or your group wants input in the process, see Michael or a member of the Steering Committee.

New Business:

Lyndee asked about plans for Founders Day (scheduled for June 14 at Washington Park). Wes said there is a Founder's Day Committee that meets on the first Sunday of the month at 6pm at the EVI office. They are planning the details. Contact the committee if you want input.

EVI Office

(541) 342-4113

1259 Willamette St.

Eugene, OR 97401-3509

Monday – Friday 9 am – 5 pm

Saturday 9 am – 4 pm

Drop by for a visit!

EVI Web Site

www.eviaa.org

Meeting Schedules, business

Meeting minutes and more.

Save a bookmark!

EVI News

Emerald Valley Intergroup's monthly newsletter for the AA community in Lane County.

EVI news is about, by and for members of the AA fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of any article, event or notice imply endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or EVI. (Exceptions: Quotations from AA books or pamphlets, which are reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.) EVI News reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, length, language and editorial policy.

Contributions are gratefully accepted for consideration for publication.

Submissions are due by the last Monday of each month. To submit articles or event information, mail them or drop them off at the EVI office c/o EVI News. Please include a contact phone number.

Submissions and comments may be sent by e-mail to:
evinews@yahoo.com.

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Contributions

March 2009

Month YTD

Contributions/Group:

As Bill Sees It	0.00	20.00
Attitude Adjustment Group	273.00	688.00
Downtown AM group	175.00	410.00
District 19	150.00	150.00
EASYPAA	0.00	20.00
Fireside Group	0.00	45.00
Get Well Group	0.00	100.00
Host Of Friends	0.00	80.00
New 11th Step Mtg	0.00	13.00
New Freedom	0.00	100.00
SAG	0.00	40.00
Saturday Morn Steps	0.00	198.00
Serenity Seekers West	0.00	132.00
6:45 AM Stag	0.00	46.00
Sober Awakenings	0.00	523.80
Sober Chicks	0.00	10.00
Sobriety for Life	0.00	60.00
Spiritual Kindergarden	0.00	4.00
Springfiend Men's Stag	20.00	20.00
Sunday Morn Sun Grp	0.00	150.00
Sunday Ngt Womens Step	0.00	141.28
Try God	0.00	509.00
Womens Courage	0.00	175.00

Total Group Contribution 618.00 3758.08

Contributions/Individual:

Faithful Fivers	25.00	190.00
Other	8.90	205.45

Total Individual 33.90 395.45

Total Contribution 651.90 4152.53

Continued from page 7:

through a major overhaul of this relationship, the process is giving me an opportunity to practice trusting in my higher power despite. Letting go and learning to trust the process is resulting in a greater capacity for letting go and trusting.

-My life is moving in a new and more positive direction, one I would not have been able to envision prior to discovering the guiding steps of this program (with the aid of my sponsor). It seems that the difference between really "being in recovery" and just "not using anymore" has to do with learning healthier coping skills. The steps provide a practical means for learning those skills, of which honesty appears to be the cornerstone. I realize that prior to working the 12 Steps of AA, I really did not have an understanding of what honesty means. That is the gift I received by working steps 4 and 5.

Sally B.

NEED SERVICE?

Current Open Service Positions at EVI
(attend EVI Business Meeting,
2nd Monday, 6:30, at EVI office)

Chair co-chair
Treasurer co-chair
Archivist
Co-coordinator

Upcoming Openings:

Newsletter co-chair

Office personnel (ongoing need)
Contact Michael, EVI office chair:



Addresses for Group Contributions

Contributions for districts 6, 19 and 20 may also be sent to the below address. Please indicate the district on the envelope.

Emerald Valley Intergroup
1259 Willamette St.
Eugene, OR 97401-3509

District 33
P. O. Box 40163
Eugene, OR 97404

Oregon Area 58 Treasury
1900 NE 3rd St., Suite 106-172
Bend, OR 97701

AA General Service Office
PO Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-0459

Calendar

(all meetings held at EVI office unless otherwise noted)

- 1st** Mon Steering Committee, 6:30 pm
Tues District 20, 6:30 pm, 418 "A" St., Richard T

Tues District 33, 6:30 pm, LynDee R.
Thur Speaker Meeting Committee, 7:00 pm, Vicki

Sun Activities Comm, 6:00 pm, Sylvia
2nd Mon EVI Business Meeting, 6:30 pm
Wed District 6, 6:30 pm, Rhonda
Sat Diverter, 10:00 am, David W
3rd Thur Outreach Committee, 6:30 pm
2nd to last Sun Literature committee 1pm to 5
4th Tues CPCPI Committee, 6:30 pm
Last Wed H&I Committee, 6:00 pm
Last Thur Grapevine Committee, 5:30 pm

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EVENTS

(application forms at EVI office)

34th Annual Rogue Roundup

Grants Pass, OR

May 1, 2 & 3

Call Eileen B.

