



Approved by  
The AA General Service Conference in Great Britain

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# WHO ME



**Helpline 0800 9177 650**

# Who Me?

## The AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, 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 dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization 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.

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Not all drinkers are alcoholics. Many people can drink normally and have a normal life. Alcoholics Anonymous has nothing to offer these drinkers. For them, alcohol is not a problem.

The message of Alcoholics Anonymous is for those who do have a problem with alcohol and crave it, even though drinking is causing them a lot of harm.

No alcoholic starts as a down-and-out. It is our drinking and what it makes us do that in time may lose us our homes, families and jobs. Accidents, jail sentences, hospital admissions, suicides and murders are often linked to alcoholic drinking. We know because we are alcoholics.

**WE KNOW** what it is like to give up drink, and then wait in agony for the off-licence or the pub to open.

**WE KNOW** what it is like to spend money that we haven't got; to be driven to steal; to hide drink around the house; to wake up not knowing where we have been or what we have done, or knowing only too well.

**WE TOO** have felt those terrible feelings of loneliness, despair, depression, shame and self-hatred that this illness brings.

Those of us who have tried to control our drinking have found that we cannot. We behave much like other people while we stay away from drink, but if we take any alcohol at all it is difficult or impossible for us to stop.

We have lost control of our drinking.

Alcoholism is a disease that compels us to want more of the very thing that hurts us, and makes us ill and lonely. We found that over time, drinking made our lives worse. Even though it may cost us our family, friends, home and job, we don't really know why we are drinking. We just know that once we start drinking, we cannot stop. This is why an alcoholic can't be a social drinker and just have one or two.

Many of us found it hard to understand that for us it was the first drink that did the damage. We argued that we never got drunk on one drink; it was the fourth, or the eighth, or the sixteenth, which was the culprit that did the damage. If only we had just had one or two we would have been all right.

The fact was that we could not stop at one or two. Once we had taken the first drink, our power of choice had gone. Even if, occasionally, we managed to control our drinking, that very control made us think that — next day or next week or next month - we could handle alcohol. We can't. It is the first drink that destroys our power of choice. No matter how small, or how innocent or tempting the first drink seems we stay away from it — a day at a time.

When we really wanted to enjoy life as we once did, but couldn't picture life without alcohol, we experienced the full feeling of hopelessness and misery. We were obsessed by the idea that one day we would be able to control our drinking and live a normal life. As members of AA, we believe that alcoholism is a deadly illness. Many men and women who suffer from it find it hard to believe this. Alcoholics have to deal with people who see them as just useless and bad.

**THROUGH COMING TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** we found out how to stop drinking, and how to stay stopped. We have found that life without alcohol is not just OK, but that we can enjoy it. We began to get better as soon as we stopped fighting the idea that we were alcoholics.

**Here are a couple of questions to ask yourself:**

**When you drink, do you have little or no control over the amount you take?**

**Do you find you cannot stop drinking, even if you want to?**

If you answer yes to these questions, there's a good chance that you are alcoholic and have lost control over your drinking.

Today it may seem like the end of the world to you, but there are thousands of people in AA who can state that knowing and accepting that they were powerless over alcohol was not an end, but a beginning; the beginning of their recovery and the start of a new, useful and rewarding life.

AA offers a simple 12-step programme of recovery. It is a practical programme of action that has helped many AA members to recover from alcoholism. If you want to stop drinking, this programme of recovery might work for you too.

**THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING**

This means you do not have to sign up, or pay money. You can come to any AA meeting and you may meet people who have had similar experiences to yours. By attending many different

meetings, you will hear different members tell their stories. Among them you will find people like you, who understand you.

Our ability to stay away from that first drink depends on us taking care of mental and spiritual health. Staying sober goes on all the time. We have found our only sure - and enjoyable - course is to stay close to AA. That way we don't go back to our old destructive ways of thinking and behaviour and we share our experience with the newcomer.

At first some of us thought this was obsessive. Once we were sober we wanted to spend more time with our loved ones, to get ahead with careers, or hobbies.

Older, wiser members urged us to put our sobriety first. They pointed out that, in time, we would each find the balance that was right for us. Without sobriety, the future held nothing but destruction of ourselves and everything around us; with sobriety, the world could once more open up for us.

Maybe you are still not sure you are an alcoholic.

In which case, a few meetings may help you to decide. All we ask is that you bring with you an open mind.

Why not give the AA programme a try?

We did, and it has worked for us.

## THE AA PROGRAMME OF RECOVERY

The AA Programme of Recovery is summarised in the suggested Twelve Steps. These are set out in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (The 'Big Book'), which was written and based on the experience of the first hundred AAs to get sober in the US.

### HERE ARE THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

### You may see the point of these steps straight away

On the other hand, they may seem completely alien to you, full of talk of God and wrongdoing. When we speak of God or spiritual awakening, we are not giving you a new theology or trying to put a new light or explanation on your own belief.

In AA there are as many different religious beliefs and interpretations as there are members. You only need to come to believe that a power greater than yourself exists and is much more capable of running your daily life than you have shown yourself to be; for some that power is the AA group, or the Fellowship as a whole.

### A programme for living

Most of us have found that sobriety is the most important thing in our lives, without exception. It is easy to believe that one's job, domestic life, or many other things might come first. However, our experience is that without getting and staying sober we might not be able to hold down a job, keep our families, maintain our sanity or even stay alive. Being convinced that our lives depend upon sobriety, we have a much better chance of getting and staying sober.

## IS AA FOR YOU?

Only you can decide whether you want to give AA a try — whether you think it might help you.

We who are in AA came in because we finally gave up trying to control our drinking. We still hated to admit that we could never drink safely. When we came in, we heard from other AA members that we were sick people, rather than bad people. We discovered that many people had the same feelings of guilt, loneliness and hopelessness that we did.

We decided to face up to what alcohol had done to us. Here are some of the questions we tried to answer honestly.

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Have you ever decided to give up drinking but only managed to last a few days?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Have you ever had a loss of memory because of drinking?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Have you ever tried switching from one kind of drink to another in an effort to control your drinking? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you often want to continue drinking after your friends say they have had enough?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you hide alcohol or drink in secret?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. When drinking with other people do you try to have a few extra drinks which they don't know about?
7. Do you crave alcohol, and have a sense of relief once you have had a drink?
8. Have you ever tried to stop your drinking and been unsuccessful?
9. After drinking have you ever felt remorseful and made a resolution not to drink again?
10. Do you drink to make you feel normal?
11. Have you ever tried to control your drinking?
12. Do you get to the point where you forget or don't care about the negative consequences of drinking, or think 'this time it will be different'?

## What's your score?

If you have answered YES to any one of the questions, you may be in trouble with alcohol, The more questions you answered YES to, the greater the chance that you could be an alcoholic.

Why do we say this? Because many members in AA have had these very experiences and found out the truth about their alcoholism.