

Alco-Solo



April 2011

Remember you
get sober by the
steps you take not
by the meetings
you make.

Dear Friends,

Let us open this meeting in print with a moment of silence for the still suffering alcoholic, followed by the AA Preamble:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and woman who share their strength and hope with each other, that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no fees or dues for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organizations or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety"

Please note that any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual and not that of the fellowship.

From: The Editor:

Dear Readers

Greetings and we trust all our members had a happy, sober festive season. I guess you are well settled into the New Year and full of new resolutions which I am sure you are going to try and keep.

Firstly I must apologize that our July 2010 copy was only published in October 2010. This was a misunderstanding between GSO and the graphic designer. My drafts were submitted to GSO in July 2010. I apologize and trust this will not happen again in the future.

I must report with sadness the passing of our Chairman Terrence Mc Phail – GSO literature and publications department. He will be sorely missed in the fellowship. He was a very humble and committed worker within the fellowship. Although I never met Terrance, we used to communicate a lot via email with matters concerning Alco-Solo. We send our condolences to all his family and friends.

We must again ask you please keep your contributions short, to the point and alcohol related. This is an AA publication and can't cater for all addictions. We refer other addicts to organizations within their field who are well equipped to handle them. As an AA fellowship we keep to the guidelines and traditions which have kept the AA Fellowship in good stead for over 75 years. Let's keep our primary purpose always in mind.

One can see how our program is truly spiritual by the topics of the contributions in each issue. This publication focuses on gratitude. Something we must never lose sight of.

Those of our contributors who use snail mail, please write your name and address in Block Capitals as some of the letters I've received are almost illegible.

Contributors are most welcome to write to me via my email address:

sadhammananda@gmail.com

We are looking forward to receiving many contributions for our next issue.

Be blessed and happy
Yours in service

The Editor



From: **Brian Mac**
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Malawi

29 February 2011

Dear Friends

Gratitude before complaints

I would like to thank you for sending me the Alco-Solo news letter, despite my not responding to you or other loners for a while.

For those who may recognize me from past sharing and for the benefit of those who are not familiar with my story, herewith a brief summary;

I joined AA in 1984 and stayed sober for ten years. February 1995 I slipped and was on and off alcohol until 2007. Since May 2007 until now by the grace of God I have been sober.

The anguish and remorse that I went through during the slippery period are hard to describe. Several times I was tempted to end it all by taking my life. But I wasn't even good at that. Today I am sober and have been diagnosed with cancer. I came to South Africa twice, in June and September of 2010. I have

accepted my medical condition and I am not angry or afraid. I did feel very disappointed since I have such a lot of things uncompleted. But one day at a time. I am able to spare half an hour every morning for my AA meditation then I take my medication prescribed to me for my cancer and live the best I can.

I am also trying to start an AA group here in Malawi- Lilongwe. Every day is a special day for which I am grateful, nothing is taken for granted anymore. In February 2011 I will be back for assessments with the doctors in South Africa and hopefully I will be able to attend an AA meeting.

May I take the opportunity to wish all Alco-Solo producers, readers and contributors a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Life is short- so enjoy it while you can – sober.

Yours in fellowship

Brian Mac

Dear Brian

Grateful thanks for your contribution. It's much appreciated.

Ten years is a fair number of years of sobriety. But all is not lost- you are sober now that is the most important thing. I know we feel a lot of remorse, shame and suffering when we relapse. I was told by an addiction doctor and many sober alcoholics that a relapse is a planned action. I agree with them. I believe when we become a little complacent this can happen. As you say you picked up the pieces and started over again. We must never lose sight of the fact that alcohol is cunning, baffling and powerful. Always

remember HALT/ stop when you feel the urge to take a drink.

H: halt

A: anger

L: loneliness

T: tiredness

These are generally triggers for a relapse.

The same as you are living a happy life as a sober alcoholic, you should now think – I am living with the cancer one day at a time. Also try to make up a gratitude list for things to be grateful for. A feeling journal is also a good idea – where you record how you feel daily. Look at it from time to time and you will be amazed at the great progress you are making.

Many thanks for the share straight from your heart. We are looking forward to hearing how you are getting on health wise and with your new proposed AA group in Malawi. If you need any assistance please contact us.

Be blessed

The Editor



From: **Debbie G**

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15 January 2011

Dear Alco-Solo

In difficult times hang on tightly to your gratitude list

What a great topic and reminder of an essential tool. As someone who has done the battle with depression before and during recovery there is nothing quite like a gratitude list, to get me off the pity-potty and into positive mode. It is well to be reminded that I do actually have all that I need and that what might not be meeting my needs, if that makes sense.

