

WAYS & MEANS®

Winter 2004

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SPOTLIGHT

Stepping Into Service

D.A. Service Teaches Awareness

I attended D.A.'s World Service Conference for the first time in 2003. My intergroup had worked hard to send me as their representative, and I was grateful to be there. Participating in the conference led to a fundamental shift in my view of the program and the fellowship. On one hand, I recognized the tremendous strength of the program and the transforming recovery that takes place in D.A.

On the other hand, I became aware of how fragile our fellowship really is.

When I first came to the program, I felt utterly helpless and hopeless. Using the tools relieved me of active debt, but I continued to struggle with serious underearning. After taking Steps Four and Five, I gained clarity about a long-held vision: to earn a Ph.D and become a college professor. It seemed impossible given my financial situation and my lingering fears. Yet my pressure relief group supported me as I applied to schools and pursued every available funding source. Serenity came when I took the actions and turned over the results.

To my amazement, I am now a doctoral student, and my education and living expenses are paid for abundantly through fellowships and scholarships. Seeing the program work so powerfully in my life made me eager to give back by attending the conference.

Over the five days I was there, I met members from all over the country as well as from Canada and Europe. Every face seemed to radiate purpose and serenity. Each

conversation I had, private or public, involved D.A.'s spiritual principles—Steps, Traditions, Tools, and Concepts. It was wonderful to be around so much knowledge and love of the program. The solid recovery and deep commitment to the fellowship I witnessed sparked a kind of spiritual awakening in me, and I felt the presence of a Higher Power more strongly than I ever have in my life.

At the same time, I became aware of the fragility of D.A. There were 101 members present at the conference—too few to conduct the business of a worldwide fellowship. Many pressing projects carry over from year to year because no one is available to complete them. Some members take on enormous responsibilities to keep the fellowship going.

There was a positive side to that awareness: I learned that one

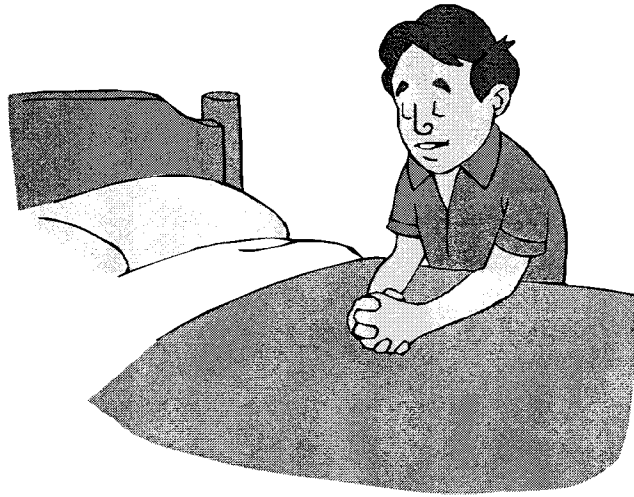
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A Quarterly Newsletter For the Fellowship of Debtors Anonymous



I Pray That...

I pray that I am of service however it is intended for me to be.

I pray that I take care of Mickey however it is intended to be carried out.

I pray that I make the necessary motions that propel me to the places I am supposed to go.

I pray that I do not interfere with the Universe as it propels me where I am supposed to go.

I pray that I recognize the signs and encouragement I am sent.

I pray that I respect the time frame that the Universe has.

I pray that I am appropriately grateful for what I have.

I pray that I am appropriately gracious to those around me.

I pray that I am appropriately contented.

I pray that I accept what I am given.

I pray that I have faith that the Universe has a plan.

Amen ☺

Kieran K.
(Los Angeles)

Mickey M.
(Dallas)

Editor's Corner

Carrying the message to the still-suffering debtor is the primary purpose of Debtors Anonymous. Collectively, we engage in this work to strengthen our own recovery and to share the abundance and joy that results from applying the 12 Steps to our debting and underearning. The D.A. General Service Board is working especially hard to ensure that D.A. members have the awareness and opportunity to experience the life-transforming power of the 12 Steps. With that in mind, the current issue of *Ways & Means* features an article and an interview that focus on the Third and Sixth Steps, respectively.

Also in this issue, one member reflects on her first experience attending the World Service Conference, held last year in Minneapolis-St. Paul. She blends a review of her own recovery story with her sense of a fellowship connecting at a worldwide level. You will also find a feature on the tool of meetings, a report from Denver's first day-long D.A. event, and—never out of place—a prayer. We are extremely grateful to all who contribute their time and effort to share their experience, strength, and hope with the fellowship in this publication.



