

Downeast Intergroup Newsletter

October 2021

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How Can Online Groups Participate in the General Service Structure? (Peter B.)

The 2021 General Service Conference had six motions regarding this question. The difficulty is that A.A. service entities have a geographic dimension, while online forums do not. The Policy/Admissions Committee pondered this and came up with a modest solution: that an online group can be listed within the group's "preferred" district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact.

This addresses the group's listing in the database in New York. But the district and area must answer the question: Can this group vote? Can it send a GSR to meetings and Assemblies? Is the GSR required to come physically?

This listing solution was approved by the Conference with substantial unanimity, as was a recommendation that the General Service Board form a committee for further study. One possibility is to form an Area 95, which would be an online area. This area would have a delegate who could vote at the General Service Conference.

Of course, areas subdivide as the number of groups grows. There will someday be many online groups, and thus more online areas. Would they send delegates physically to New York? Or would future General Service Conferences be hybrid? And what about geography? The Conference represents the US and Canada, but online groups would often have members from the outside the area. The issue will occupy the Conference for years.

Why Study Tradition Ten? (Bill L.)

"Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. Name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

A major principle identified during the course of my study of Tradition Ten was that of **"Outside Opinions"**. So what does that mean, and how does that benefit others and in the process my own program? (Common welfare comes before personal sobriety- Tradition One)

Early in sobriety I was taught that perhaps the very last thing an alcoholic will surrender is "his opinion". Step eight in the Twelve and Twelve may offer the best explanation why this is so in its discussion of emotional harms: *"Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness...they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered out lives for the worst"*. If my opinion is below the level of consciousness it can not be surrendered until it is recognized.

Outside opinions can be devastating when they apply to another person's recovery (or lack of it) when they take the focus off of my own recovery process and unconsciously project my own thinking on somebody else. As a sponsor I need to be very careful to identify any suggestions made as an "opinion" based solely upon outside personal experience and not an AA incontrovertible truth. Bill tells us in his chapter **"We Agnostics"** that *"the Great Reality is deep down within us"*, and it is only there that it can be found.

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"My AA sponsor told me 'no relationships for a year'."

The Set of Keys (Heath W)

When I went to rehab, I not only wanted to be sober and stay sober, I also wanted to learn about my addiction. What was it about me? Why was my life always a mess? Why can't I drink like normal people? Along with tons of other questions piled up in my brain. (This was my last shot at giving it a shot. I tried and failed on my own countless times. I was going to go in there, hopefully learn something, and do everything I was told to do. Before arriving, I accepted defeat. I knew I was powerless over Alcohol. I had step one down before I ever knew what Step One was.

First things first I was assigned a counselor and a chaplain and hoped both would be the perfect match for me. I hoped we could sit down and open this can of worms. Both of these men turned out to be exactly what I needed. You see, God had a lot of stuff worked out for me in rehab, but I didn't know it yet. Lucky for me, I was ready to be willing and honest, and I was about to find out that He was waiting for me there. My conversations with these men were very different from each other. After talking with my counselor, I left with some assignments. One of them

was to start writing down the coincidences in my life. Coincidences? That confused me for a while. I'm in rehab, what coincidences could he be talking about, aside from the obvious one? I wouldn't see my counselor for a few days, giving me time to figure some of it out. I went to my room, read, and prayed. I asked God to show me the coincidences. If I was meant to be here at this moment, to send me a sign or something that I would know was just for me. And God didn't waste any time.

By the end of the day I knew without a doubt, I was exactly where I was supposed to be. By the next time I saw my counselor, I had written down multiple things to share with him that I knew were just for me. Some were serious, some funny, but all were just for me, just as I had asked. From an encounter with a stranger that I felt God tug at me to talk to and finding out God had tugged at him too, to my favorite foods three meals in a row, and finally, a random passage that I read in the Big Book. All day long I couldn't stop thinking about that passage. Then that night it was the passage and story the speaker at the AA meeting shared. I realized I didn't understand the coincidence assignment until I understood that there are no coincidences in my life.

It was later with my chaplain that I came to know a little bit about the steps and where I first talked deeply about my past. We started at the beginning, and through that I learned that I had an Alcoholic Mindset even before my first drink. Somewhere in the middle of sharing, he stopped me. He said, "That. That right there – you're going to have to remove that to continue on in the right way." He had heard something that damaged me and I was holding onto the anger with a death grip - one of my biggest resentments. I had been so mad at the people in my church growing up that I felt betrayed and unwanted. I became mad at God too. When my chaplain pointed it out, I realized I had been holding onto that anger and resentment since I was 15 years old. Now to

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move forward, I needed to accept my part in all of it, forgive the people who hurt me and myself, and prepare to let it go

It's hard to explain, but that moment felt like the light bulb finally turned on. Everything clicked, like in the "Rocky" movies when it finally hits with him and the music starts playing and you feel it go through your body. How could something so small be one of the biggest keys to my new life? I left his office and found a peaceful spot outside. I thought to myself, "Why have I been holding on to this for so long?" I was truly ready to let it go and I forgave them and myself. In that moment I could feel the walls that I built up come tumbling down. The God that I left and said didn't exist was right there waiting for me and His plan was in motion. He had been there the whole time. I had a "spiritual experience" as the result of those two key meetings, and I knew immediately that my view of the world had changed. Through the power of forgiveness and the steps, I would continue to live a sober life. I'll never forget that day. It was the day I started to really see. There was hope now, for my wounds and others to heal.