Fellowship on the River

Tri-State 25th Annual Roundup

Laughlin, NV

May 14,15,16,17

Call Elizabeth R

24rd Annual Gathering of Eagles

DoubleTree Hotel

Dallas, TX May 21 -24

Call

Spring Fling Convention

St. Louis, MO May 22 -24

Call John S.

32nd Annual Summerfest

Eugene Hilton, Eugene

July 3 - 5

*Resentments are
like stray cats:*



*If you don't
feed them,
they go away.*

People:

(Bus. Meeting Minutes continued from page 3)

ACTIVITIES

Dawn Sandra E Brian

ANSWERING SERVICE

Mike B

ARCHIVIST (position open)

BOOKKEEPER: Ric H

CPC/PI (Coop. w/Profess. Commun/Public Info.)

Lyndee R randon

DIVERTER COORDINATOR

Chair: Myron Co: Dee

EVI COMMUNICATIONS

Meeting Guides: (co-chair open)

Newsletter: Sally B Angela M

Website: Alan U Bill H

EVI OFFICE MANAGER

Michael (co-chair open)

EVI SPEAKER MEETING

Gene Scott

EVI STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair: Wes H (co-chair open)

Secretary: Martha S.

Treasurer: Chuck (co-chair open)

At-Large: Andre

At-Large: Breyer

At-Large: Greg

At-Large: Ted

At-Large: Bill

GRAPEVINE

Chair: Gus

Co-Chair: Chris

H&I (Hospitals and Institutions)

Chair: Brenda K Co is open

Corrections: Annie O Co is open

Lane County Jail (Women): Rose B Karla B

Lane County Jail (Men): David

Ron L.

C.C.C. (Women): Melody Denna S

C.C.C. (Men): Bob S

Alma Work Camp: Lee H

Pathways: Joe N Co is open

Serbu Detention: Jack Co is open

Cooperation w/Treatment Facilities: Jeff C

Carlton House: Mark Z

WFTS: Johanna D.

Serenity Lane:

Fri. Speaker: Richard

B.T.G.: Tim a

S.N.L.: Greg D

Shelter Care: Hank Angela D

Hospitals: Both positions open

Johnson Unit: Jill David L

VA Reintegration Cntr: Both positions open

LITERATURE

Teffany Doug S.

OUTREACH

Rebecca Jeff

Committee Reports:

Activities. Tony Rae and Common Ground Concert at First Christian Church was a success. There will be a root beer kegger and softball tournament May 25. Raffle donations are being accepted. Activities has rented a storage unit. The Committee is meeting every first Sunday at the EVI office at 5 (not 6) pm.

Website (Allen). Website is running smoothly. Co-chair Bill announced that if any committee person wants an e-mail account through the website he can set it up. This would be a forwarding address so your personal e-mail does not appear on EVI publications.

Meeting Lists. Ric reported that the information is being entered into the Oregon Area Events calendar.

Newsletter. Chair Sally requested that people e-mail correct name and phone info to evinews@yahoo.com to update data listed in newsletter's PEOPLE column.

CPC-PI. Committee members have participated in several events recently, including a class on aging and addiction and setting up a table at the Homeless Connect fair. This fair presented opportunities for networking with other service organizations. They presented a video to a luncheon for Doctors in the Oregon Medical Group, and got very positive feedback from those physicians. The EVI phone # is now on all distributed literature.

Diverter. No rep present.

Grapevine. No rep present.

Hospitals and Institutions. Brenda has been working to set up a meeting at McKenzie Willamette Hospital. Corrections Committee Coordinator has been meeting with the jail coordinator – there are no meetings at the Lane County Jail at present. H&I needs a VA Hospital coordinator and co-coordinator for Serbu. Thank you for increasing our budget.

Literature. Teffany reports everything is going smoothly. An inventory count is scheduled for Sunday.

Office Coordinator. (Tricia, rotating out in favor of Michael). Two volunteers have agreed to do office cleaning on Sunday. Michael noted that he has had requests for transporting elderly and immobile members to meetings, and is uncertain how we respond. After the most recent break-in a Eugene Police officer suggested we install a security system. This is a possible topic for future discussion.

Outreach. Rebecca has information packets for new EVI representatives. Chair and co-chair have visited a number of meetings. Committee could use more volunteers.

Speaker Meeting. Good turnout in February.

Treasurer. Distributed February 2009 financial statement. Group contributions were unusually low. It is too early to tell whether this is temporary or a cause for concern. The February 28 financial statement shows a balance of \$18,593 in all accounts, \$605 above prudent reserve.

There were no further announcements. Meeting adjourned at 7:50.