Ways & Means

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Fellowship of Debtors Anonymous

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A Creaky Third Step

The point of the D.A. fellowship is to aid debtors and under-earners to recover from a crippling malady so that they may lead the type of life that God has intended for them. Yet the Third Step ("Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.") has me completely stumped. That is why I have chosen to write this article, hoping I will find a way forward. Perhaps I will also be of service to another member who is facing a similar dilemma.

I have been sober for over eight years, and have worked the Steps through a number of times. The A.A. Steps have been a challenge, but they have made sense to me. I have had to clean house in order to find a God of my own understanding and learn to help others. D.A. recovery, unfortunately, has been another story. My life has been unmanageable as a result of underearning, and I have been powerless at the feet of the false idol, VISA. That much my mind can grasp.

The problem is this: in order to work the third step I have to radically change all of my opinions about money. I have to fully accept that

God and money *can* be discussed in the same sentence. I have to accept that even the most right wing, conservative D.A. meeting is part of an entirely spiritual way of life. It adheres to the principles of recovery above any political agenda. The spiritual admissions in this program have larger ramifications than I had ever envisioned.

My attempts at taking this step have always been unsuccessful. I am like a man attempting to scale a cliff in pajamas and bedroom slippers, blissfully unaware that I am completely ill equipped for such an undertaking. When I sat in a meeting and people shared about "being paid what you are worth," I did not react because I felt worthless. They said that the program had helped them to double their

income, and I judged them for being greedy. Other members of the meeting talked about spending money on themselves, and I responded with the old maxim

"The problem is this: in order to work the Third Step I have to radically change all of my opinions about money."

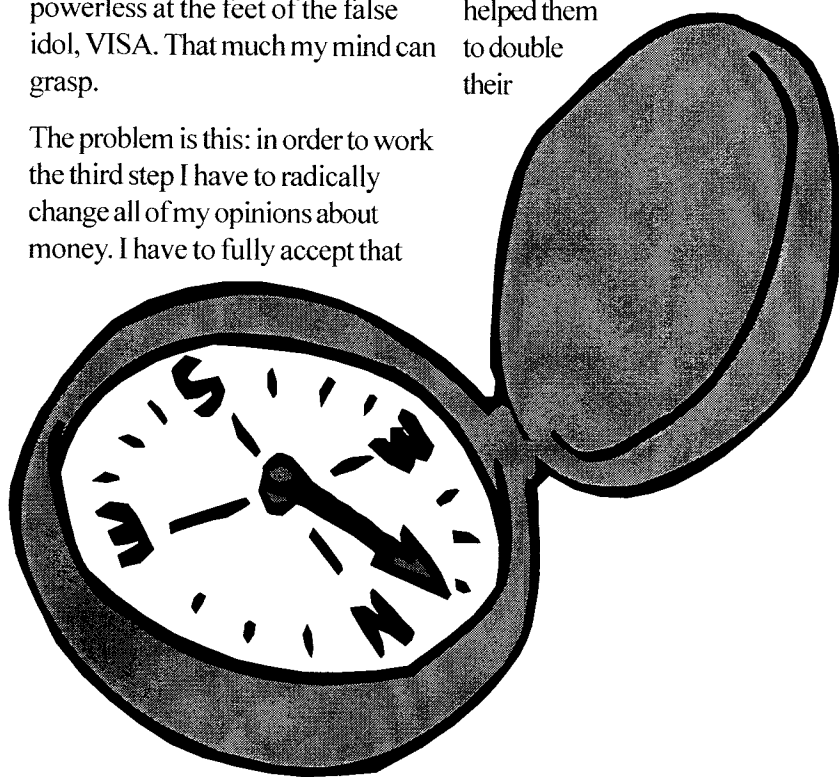
"thriftiness is next to godliness." At every turn there was a rational defense for my underearning and debting. Not only was I unable to see

God in D.A., I was closer to God without the program! Any old idea that I had upheld for spiritual and political reasons had to be completely smashed to achieve recovery and prosperity.

The work that I have done on this step has taken me beyond the literature that is available to us in the rooms. What I have learnt from my reading is that money is not evil, poverty is evil. Money can be hoarded, but it also can help so many people. It is a means by which we can find justice in our lives; a medium through which we can acquire goods and services without fear that these things would not have any value by the next day.

A good business transaction is one where both parties come away better off. When I work with a newcomer we should come away from the meeting feeling more optimistic about our lives than before. The aims of D.A. are much simpler than I had ever imagined. It is my mind, and my disease that has tangled the program up in my head.

