Step 2: *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

I had been sober for several months, enjoying the fellowship, the meetings and the fact that my mind was clearing. Family life was starting to improve, though my wife was complaining about how many meetings I was attending. I figured I could just keep following this routine indefinitely. Besides, I wasn’t ready to deal with all the “God” stuff.

I particularly resented old Claude W. who was always quoting the Bible, Victor Hugo or Emerson. His favorite was, “If God did not exist, man would have to invent Him.” I thought that he was being less than helpful as I struggled to move on with the Steps. I didn’t have a workable concept of “God”, and I didn’t want somebody else’s stuffed down my throat.

One Friday night, at the post-newcomers discussion meeting, “Hostile Bob” was finally recognized by the leader. He began to refute Claude’s emphasis on “God”. He said that all we really needed to do was to have a “massive psychic change.” “Aha!” I said to myself, “I don’t have to believe, I just have to wait for a massive psychic change.” Good news!

One problem; how do I get this to happen? As I began attending a 12 Steps & 12 Traditions meeting, a clearer picture began to form in my mind. Something powerful had happened to me: I had received the gift of sobriety by surrendering. So, a power not my own had certainly effected a psychic change of some sort. Therefore, I had to accept the fact that Alcoholics Anonymous was a power greater than me, and I sensed the presence of this power at every meeting.

While I began to realize these “psychic” events, I still had no concept of a power greater than myself. Not to worry. The “12 and 12” tells me that, “True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith, and every A.A. meeting is an assurance that God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to him.”

In the beginning of my sober journey, I thought that the implied insanity had more to do with my distorted perceptions, burning resentments and neurotic thinking than with my drinking. These days, I believe that the Step is really talking about the insane thought that somehow things will be different if I pick up a drink. It was that strange mental quirk that always said, “Go ahead, you deserve it, you need it. This time it will be O.K.” That was the ultimate insanity for an alcoholic.

So both the coming to believe and the restoration of some kind of emotional sanity could be a process; something that would happen over time. Bill tells me in the “12 and 12” that if I work on through the rest of the Steps, I will find a faith that works and that I will have a good chance of achieving emotional sobriety as well. This has been my experience.

Appendix 2 of our “Big Book” tells us that most members have spiritual experiences of the “educational variety.” “With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.” And that sounds a lot like a “massive psychic change.”

*Phil F., Tustin*

*It is an attitude which can only be changed by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions.*

Twelve and Twelve, p. 79
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### THE LIFELINE
1526 BROOKHOLLOW DR., SUITE 75, SANTA ANA, CA 92705

*Published monthly by the Orange County Intergroup Association*

**Purpose:** The Orange County Lifeline Committee is a committee of volunteer A.A. members, charged with the responsibility of producing and distributing the Orange County Lifeline, (a publication of the Orange County Intergroup Association). The Lifeline is published monthly and is supported solely through contributions from the A.A. groups and members of Orange County. The Lifeline is published to meet the following needs of the Orange County A.A. membership: to inform the A.A. membership regarding A.A. service, A.A. events and A.A. announcements; also to share experience in recovery, unity and service; to keep the A.A. membership informed regarding the actions, finances and meetings of the Orange County Intergroup Association and other Central Office committees.

**Lifeline Committee:** Meets the 1st Thursday of each month at the Central Office. Join us @ 7PM.

Doug B., (Chair), Jim S., Phil F., Richard H., Mike T., Tarcy H.

Mail submissions to the above address or send email to: LifelineCommittee@gmail.com

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### ORANGE COUNTY CENTRAL OFFICE
1526 Brookhollow, Suite 75
Santa Ana, CA 92705
Phone: (714) 556-4555; Fax: (714) 556-7231
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Monday-Friday: 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM
Saturday and Holidays: 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

South County Office
27281 Las Ramblas, Ste.135, Mission Viejo, CA 92691
Phone: (949) 582-2697; Fax: (949) 582-2611
E-mail: socsoaa@sbcglobal.net
Office hours:
Monday-Friday: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

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### The Orange County Intergroup Association Meeting

**Wednesday, February 13th at 7:00 PM**
Costa Mesa Senior Center
695 W. 19th Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Co-founder Bill. W liked to call A.A. a “benign anarchy,” and for good reason. A.A. is a spiritual movement, and as Tradition Two clearly states, our sole authority “is a loving God as He may express Himself in the group conscience.” But what exactly is the group conscience? How does it differ from a group opinion or a majority vote? And what is the best way to get there?