It helps too, to have friends around the world and to hear their stories and day to day tales as I am reminded to be grateful for things I take for granted, like the National Health Service. It has its weakness sure, but it also has its place.

I am very lucky to have experienced homelessness in my life. If I look at my life today in comparison- I am very rich indeed. This is bearing in mind for someone who is officially living below their country's poverty line. But riches can be spiritual as well as material and the gratitude list is one such priceless gift. It has the ability to lift the spirits and connect me with my higher power

to say thank you, which is probably the shortest yet most heartfelt prayer.

It also seems fitting to use this opportunity to thank everyone who has written to me, sent cards and even gifts. This year I have been unable to send any cards overseas but I plan to write a letter to everyone who has sent me something. There will be a bit of a delay with this, as I have been having some extreme health problems which include some dizzying meds, but I am sober (hurrah) and I am very humbled and deeply grateful to every one of you, who has touched my life along our happy trudge.

Thank you for being (t) here for me to stay sober. And enjoy the journey and the very best wishes for 2011.

With love and hugs

Debbie

Dear Debbie

Thanks once again for a wonderful share and for all the audio shares you have been sending me every day. Yes we should be here for each other to encourage and support along life's way; that's how the program works "one alcoholic helping another".

In difficult times we all tend to look at the dark side of life; but if we keep our gratitude list we can quickly refer to it and things don't seem so gloomy after all. I also find keeping a daily feeling journal comes in very handy. One can see how we are progressing along the way; remembering of course there is always someone in a worse off position than ourselves. That changes our scenario a little.

I am sure you would be happy to give details to our readers regarding the audio shares?

Be well and happy
Yours in fellowship

The Editor



From: **Cameron D**

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South Africa

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29 January 2011

Hi everyone

Service, spiritual practice and effort

My name is Cameron and I am new to Alco-Solo and I am a grateful Alcoholic. I drank pretty much whenever possible, from the age of eleven to the age of twenty-eight, over doing it every time. From some

perspective the bottom that brought me into recovery did not look bad, but the hole in my soul had gotten big enough to make me desperate.

I had my last drink on the 14 September 2001 and attended my first AA meeting on the 17 September 2010. I continued using drugs until November 26 because I thought I only had a problem with alcohol. As a result of this my sobriety date is 27 November 2001. It was around this time that my sponsor taught me that any chemical I consume that will affect me from the neck up, will kill me. I had no doubt that in doing so, he saved my life.

My introduction to Buddhism and meditation came early in my recovery. There was a music festival and a meditation retreat happening on the same weekend and by the grace of God, I chose the meditation retreat which was being hosted at a Buddhist Center. Since then the 12 steps of Alcoholic Anonymous and Buddhism have been the two tracks of my recovery path. I am active in both areas: I currently sponsor people in AA and NA and do some service in the Buddhist Community. I attend at least one 12 step meeting a week and do the same for the Buddhist group. I often refer to the readings in "As Bill sees it" in which he notes that AA is a spiritual kindergarten, and that it's up to each of us to grow our own spirituality.

My experience is that the teachings in the Buddhist tradition supplement and compliment the program as it is laid out in the Big Book. Buddhism and both steps 10 and 11 encourage me to maintain a fit spiritual condition through the use of daily meditation and prayer. Both sets of teachings encourage a "stock take" before retiring in the evening, which consist of reflecting on the past day, acknowledging what could have been done better, and committing to make whatever amends are necessary as soon as possible.

The other message I take clearly from both sources is that I need to train in staying in the present moment, rather than allowing my mind to drift into the past or forward into the future. This makes absolute sense to me since my experience is that the serenity we pray for at the end of each meeting can only be found in the present.

My understanding is that training to live in the present includes a daily inventory as well as a regular prayer and meditation.

A prayer that is really working for me at the moment is the "open mind" prayer. God grant me an open mind that I may have a new experience. When I allow it to, this prayer centers me, and opens me up to allow my Higher Power guidance into my life. Most mornings

I include this prayer as part of my morning prayers, based very much on the step 11 guidelines as they are laid down in the Big Book. I also include a version of step 3 prayer given to me through the Buddhist teaching. On a practical note, I have reminders on my mobile phone to remind me to hand over on a regular basis. Once again, this keeps me centered when I allow it to, and is in harmony with the Buddhist principal of surrender and not holding onto to or clinging on to.

