



NATURE COAST JOURNAL

APRIL 2020



On Cultivating Tolerance

During nine years in A.A. I have observed that those who follow the Alcoholics Anonymous program with the greatest earnestness and zeal, not only maintain sobriety, but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance. Tolerance expresses itself in a variety of ways: in kindness and consideration toward the man or woman who is just beginning the march along the spiritual path; in the understanding of those who perhaps have been less fortunate in educational advantages, and in sympathy toward those whose religious ideas may seem to be at great variance with our own. I am reminded in this connection of the picture of a hub with its radiating spokes. We all start at the outer circumference and approach our destination by one of many routes.



To say that one spoke is much better than all the other spokes is true only in the sense of its being best suited to you as an individual. Human nature is such that without some degree of tolerance, each one of us might be inclined to believe that we have found the best or perhaps the shortest spoke. Without some tolerance we

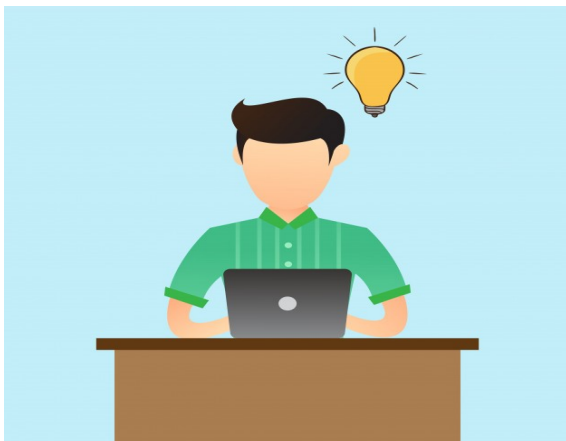
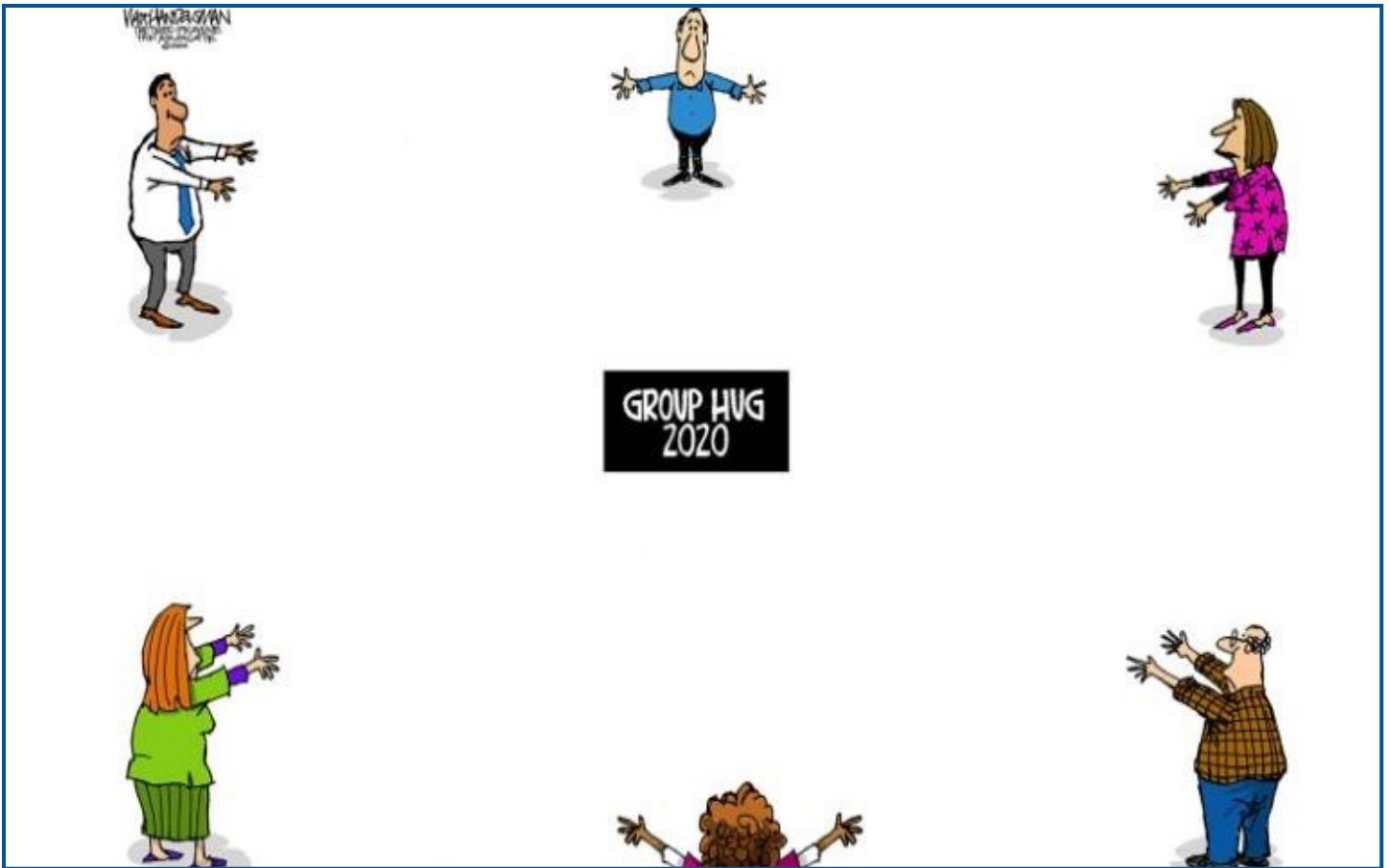
might tend to become a bit smug or superior--which of course is not helpful to the person we are trying to help, and may be quite painful or obnoxious to others. No one of us wishes to do anything which might act as a deterrent to the advancement of another--and a patronizing attitude can readily slow up this process.