It is generally agreed that the group conscience strives for unanimity through enlightenment, spirituality and adherence to our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly—discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the group is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a “yes” or “no” count—precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience.

The late Dean K., who served a term as delegate, California/Northern Interior, and then managed the Seattle Central Office for a time, said that there are two ways to arrive at a group conscience: “The competitive way permits the person with the loudest voice to push his idea across, take a vote and come up with a majority decision. This is not informed group conscience. In the cooperative way, group members come together in mutual trust to arrive at a group decision, not one individual’s personal triumph.

Dean's formula for a cooperative and informed group conscience calls for facts (or presentations) on both sides of a question. “The meeting is not thrown open for general discussion,” he stressed. “This would allow the more vocal members to set the debate. It is suggested that the chairperson call on each member in turn, allowing two minutes for each to speak. No member should speak a second time until all have had their turns; this gives even the quietest person an equal chance. The chairperson expresses his or her opinions only after all the others have spoken.”

“It is important,” Dean noted, “that the minority voice always be heard; but it should be born in mind that while the minority voice sometimes is right, it is just as often wrong. Unless the minority voice is decidedly persuasive, it should be considered in its proper light—as a minority voice. To permit the minority always to influence the majority is to permit the tail to wag the dog.”

Beyond the group level, the A.A. General Service Conference has the responsibility of acting as the collective group conscience of the Fellowship. About the closest thing to a collective voice that A.A. has, the Conference produces statements on important matters of policy that affect A.A. as a whole; approves the choice of some trustee nominees for the General Service Board and directly elects others. But neither the Conference nor the board can dictate to any A.A. group or member.

Not always understood, group conscience as expressed in Tradition Two is a powerful spiritual concept that makes it possible for people of diverse backgrounds and temperament to rise above personal ambition and unite in our common purpose: to stay sober and extend the hand of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Box 459, News & Notes From the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous®
VOL 35, NO 1, FEB/MARCH 1989
http://home.capecod.net/~roger/pages/recovery/print/groupconscienceprint.html

Step Two

Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Concept Two

The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.
Profiles in Sobriety
First name, last initial: Paul C.
City of residence: Irvine
Years sober: 23
Sobriety date: January 8, 1990

What was your first impression of A.A.?
That it should be named by all nations as the savior of the world.

What made you realize A.A. would work for you?
This was the final & last resort, all else had failed.

In your opinion, what is the most important thing a newcomer should know about A.A.?
That it’s a spiritual program, and change will happen.

Take a wild guess - how many A.A. meetings have you been to?
I don't know or care. All I care about is I feel better when I leave.

What’s your current weekly meeting routine?
I attend four men’s stag & one mixed speaker.

Why do you continue to go to meetings?
To hear the solution.

What do you remember the most about your first few months of sobriety?
Excitement, confusion, peace.

Do you remember the first time you asked for help – what was that like?
Complete surrender.

What has been your biggest challenge in sustained sobriety?
Not helping enough Newcomers.

Do you ever think you might be cured for good?
NEVER

Besides yourself, who benefits the most from your sobriety?
My kids, friends, clients.

What’s the best thing about being sober?
Waking-up in the AM, not coming-to. Going to sleep at night, not passing-out.

Everyone has the right to be wrong and I don’t have to prove it to them.
Wine Snob or Alcoholic? 
A Moment of Clarity

The moment I knew I had to either stop drinking or die was one of the most powerful in my life, and yet it's also one of the hardest to explain. I was one of those drink-every-day- and pretend-it's-social alcoholic. I didn't pass out at parties or drive somewhere in a blackout or wake up in a stranger's bed and wonder how I got there (I had at least a vague memory of how I had gotten there). No, my drinking was the kind that appeared to be just normal enough to lend itself to massive self-deception.

This is what I thought of myself: I was a wind-down-after-work drinker. A red wine snob drinker. A non-partying drinker. (I stopped the partying around age 33 and migrated to being an at-home and out-to-dinner drinker, proof of my growing maturity.) On an online dating site I listed my passions as wine tasting and going out to dinner (at fine restaurants with lots of wine). I showed up at events after imbibing two or three glasses, drank the socially correct amount, and then finished off the night with another two or three when I got home. This, I was sure, did not make me an alcoholic. Alcoholics couldn't stop drinking—and they drank the hard stuff, not wine. Me? Nah. I habitually left small amounts of wine in the bottom of my bottles to prove to myself that this wasn't the case for me. And as the years went on, I added “cut down on alcohol” to the long list of things I needed to do to improve my life: reduce caffeine, eliminate sugar, exercise regularly. I was going to do it—just as soon as I did all those other things first.