☞ If you want to quit drinking,
you're going to have to quit drinking

getting my feelings out and my stress level would lessen for a time. (To anyone with longstanding emotional issues that are not resolving adequately by thorough step work, I highly recommend working with an appropriate therapist. An advantage of being in the program and then finding a therapist is that we have a much better idea of what our own issues are and can therefore address them rather than just rehashing all the pain of the past.) What I didn't learn in therapy (prior to working the 12 Steps) was how to identify my part in things that were causing me pain. I was in denial about my shortcomings, and without that honesty it was not possible to move forward and make any meaningful changes in my relationships with others and myself. Through learning to work the steps of AA I am much better able to distinguish between what part is mine and what part of a problem belongs to someone else. Since internalizing the fact that the only person I have any control over is myself (though still only marginally at times!), I know that this is always what I need to look at first if I want to improve any relationship.

The day that my sponsor and I met to go over my 4th step and work on the 5th, I was nervous as all heck. A month prior I had stopped smoking cigarettes and had resumed again due to my worry around the anticipated distress (shame and embarrassment) of talking with another person about my baggage. (Once I worked through the 9th step I was able to quit tobacco and haven't needed to pick it up again.) As we discussed each case and my sponsor helped me discover my underlying fears, an incredible sense of "aha" filled my mind. This was accompanied by a new feeling of lightness in body and spirit. The lasting result has been that I'm no longer able to fool myself into blaming others for how I feel. Now when it returns, I recognize that old icky feeling for what it is (although sometimes I still choose to procrastinate reworking steps 4 and 5 around it). I know that I'm in an old place of putting responsibility outside of myself when that old familiar sickness in my gut returns. When I find myself becoming stuck in a new or old resentment, I'm know that I can pull out my bag of tools (the 12 steps) and identify what is my part in my current lack of serenity and then move on into doing something constructive about that (which sometimes is to do nothing at all). It always has something to do with inappropriate expectations, lack of acceptance, or looking at someone or something as "responsible" for my feelings. While it is true that I still tend to initially react in old ways, what is also true is that now I don't stay there long and I don't have to use alcohol or any other substance in an effort to sooth myself. I feel a tangible difference in the quality of my relationships and my general outlook on life. And I'm able to make conscious, healthier choices regarding in whom, what, or where to invest my time, energy and emotions.

The lifelong theme that ran through my 5th step was fear about just saying what is true for me. I kept in a lot of secrets and feelings and was virtually unable to stand up for myself. I was afraid to say what I really felt if there was the slightest possibility it might cause a negative response in someone else. I was so afraid of what others would say or do in reaction to what I thought or felt. I was afraid of being shamed, blamed, accused and confronted. Although there were legitimate, understandable reasons why this behavior had developed in my formative years, nevertheless it remained a very real obstacle to my personal and interpersonal development. Pointing at those historically damaging incidents did absolutely nothing to assist me in changing the way I functioned and felt in the now. I was miserable in my relationship with myself and with others because I did not feel capable of being honest about my inner experiences. In other words, I was a people pleaser. And I revolted against this dynamic by intermittently acting out in damaging ways. Then I would be very unhappy with myself and often ended up severing relationships because I didn't know how to change them or myself and felt I couldn't back up, start over, or tell the truth. I was literally controlled by fears about "what if".

Working steps 4 and 5 removed my blindness to the workings of my ego and its underlying fears. It helps me let go of the desire to control what others think, feel or do. This shift is an invaluable tool and a huge gift; one for which I will always be grateful and one to which I often return for help in working through issues that arise in the present.

-I should add that the results of this program are not always what I think I want. One major, long-term relationship has taken a frightening and painful (but healthier) turn. I spent many years and huge amounts of effort contorting myself in an attempt to maintain this relationship in the only way that I could imagine it. Once I became truthful to this person about my experience in relationship to her, the very things I disliked about the relationship were removed. She does not appear to be practicing honesty about it, but that is no longer my concern. Because my approach to changing this relationship has been based on me practicing honesty, it is working itself out to my overall benefit. Although it has been scary going

Faithful Fiver Pledge:

Emerald Valley Intergroup
1259 Willamette
Eugene, Oregon 97401

- I pledge \$5 per month to support EVI and service work in my community.
- I'm feeling grateful, I can send _____ per month.
- I will mail or drop off my contribution: Monthly.
- Four times a year (\$15 each)
- Once a year (\$60)

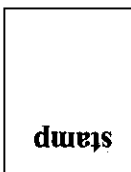
Name:

Address:

Phone:

GET THE NEWS!

"Faithful Fivers" are people who donate \$5 or more per month to help support Intergroup. You can contribute monthly, quarterly or yearly, and if you check the receipt box on this form and you are on our mailing list, we will send you a receipt at the end of the year. (If you want a receipt, but would like to save EVI postage by picking up the News at the Office, or the EVI Business Meeting, fill out your nickname and address, but write "no news" next to your address.)



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