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words, it often promotes an open-mindedness, which is vastly important--in fact a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

These, then, are a few of the reasons why an attempt to acquire tolerance should be made by each one of us.

-Dr. Bob of Akron (*July 1944*)

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Make checks payable to NFAC and send to:

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General Service Office

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Archives Corner

Group Histories

As most of you know, the Archives Committee has been trying to update Group Histories in District 28. You may not know that the histories my predecessor left had disappeared during one of the events a couple of years back.

I recently had a conversation with an old-timer who was trying to gather information on a group he regularly attends and was talking with another old-timer to pick his brain. What became of that conversation by old-timer #2 was, let him go to GSO, they have all that information! Yes and no. GSO may have the date the group/meeting registered with NY, the group ID#, they may have the first few people that were contacts for the group/meeting, and the address. But what they won't have is why the group/meeting started. Or the trials and tribulations of group/meeting. Trying to find a location, the times to meet, enough attendees to support the group/meeting, or who the first coffee maker was, the first secretary, how they elected their first GSR. GSO sure won't have the controversies that were encountered in the beginning, or how they struggled to make their rent, pay for their coffee. One thing I know GSO will not have. They will not have the information of the first newcomer that walked through the door, stayed sober, and became an old-timer himself.

Dean B.

District 28 Archives Chair

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—Due to the current changing health situation, many AA meetings are finding it safer to close. To help members during this time, The Grapevine is giving everyone **free access** to most of the 2020 Grapevine issues at aagrapevine.org. Please share with your fellows.

—For the latest in meeting closures and announcements: **ncintergroup.com**

—**Stay Connected:** talk to your sponsor, join an online meeting each day (zoom meetings are popping up everywhere, or check out recoveryspeakers.com and intherooms.com), and **ask for help**.

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At Nature Coast Intergroup, we hope that everyone in recovery is taking the appropriate precautions to protect themselves during this time.