Although my drinking did not, to my knowledge, affect my life, I did get the sense that I was unraveling at an alarming rate, and I couldn't figure out why. I was shaking all the time, and I thought it was because of my stressful job, or my latest break-up. The made-up reasons kept changing.

The unraveling didn't. It wasn't long after that I hired someone to work for me at my company who began using his finely honed Twelfth-stepping skills to bring me the solution.

There was a time after I met this man and before I had my moment of clarity that I knew I was going to stop drinking. I grieved. I walked through the wine section at Andronico’s and spent a long time breathing in the oaky smell of the barrels and admiring the beautiful labels. I ordered fabulous, expensive bottles at dinner and told my friends each time that it was close to being my last.

And yet still I didn't stop, couldn't stop. Until one night, after making a fool out of myself with a man I truly cared for, I found myself at home, drunk and stumbling and standing in front of my kitchen sink with every bottle of alcohol in my house. I was looking out the window, and suddenly I had the sensation that I was in a car speeding toward the edge of a cliff. I felt time slow down, then pause, and I saw myself going over the edge and all the way down. I knew without a shred of doubt that I had to leap out of that car and I had to do it right now. It almost felt as if some powerful force pushed me out. I stood there at my sink and emptied every bottle in my house. The last drink I took was a big gulp of Nyquil before it, too, went down the drain.

More than anything else, it is this moment that has kept me sober for the last four and a half years. It cuts through the delusional crap that continues to rattle around my brain from time to time, telling me I'm not an alcoholic and I could have just one and all the other things voices like that tell us. That moment sits somewhere at the center of who I am right now; it is a polished piece of truth about myself that I can't deny, and it's saving my life.

by Kristen B.
Borrowed from The Point, San Francisco

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

This month’s question:

Alcoholic A says people shouldn't go too deep when sharing in meetings. Stories of childhood abuse, suicide attempts and the like should be reserved for a sponsor, therapist or other close confidant.

Alcoholic B disagrees and says the deeper the better. Any story, no matter how chilling, should be welcome in a meeting if it relates to alcoholism and recovery.

What do you think?

Send responses to Email:
LifelineCommittee@gmail.com
Another Buck in the Basket

This month's tip for dropping an extra dollar or two in the basket:

Make a pledge with another close A.A. friend to each drop $2 in the basket every meeting – you'll both feel better for it.

Orange County Central Office—New HOLIDAY Hours

With the hope of better serving its Members and Groups, The Intergroup Service Board voted in favor of a new holiday schedule for the Central Office in Santa Ana on a six month trial basis. Below are the new holiday hours.

Christmas Day 12/25 Tuesday 9am – 1pm
New Year's Day 01/01 Tuesday 9am – 1pm
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 01/21 Monday 9am – 1pm
Presidents Day 02/18 Monday 9am – 1pm
Memorial Day 05/27 Monday 9am – 1pm

Orange County Intergroup Assoc. Web Site Statistics

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*Lifeline numbers are lower due to now reporting “Visitors” rather than “Hits”

Alcohol does not make people do things better; it makes them less ashamed of doing them badly.
A Letter From Bill W. on Depression

The following excerpts from a letter of Bill W.’s was quoted in the memoirs of Tom P., an early California A.A. member. Tom did not use the name of the person addressed—perhaps because he was still living.

Tom said:

Here in part is what Bill W. wrote in 1958 to a close friend who shared his problem with depression, describing how Bill himself used St. Francis’s prayer as a stepping stone toward recovery:

Dear .......

I think that many oldsters who have put our A.A. “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in A.A. ... the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result and so into easy, happy, and good living ... well, that’s not only the neurotic’s problem, it’s the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That’s the place so many of us A.A. oldsters have come to. And it’s a hell of a spot, literally.

Last autumn, depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I’ve had with depressions, it wasn’t a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, “Why can’t the Twelve Steps work to release depression?” By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis prayer ... “It is better to comfort than to be comforted.” Here was the formula, all right, but why didn’t it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was ... My basic flaw had always been dependence, almost absolute dependence on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came so did my depression.

There wasn’t a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Reinforced by what grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon A.A., indeed upon any set of circumstances whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and institutional satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God’s love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn’t possibly do that as long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependency meant demand ... a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit, an outgoing love of God’s creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can’t flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent demand. Let us, with God’s help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to gain emotional sobriety.