My Story (Derald C.)

Hello, the last time I saw my brother he asked me not to leave him because he was a wanted fugitive. Escaping after a drug conviction, I left thinking another geographical change would be different and reduce my drinking. I already had two ex-wives, jails, mental hospitals for up to a year but still thinking a different place would be different. I was in Alaska only two weeks when I was informed my brother had been murdered. He was in the wrong place at the time of a robbery. They shot him then poured gasoline while he was still alive.

This news took me to a very dark place, people said I had shark eyes, I had nothing but hate, rage and such a deep hurt that I had abandoned him, I could not take a sober breath the pain was so bad. I met my 3rd wife in a strip bar and had four children. I wasn't there for my children and neither was their mother, the state of Maine

stepped in and took our children because we were unfit parents. I got drunk one night passed out and woke up in a rehab. I wanted to leave to drink, a couple of people talked me into staying at least a few days.

They had a family day and brought my kids from various foster homes, I don't remember much of that day but I was walking my little girl who was 5yrs old to a foster mother's car, she tensed up and screamed "NO DADDY" take me home. I couldn't and something deep inside me knew the life I had known was over. I went back in the rehab even though I didn't want to but I knew my kids needed someone. They started bussing us to AA meetings, I will never forget my 1st AA meeting because the speakers were telling my story and for the 1st time in my life I knew I wasn't alone, there were others like me. I felt like I was placed on another planet because I didn't understand the language they were using, easy does it, time takes time, let go and let God, nothing made sense and I could not envision a life without drinking. But the Old Timers told me I didn't have to stay sober the rest of my life, I didn't have to stay sober tomorrow, they said why don't you just stay sober today. Some how that made sense, they said go to a meeting every day, get lot of contacts and get a sponsor. I was willing to do anything for my children, the thought of them in foster homes was so painful. I stayed sober doing what they told me, I got my kids back, I got my health back, I had some money in my pocket, getting sober was one of the hardest things I've ever done, the Old Timers promised me if I kept a plug in the jug my life would be beyond anything I could imagine.

They were not kidding. It wasn't easy and I made a lot of mistakes but I didn't drink. That was over 33yrs ago one day at a time. I met a beautiful woman at 5yrs sober, we have been married 28yrs, she is my best friend, our 1st child was born with autism but because I was sober I was there for homework, PTA meetings, I had patience and tolerance the program taught me, he graduated 10yrs ago high school with honors. The state of Maine knew we had a child with autism, they asked if we would become foster parents, the same state that took my kids was no licensing me as a foster parent, we adopted a young boy with autism, he too graduated with honors, we had 2 other children, we watched everyone get their diplomas, I never missed a Christmas morning, an Easter egg hunt, in the bleachers for basketball, football in auditoriums for our daughter's ballet, I co founded a

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recovery center, was on the board of directors with a police captain, a judge, bankers and counselors, I put on meetings at the county jail, I owned a reputable business, own a home in Maine and the Philippines, none of this was part of my plan, i'm not smart enough to be the architect of this amazing life I have, the guy who was directly responsible for taking my kids came to my 30th sober anniversary spoke and gave me my medallion. you can't make this stuff up. I'm writing this from my home in the Philippines due to covid19. I started an AA zoom meeting here last august and host it 7 days a week from gratitude. The last thing I will share my son back in Maine informed me two hours ago I'm going to be a granddad again. 33yrs and i'm still saying it can't get any better than this.

SUMMARY OF DEIG MINUTES- AUGUST, 2021

- Motion to continue the DEIG ZOOM account for another year (passed unanimously)
- Motion for the Meeting List Chair to keep an accurate log of all meeting list change requests and the date of notificatiob (passed unanimously)

DEIG FINANCES- AUGUST 2021

Operating Account

- beginning balance.....\$2,062.91
- total debit.....< \$530.72>
- total credit..... \$571.00*
- ending balance.....\$2,103.19

*Donations were received from the following:

Stark Raving Sober Group/Blue Hill....	\$50.00
Bar Harbor Group.....	\$75.00
District 16.....	\$55.00
Lamoine State Park picnic.....	\$208.00
Pass it On Group/Belfast.....	\$58.00
Anonymous Donation.....	<u>\$125.00</u>
total.....	\$571.00

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send articles, events, corrections, anniversaries, and other group or district news to Newsletter Editor Bill L., PO 1056 Pleasant Street, Blue Hill, Maine 01616

editor@downeastintergroup.org.

You can also write to Downeast Intergroup, PO Box 1633, Ellsworth, ME 04605-1633. Please mail contributions to support this intergroup to this address or to Downeast Intergroup Treasurer, PO Box 1633, Ellsworth, ME 04602-1633. We ask for your name and AA job title from all who contribute items printed in this newsletter.

Events listed are for your information, and are not necessarily sponsored or endorsed by AA or this intergroup.