For a long time in this program I have clung to the notion that God





The Relief of Letting Go

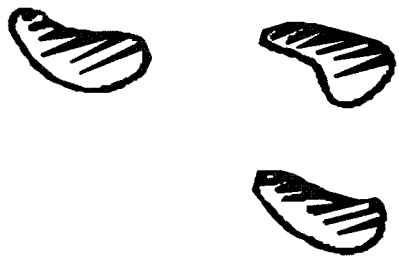
SP: What are the blessings of working Step Six?

AZ: I have more peace of mind and feel more connected to myself, more authentic.

SP: How did you work it?

AZ: One of the things that helped me work it was to read the 12 and 12 in A.A. literature. I have had to have the understanding that this was going to be a lifelong process.

It's a step that you can't do perfectly, but it sets a high



"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Step

6

standard, or a goal.

I gave up lying as a defect of character. I prayed and asked God to remove my compulsion to lie. At first it was painful, but then

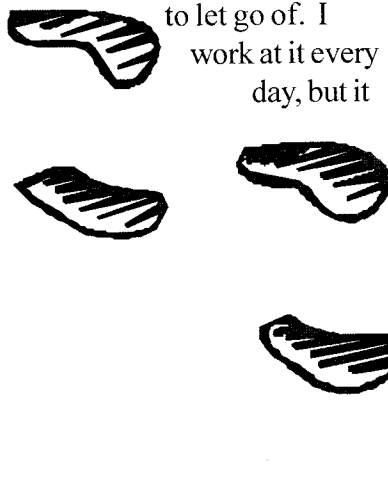
"...it's a miracle that God would remove my defects of character."

I experienced the relief of letting go. It's the relief of being able to live life with more dignity and character.

My defect at work is procrastination. I prayed about it, but only slowly has it been lifted.

Procrastination is hard

to let go of. I work at it every day, but it



seems to be a deep seated character defect. There are other defects I'm working on too and I talk to God about them.

Completing the Fourth Step was important in preparing for the Sixth Step when I reviewed my defects of character.

To me, it's a miracle that God would remove my defects of character. I grew up believing you're forced to live with defects all your life.

SP: What are your recommendations to others?

AZ: Be patient, God has his own unique way of removing defects of character.

Look at the Fourth Step to find those defects that have the most compulsivity and work on those first. ☺

Interview with
Angelo Z. (Farmington Hills, MI)
by Sally P. (Royal Oak, MI)

The Importance of Meetings

Winter
2004

A meeting – what is it? At a pre-arranged time and place, a group of people with a common goal comes together to learn from each other and share on D.A. issues. It's an oasis in the desert. Sometimes daily life feels devoid of spiritually uplifting water. Meetings provide that water to us souls thirsty for relief from our pain. We're thirsty for a new drink – a new way of life that will lead us from the deprivation and scarcity to abundance and fulfillment.

Meetings provide me with a forum

for emotional support. Even when I'm working my program and things are on track, it's great to be among folks who share my situation. This is even more so when I'm in flux, and that's most of the time!

“Here, in a 12 Step meeting, I have no fear; there's no crosstalk, no reprisal...”

Meetings work like booster shots – they help strengthen my immunity to debting. If I don't get the booster shot, I'm at greater risk and I



really want to rid my system of the debting disease.

Meetings are also wonderful social events. I enjoy gathering with people from different backgrounds and hearing their stories. It's fascinating and heartwarming to me how we have drastically diverse upbringings yet learn from each other and share our emotions and feelings on a very deep level.

So, for all these reasons, meetings are critical to my recovery. The strength of the group, the faith of each individual, and the energy in the room have a positive impact on me. I'm grateful for this tool. I feel safe in these rooms, and for this reason I've gained self-confidence in speaking. In my past, I was afraid to express my opinions when I didn't agree with others – I was afraid of reprisal. Here, in a 12 Step meeting, I have no fear; there's no cross talk, no reprisal. That has built my self-confidence. The more self-confidence, the stronger my recovery. The stronger my recovery, the stronger my emotional immune system. 🍀

Sherrie S.
(Los Angeles)

WAYS & MEANINGS

D.A. Service Teaches Awareness... (← page 1)

person can make a difference. Just by attending the conference on behalf of my intergroup, four D.A. groups that had never been represented gained a voice at the world level. I pitched in to help complete projects that might never have been done otherwise. My contributions were unique and vital, like the contributions of every individual there.