What I really identify with is that although I am generally miserable, when I have others on my mind-life seem more tolerable, and even enjoyable. This goes counter to my self-centered inclinations and takes some effort to work on. The service I am able to do helps me a lot with this, as does sponsoring people. My experience shows that when I do these simple things to get "me out of the way", I allow life to happen, rather than trying to control it in line with my selfish ideals. The result of this is that events unfold in ways I could never even have seen, and to use the cliché, miracles do happen.

One of the potential challenges of bringing these two precious paths together is the word God in the 12 steps. I say this because I guess a person is not likely to find this word in too many Buddhist books. I've overcome this potential obstacle through my direct experience of an active Higher Power in my daily life, and also by studying as much as possible on this subject. There is a vast body of material available tying the 12 steps and Buddhism together thanks to the great work that's been done in the USA. My understanding of these teachings supports the fact when I am active in my spiritual practice I move from a spiritual practice to a spiritual belief and into a spiritual experience. Fortunately I've landed myself in a school of Buddhism full of colorful deities and the need for a Guru to progress along the path. For me these aspects are clearly a Power Greater than myself! At this stage of my recovery the concept of HP is external and internal. Both seem far less important to me than my direct experience of a conscious contact, and the benefits thereof.

Another recent change is that I'm finally learning that the best, and possibly the only way I can help sponsees, is by encouraging them to improve their conscious contact with their HP. In desperate situations and specifically with new comers I apply some logic and help with decisions, but for those longer in the program I ask them to pray for guidance on just about every issue. On my bad days I probably

still try control a little but that's OK too.

The most exciting thing in my life right now is the hosting of a 12 Step and Meditation workshop. I am doing my best to facilitate a part of the course which means I've started digging deeper into both traditions. At least I am benefiting but from the feedback in the group, others are also taking something positive from it.

Sincerely

Cameron

Hi Cameron

Greetings and thanks for a great share: I related to every point you mentioned; especially the one living in the present moment. In today's time we are taught to live in the past or the future. For example with both the diary and watch we are taught to control and plan for our future, the past is of course is the camera-remembering past events in our lives. Very few spiritual persuasions teach us to live and be in the present moment.

I relate well to Buddhism as it is not a religion but a philosophy and way of life, psychology logic, psychics and just plain common sense and of course – there is no blind faith. A believe or else sort of attitude. We create our own miracles from our actions firstly from our thoughts.

As the quotation goes:

Be careful of your thoughts –

They may become your actions

Be careful of your actions –

They may become your habits

Be careful of you habits –

They may become your character

Be careful of your character –

It may become your destiny

*So by being focused in the
MOMENT – NOW; there is little
or no time to get wrapped up in the
past or the future.*

It took me 39 years to get to this point in my life.

So I am not sober for a day, a month or a year at a time, but sober now in the present moment – one breath at a time – no more and no less.

One again thanks for your contribution and I'm looking forward to hear how the AA Steps and Meditation workshop went. I am sure our readers will be delighted to get your feedback.

Write soon

Yours in fellowship

The Editor



From: Drummer Jim Moore
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United Kingdom
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3 November 2010

Dear Editor

Everything created is subject to change

Hope we are at another month, when your sober life just whizzes past you at a rate of knots! I often think to myself "Where did I ever find the time to drink?" It was hard being an alcoholic let me tell you. Thank God things are not like that today, first like the 4 seasons we have to learn to change. My life today is one of change and I accept that 100%, so change we will, change we must.

For the last 12 years I've had a fantastic balance in my life, till my best friend did something which just left me in a state of shock. The friendship went out the window. I had to run everything by what my sponsor told me, which was to slag this person off and get on with my own life. To say I was resentful was an understatement. I knew I shouldn't do this as it was too dangerous for me, but boy was I near to it. This just shows we have to be ever watchful for all those signs; yes I felt raw and enflamed and I am still really hurt that a friend could do this to me but there you go, people do let you down. Have I ever let somebody down? Oh yes, plenty of times, so I have to dust myself down and get on with living my own life. I am going to do just that. I had to remind myself when one door closes another door opens but I do so often look long and so regretfully upon the closed door that I don't see the new ones which open for me.

Even though I am 17 years sober, things happen in my life that I know I am handling differently than I would have done had I still been drinking. It may not be the right thing I am doing. If we have the willingness to do these things then I must think we are half way there.

As a loner sponsor in LIM it's my job to share the group's experience with the people who can't get to meetings and it's a fantastic feeling; all that one gives out, one receives back fourfold. I find people generally are uninhibited in letter writing especially hand written letters. The inhibitions just seem disappear and result in some very deep sharing and we know, if we share then people will care.