This Too, Shall Pass

Letters and Shares

From Suicide To Sobriety

I came into the rooms of A.A. in an attempt to save a relationship. I was convinced I was smarter than my disease, but I wasn't, and the relationship ended anyway. But my first contact with A.A. ruined my drinking and using. No matter how strenuously I attempted to avoid the truth, I remained an alcoholic. In my final year of "research" I burned my life to the ground. The progressive nature of my condition became an inescapable fact. So, I resigned to my self-diagnosis, and decided that the solution was to kill myself, so I prepared for my suicide with a maniacal focus. After collecting a fistful of pills and downing a half-bottle of Scotch, I called my former sponsor to thank him for his valiant attempt to help me get sober. But, when he found out about my plan, he reminded me there was another way open to me: A.A. He collected me and took me to a meeting, thus saving my life. That was three years ago. I have stayed sober by the grace of god one day at a time by not drinking or taking drugs, doing the twelve steps, going to meetings, and by praying every day upon awakening. I keep meditating, staying in contact with my sponsor and others in the program, taking commitments at meetings, sponsoring guys, eating better, and exercising. My sobriety has allowed me to deal with the wreckage of my past, and in some cases amending my relationships with people and institutions I had harmed. Moreover, it has permitted me to think more clearly and experience my emotions - both good and bad; and in so doing I have a program for recovery that works elegantly and simply. I have an immense gratitude for being given a chance to make my present and future into something other than death, destitution, or institutionalization. I attempt to live a life of useful service to fellow alcoholics and maintain my sobriety one day at a time.

- Christopher W.

Step Four was an exciting step for me! Working step four with a sponsor, was the beginning of me becoming a real person....

Hearing about step four at a meeting, I thought, "WOW! To continue my journey, all I have to do is tell my sponsor all the things I don't like about the world, and how it has been treating me..? Awesome!" I was ready to get to it. My sponsor said to make a list of all my resentments, which she explained were all the things that made me boil inside. She said put down as many as you can think of.

Oh boy! This was going to be easy. Then, I could tell her exactly why I drank. I knew any-one who heard my list would agree that I definitely had good reasons to drink.

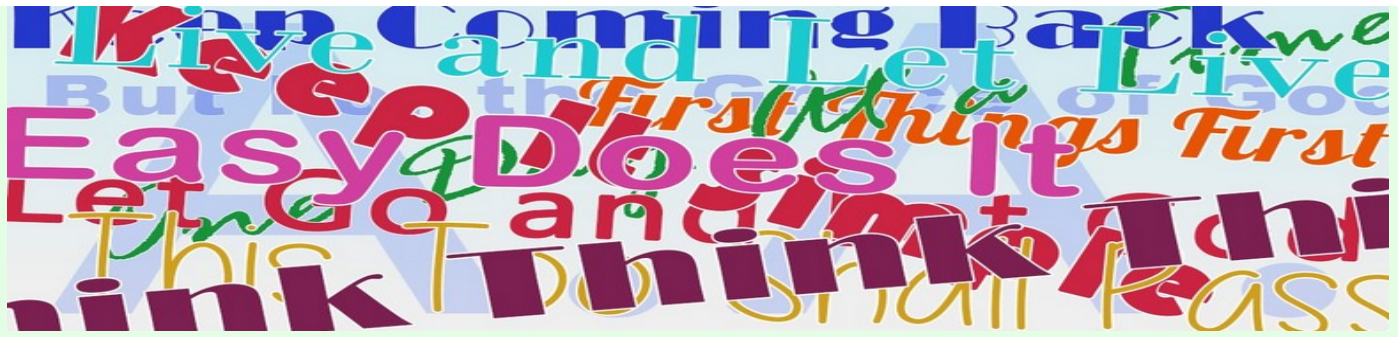
UH-OH!! Wait!! My sponsor now told me to look at me. Oh my God! What did she mean? How could I have done anything..? I was the victim!

My sponsor and I had a lengthy discussion and I began to see things through a "new pair of glasses", so to speak. I began to see how I had been selfish, self-centered, dishonest, a people pleaser, irresponsible and egotistical. Now, I was able to do the step in earnest and really begin to see myself.