Of course, I haven’t offered you a really new idea ... only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own “hexes” at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

Tom said:

“Bill’s words of wisdom helped and inspired me and many others. To those who have never been there, it is hard to describe the gratitude that overflows in men and women who are delivered from the black depths of depression into the light. As with delivery from the bondage to alcohol, it is a hosanna of the heart that never ends.”
### SPEAKER MEETINGS

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### EVENTS

- **April 26-28, 2013**
  - **25th IWV A.A. Round Up**
  - A Frontier for Hope
  - Desert Empire Fairgrounds
  - Ridgecrest, CA 93555
  - Website: [www.orgsites.com/ca/iwvroundup](http://www.orgsites.com/ca/iwvroundup)
  - Email: iwvroundup@gmail.com

- **May 4, 2013**
  - **3rd Annual South County Chili Cook-Off**
  - Presented by:
    - SOC H & I Cook-Off Committee
    - All Welcome, Pet Friendly
    - Mason Park, Irvine

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**Orange County H & I**

Meets the 2nd Sunday of the month
Institutions meet at 6:00; Hospitals meet at 4:00
Garden Grove Alano Club, 714-534-2244
9845 Belfast Drive, Garden Grove
For additional info call (714) 979-8524 or Central Office: (714) 556-4555

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**South Orange County H & I**

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month
7:30 pm
Laguna Canyon Club
20456 Laguna Canyon Rd.,
Laguna Beach
(949) 497-1823

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**To Carry the Message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the Alcoholic who is confined in a Hospital or Institution**
CALL FORWARDING:
The call forwarding program instituted by Orange County Central Office insures that our help line phones are answered by volunteers 24/7. During hours when the Central Office is closed, calls to the Central Office are forwarded to a call forwarding volunteer’s home or cell phone, where the volunteer answers the calls just as if he or she were sitting in the Central Office. This service allows the Central Office to realize a significant cost saving because we do not need to contract with a phone answering service. Even more vital, when a call is placed to Alcoholics Anonymous in Orange County, the caller will be talking to an Alcoholics Anonymous member not a phone service! This truly is “front-line” 12th Step work and we would appreciate any time you can give.

SHIFTS:
Monday thru Friday shifts are 6am to 9am, 6pm to 9pm and 9pm to 6am. Saturday and Holiday shifts start with the 6am to 9am. The Central Office opens and covers from 9am to 1pm on Saturdays and Holidays. The phones are then forwarded to volunteers to cover the phones from 1pm to 4pm, 4pm to 7pm, 7pm to 10pm and 10pm to 6am. On Sundays shifts begin at 6am with the 6am to 10am, and continue with 10am to 2pm, 2pm to 6pm, 6pm to 10pm and 10pm to 6am.

VOLUNTEERING:
In order to volunteer for this service it is suggested that you have two years of sobriety. You must then arrange with the Central Office Manager in Santa Ana or the Satellite Office Manager in Mission Viejo for a brief orientation session which will be held at one of the offices. Shifts are available please call the Central Office at (714) 556-4555 or the Satellite Office at (949) 582-2697.

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In Southern California, see Page 72 of our Orange County printed Meeting Directory for a listing of nearby Central Offices with phone numbers and web site addresses.

For the rest of the U.S. and Canada, go to www.aa.org where you can locate Central Offices by State or Province or Country.

Travelers without access to the Internet can call our Central Office (714) 556-4555 where a phone volunteer will look up a contact or meeting in any of the printed or on-line directories published by GSO.
From a speaker at the Sat. Night Tustin Visiting Speakers Meeting:

Seems there was a renowned A.A. speaker that a group was eager to book. Only problem: he was known to ramble on and on, always going over his allotted time. Knowing this, the group’s Secretary figured he had a good way of getting the speaker’s attention when it was time to wrap up. Came the big night. The speaker was eloquent, but as the end of the meeting drew near, the Secretary held up a card showing the speaker that there were only ten minutes to go. Now rambling on, the speaker ignored this bit of news. At five minutes, the Secretary held up the next card. Again, the speaker ignored the message, and launched into a new subject. At ten minutes over the Secretary, having lost it, grabbed a copy of the Big Book, and threw it at the speaker, just missing him and knocking an Old-timer in the first row out of his seat. The elder one regained his chair, and loudly announced, “Hit me again, I can still hear him!”