I've been in LIM for 16 years of my 17 years sobriety and it has made

me a better person because of this fact. Publications like yours have to be encouraged as some people's sharing could save a life or at least make people think more about how their own sobriety can be improved. I thank you for keeping Alco-Solo going in this day and age of financial cuts and global financial insecurity, it really is refreshing to have something which I know does me personally nothing but good, so keep up the good work

Anyway my friends I thank you again for letting me share with you. Best regards to all in South Africa.

Bye for now, take care and God Bless.

Drummer Jim
Cumernauld "Keep it simple"

Dear Drummer Jim

Once again that's for a good share straight from the heart. Yes things in life can be very disappointing at times; especially relationships or friendships. But as we all know nothing is permanent- all things are subject to change. We ourselves are changing every second of the day; this continuing clinging or grasping onto to things, does cause us immense suffering. If one can learn that nothing belongs to us, even our own body we will be able to take the knocks that life throws at us.

With the help of our HP and accepting that these things do happen in life, we (just as you say) must just dust ourselves off and move forward, strengthened by the experience.

I trust you are feeling better now and just putting it down to experience; realizing nothing happens by chance. Remember we meet people for a reason, a season or a lifetime.

Once again thanks for a wonderful contribution.

Write soon.

Yours in service

The Editor



From: Kathryn Sutton
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26 December 2010

Dear Alco-Solo members

Gratitude and more gratitude

I am filled with gratitude today as I prepare to end the year of 2010. I arrived in Zanzibar in September 2004 and was a loner for a number of

years; but now there is a recovering community in Zanzibar and I am fortunate to be part of that community. So many things have changed for me since becoming an active member of this group- I run meetings at sober houses – 4 in Ungula and one in Pemba each week and I sponsor a few guy's at each.

We had our unofficial convention in November 2010 with groups from Dar es Salaam – 3 wonderful days of coming together. Suleiman got sober and started meetings with others and it just mushroomed. I am only a small part of this community. Those recovering are running the sober houses on their own. I am the dinosaur and I try my best to be an elder statesman rather than a bleeding deacon.

We have an English/ Swahili AA Living Sober group meeting at my house every Saturday and that's been great. Some of the guys understand English but do not speak it, so they share in Swahili. We also now have a lady from Belgium attending our group and that's great for me. We have lots of visitors as we are listed the International Loners directory and AA Dar es Salaam have an AA website. We received donated books from World Services and from AA Dar es Salaam AA groups – lots of AA Big Books and the 12/12.

I am feeling much more content than I have been for a longtime. First and foremost I must admit I am a recovering Alcoholic and Addict and today I am healing. This is truly a program of attraction rather than promotion.

I am going to Thailand in January 2011 and also San Francisco for a week and I have to say I am looking forward to attending meetings in English and with people who have quite a bit of sobriety. As much as I love the community in Tanzania it will be a good change for me.

Thank you for letting me share and I am looking forward to 2011 with wondrous anticipation. I love to be clean and sober and to wake up each day to a new experience.

Yours in service

Kathryn

PS Reminder: I will be having a very large party on 10 July 2011 to celebrate my 30 years of sobriety and everyone is welcome.

Dear Kathryn

Many thanks for a wonderful share and the update of what is happening in Tanzania. We would love you to report regularly on the progress that is being made at your groups.

We notice you write with deep sincerity and humility. This attitude has

helped with your very many years of sobriety. It must also encourage those members who can understand English to share their experiences, strength and hope. Tanzania must be very grateful having a person of your caliber and length of sobriety.

Should you require extra copies of Alco- Solo please let me know? We also have a South African AA Magazine called "Regmaker" which is the equivalent to "The Grapevine Magazine" from the USA, please let me know if you would like to see a copy. We can possibly post you some back issues for your groups.

I would love to attend your thanksgiving, but as a monk I do not receive any salary. My heart will be with you at that time. My thanksgiving will be on the 22 May. Please remember me in your prayers. I will celebrate on my own as we do not have any meetings close by here in Sri Lanka.

Be blessed

Write soon

Richard

"Remember you get sober by the steps you; take not by the meetings you make".



Alco-Solo is always grateful for any donations received. Please attach a note stating it is an Alco-Solo donation. Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to:

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
and not Alco-Solo

UNTIL NEXT MONTH – STAY
HAPPY- SOBER & SERENE

ONE BREATH @ A TIME

Let's close this meeting in print with the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference

Please try and get your letters in by the 15th of each month, keeping them brief, ALCOHOL RELATED and to the point.

Post contributions to:

Also Solo
C/o GSO Office
P O Box 2770
Alberton
1450
Republic of South Africa

Our loners are always welcome to write to me via email.
sadhmananda@gmail.com