I was no longer a victim. I was a sick alcoholic who had been surviving without a program.

Working that thorough 4thStep with my sponsor truly changed my life. After, I finally became a real person -ME! Before, I had been whatever and whoever you wanted me to be, but now I was a person. I am me. I know who and what I am. I have a plan to become the very best ME, and that will happen as I continue to work through the rest of the twelve steps.

-C. B.



Those Crazy AA Slogans Set Me Free

By Steve N.

PART 1

We have all heard the catchy slogans of A.A. There are more of them than we can keep track of. I know when I first came into A.A. I was so egotistical that I immediately turned the Think, Think, Think slogan right side up. Many of the sayings seem like clichés, but I cannot over emphasize the importance of these one-liners to my sobriety. Along with the program and fellowship of A.A. and the grace of God, these cliché sayings in A.A. helped to set me free of the chains that the disease of alcoholism had bound me with – chains including physical effects, mental effects, emotional effects, behavioral and social effects and even spiritual effects. These effects of the disease of addiction to alcohol affected me in a profound way. I had been totally transformed from the person I had hoped to become in childhood. While the sayings may not seem so profound to the outsider, when taken in the context of the disease of my alcoholism, they have had a profound effect on my journey to overcome the effects of addiction to alcohol. This article is an attempt to look at the slogans often heard in A.A. and their meanings to alcoholics.

So, let's look at the slogans one at a time in no particular order, but starting with the five posters I was greeted with when I first walked into the rooms. . .

To begin to put the concept of "Live and Let Live" into practice, we must face this fact: There are people in A.A, and everywhere else, who sometimes say things we disagree with, or do things we don't like. Learning to live with differences is essential to our comfort. It is exactly in those cases that we have found it extremely helpful to say to ourselves, "Oh, well, 'Live and Let Live.'"

In fact, in A.A. much emphasis is placed on learning how to tolerate other people's behavior. However offensive or distasteful it may seem to us, it is certainly not worth drinking about. Our own recovery is too important.

Alcoholism can and does kill, we recall.

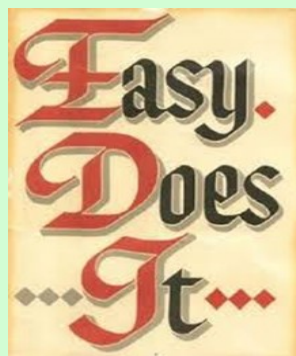
The old saying "Live and Let live" seems so commonplace, it is easy to overlook its value. Of course, one reason it has been said over and over for years is that it has proved beneficial in so many ways. I have been taught in A.A. to make some special uses of it to help me not drink. It particularly helps me cope with people who get on my nerves. Looking back I can say that while I was drinking, my drinking problem appeared to be related somehow to other people. They were the problem! At least until the point came when I isolated and had no people in my life because I could not tolerate them, and they certainly could not tolerate the drunk I was. A.A. taught me it pays to make a very special effort to try to understand other people, especially anyone who rubs me the wrong way. For recovery, it is more important to understand than to be understood. This is not very difficult if we bear ... *(continued on next page)...*



... (continued from previous page)... in mind that the other A.A. members, too, are trying to understand, just as we are.

But for the grace of God is a phrase that gives me trouble when it's not used in the AA sense. To use it when referring to some unfortunate person, and to mean that God's grace has somehow favored me and spared me some misfortune or disability or tragedy or something, to me is just wrong. I don't know why bad things happen to good people, but they do. In AA that is not what I believe it means, though we may use it to refer to someone who can't get sober. For me "the God of my understanding" is a God of grace. The havoc that alcohol causes in people's lives is profound and troubling, and this has been obvious for centuries. "Drink does not drown Care, but waters it, and makes it grow faster," wrote Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanack* in 1749. That is surely what happened to me. It takes courage and downright determination and humility to conquer the complicated disease of alcoholism. I sure did not have it until I simply asked God to help me. His grace brought me to where I am today.