One of the rewards of attending

the conference is ongoing contact with D.A. members from all over. We continue the projects we began in August, discuss new issues that arise, and plan for the future. Being involved in world service teaches me about myself as I work through my character defects and receive the benefits of showing up.

I had been a member of D.A. for five years and abstinent for more

than four when I attended the conference. Still, I questioned whether I was qualified to serve the fellowship at that level. I needed to be there to understand that some recovery and willingness are all it takes to help the debtor who still suffers. It is a gift to be able to do something, however small, for the program and the fellowship that saved my life. 🍀

Kelly
(Woodstock, NY)

Visions Make First for Denver

“Finding and Fulfilling Your Vision” was the theme for the first day-long D.A. event in Denver held on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2004.

This well-attended, breakthrough conference was sponsored by the Denver Sunday morning Prosperity Seekers group. The group conducted mini-business meetings over several Sundays to flesh out plans for the event. D.A. members generously volunteered their time to make the event an abundant success.

The day opened with the regular Sunday morning meeting. This was followed by speakers from B.D.A. and D.A. sharing their substantial experience, strength, and hope. The conference hall was decorated with a beautiful centerpiece bouquet of brilliant colored lilies and daisies. Members generously donated spring water, coffee, tea, soda, crock pots full of piping hot food, bakery goods, snack foods, craft supplies and balloons.



After listening with rapt attention to the keynote speakers, D.A. members gathered around tables to eat lunch, socialize, sing, and work on their Treasure Maps/Vision collages. Generosity, friendliness, and joy permeated the room. Lunch was followed by workshops on the tools, visions vs. fantasies, underearning and career planning, and the legalities of forming one's own company. The conference ended with a discussion on forming an Intergroup as

well as positive pitches, breakthroughs, insights and epiphanies experienced during the conference. A copy of *A Currency of Hope* was given away during a free raffle to a very grateful D.A. member. ☺

Mary M.
(Denver)

Editor's note: Coincidentally, on February 7th, 2004, the Pasadena, CA, D.A. Visions meeting held “A Visions Workshop,” featuring 10 speakers. Clearly there was D.A. visionary magic in the air across the nation that weekend.

A Creaky Third Step... (← page 3)

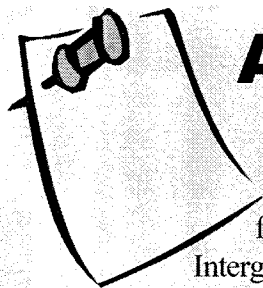
does not care what I do for a living. But what does that really mean? Does it mean that God does not care about what I do? Actually, a Higher Power loves us without judgment. This does give me some solace, but it is not quite enough to work as confident career advice. What helps me to gain a true understanding of this step is in the word “potential.” Does the God of my own understanding want me to live in the shadows away from the sun? Without enough water to flourish? I believe that God is an unchanging force, a constant, a

force that nurtures me to be the greatest person that I can possibly be. In this respect a Higher Power is not interested in what particular field that I want to excel in, but he does care if the exchange is not fair. My higher goal is betterment, and not deficit. Thus, my vocation should be spiritually motivated, with continuous opportunities to be of service, and with gainful financial rewards.

My Higher Power is not, however, wholly unconditional. I have a part to play in my spiritual experience. All that I have to pledge is the

acceptance of a supreme power into my life, and when I do this miracles happen. God cannot, however, transform our lives if we do not have a life. Our meetings are huddles where we can learn the game plan: the big match is outside of the rooms. We must practice these principles in all of our affairs and with all of the people in our world. The Big Book tells us that “faith without works is dead.” We can only see the benefits of change when we toil away in an ever-changing world. So let's go to work! ☺

Barnaby W.
(Los Angeles)



Announcements Upcoming Events

April is World Service Month. Listen up for special events in your area or ask your Intergroup representative.

April 18th New England Intergroup Service Conference Annual Fellowship/Share-A-Day at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, Boston, MA

August 25 – 29th World Service Conference, Sacramento, CA Visit the official D.A. website at www.debtorsanonymous.org and click on the Events button for links to details.

Seeking Nominations for General Service Board

Do you know someone who might be a suitable candidate to serve on the D.A.'s General Service Board (GSB)? Or would you yourself like to serve? The GSB nominations committee is currently seeking nominees. Contact Phoenix (committee chair) at 505-243-1937 for further information about Board service, qualifications, and the nomination process.

Your Help Wanted!

Ways & Means needs your contributions!

- Send in your
- D.A. jokes
- D.A. cartoons
- D.A. shares

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