"One of the most useful of the sayings that have been adopted in A.A. is that which advises, "Easy Does It." So universally workable is this good advice that it qualifies as the expression of one of the fundamental steps in personal rehabilitation. If this particular saying is applied sincerely and intelligently, it will greatly ease the path of the newcomer in A.A., avert "slips" and further the development of a mature life both inside and outside A.A.



Axioms are only words in themselves, of course, and the phraseology has become trite in many cases. Pseudointellectuals are especially scornful of old sayings, and even less snobbish observers may overlook the worth to be found in the meaning behind the words.

It Means Relax!

For example, "Easy Does It," means — relax! Don't fret and worry and stew and struggle!

Take it easy! Relax!"

-Grapevine July 1948

For me this was the "slow down, big guy" warning old-timers gave me when I first walked into the rooms. After all I was a hungover drunk whose life was in a mess. I had to be taught it does not have to be all fixed today. I was once told that Dr. Bob always attributed the slogans Easy Does It to have come from the Sermon on the Mount, in particular the Gospel of Matthew 6:34," says A.A. historian and author Dick B. in his 1992 offering, *The Good Book and The Big Book*. Loosely translated, the passage advises, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." In other words, Easy Does It. It is a motto that any alcoholic could well ponder. An old timer told me "A child learns to add and subtract in the lower grades. He is not expected to do problems in algebra until he is in high school. Sobriety is a thing that must be learned step by step. If anything puzzles you, ask your new friends about it, or forget it for the time being. The time is not so far away when you will have a good understanding of the entire program. Meantime, EASY DOES IT!" Boy did I need that!

Steve N's series on the slogans of AA will continue in next month's Nature Coast Journal

Tradition Four

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

Reprinted from The Grapevine, March 1948

Tradition Four is a specific application of general principles already outlined in Traditions One and Two. Tradition One states : "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward." Tradition Two states:" For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority-a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."

With these concepts in mind, let us look more closely at Tradition Four. The first sentence guarantees each AA group local autonomy. With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No overall or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege. We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference to our Tradition. For example, an AA group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group nightclub. Though such an absurd procedure would be miles outside our Tradition, the group's "right to be wrong" would be held inviolate. We are sure that each group can be granted, and safely granted, these most extreme privileges. We know that our familiar process of trial and error would summarily eliminate both the preacher and the nightclub. These severe growing pains which invariably follow any radical departure from AA Tradition can be absolutely relied upon to bring an erring group back into line. An AA group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members. Their own experience, plus AA opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience."

Yet please note one important qualification. It will be seen that such extreme liberty of thought and action applies only to the group's own affairs. Rightly enough, this Tradition goes on to say, "But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, these groups ought to be consulted." Obviously, if any individual, group, or regional committee could take an action that might seriously affect the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole or seriously disturb surrounding groups, that would not be liberty at all. It would be sheer license; it would be anarchy, not democracy.

Therefore, we AAs have universally adopted the principle of consultation. This means that if a single AA group wishes to take an action that might affect surrounding groups, it consults them. Or, it confers with the intergroup committee for the area, if there be one. Likewise, if a group or regional committee wishes to take any action that might affect AA as a whole, it consults the trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, who are, in effect, our overall general service committee. For instance, no group or inter group could feel free to initiate, without consultation, any publicity that might affect AA as a whole. Nor could it assume to represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous by printing and distributing anything purporting to be AA standard literature. This same principle would naturally apply to all similar situations. Though there is no formal compulsion to do so, all undertakings of this general character are customarily checked with our AA general Headquarters.

This idea is clearly summarized in the last sentence of Tradition Four, which observes, "On such issues our common welfare is paramount."

-Bill W.

Upcoming Anniversaries

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WE NEED YOUR STORIES!

Tell us about "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now."

In upcoming issues, Nature Coast Journal will publish your brief stories about:

Laughter and Fun in Sobriety, Balance in and out of AA , The Steps ,

Living Your Dreams In Sobriety ,AA Humor/ Jokes

Send us stories on any topic sobriety

related!

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