

# A newcomer asks . . .



Helpline 0845 769 7555

This leaflet is intended to help people approaching Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for the first time. In it we have tried to answer the questions most frequently in the minds of newcomers – the questions which were in our minds when we approached the Fellowship.

## **Am I an alcoholic?**

If you repeatedly drink more than you intend or want to, or if you get into trouble when you drink, you may be an alcoholic. Only you can decide. No one in AA will tell you whether you are or not.

## **What can I do if I am worried about my drinking?**

Seek help – Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

## **What is Alcoholics Anonymous?**

We are a fellowship of men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking and have found ourselves in various sorts of trouble as a result of drink. We attempt, most of us successfully, to create a satisfactory way of life without alcohol. For this we need the help and support of other alcoholics in AA.

## **If I go to an AA meeting, does that commit me to anything?**

No. AA keeps no membership files, or attendance records. You need disclose nothing about yourself. No one will bother you if you don't want to come back.

## **What happens if I meet people I know in AA?**

They will be there for the same reason as you. They will not reveal your identity to outsiders. At AA you retain as much anonymity as you wish. That is one of the reasons we call ourselves Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **What happens at an AA meeting?**

An AA meeting may take one of several forms, but at any meeting you will find alcoholics talking about what drink did to their lives and personalities; what action they took to deal with this and how they are living their lives today.

## **How can this help me with my drink problem?**

We in AA know what it is like to be addicted to alcohol, and to be unable to keep promises made to others and ourselves that we will stop drinking. We are not professional therapists; our only qualification for helping others to recover from alcoholism is that we have recovered ourselves, but problem drinkers coming to us know that recovery is possible because they see people who have done it.

## **Why do you keep on going to meetings after you are cured?**

We in the Fellowship of AA believe there is no such thing as a *cure* for alcoholism. We can never return to normal drinking and our ability to stay away from alcohol depends on maintaining our physical, mental and spiritual health. This we can achieve by going to meetings regularly and putting into practice what we learn there. In addition, we find it helps us to stay sober if we help other alcoholics.

## **How do I join AA?**

You are an AA member if and when you say so. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking, and many of us were not very wholehearted about that when we first approached AA.

## **How much does AA membership cost?**

There are no dues or fees for AA membership. An AA group will usually have a collection during the meeting to cover running expenses, such as rent, coffee, etc, and to this all members are free to contribute as much or as little as they wish.

## **Is AA a religious organisation?**

No. Nor is it allied to any religious organisation.

## **There's a lot of talk about God, though, isn't there?**

The majority of AA members believe that we have found the solution to our drink problem not through individual willpower, but through a Power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the collective therapy of AA, still others refuse to believe in it at all. There is room in AA for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

## **Can I bring my family to an AA meeting?**

Family members or close friends are welcome at 'open' AA meetings — discuss this with your local contact.

## **What advice do you give to new members?**

In our experience the people who recover in AA are those who:

- 1 stay away from the first drink
- 2 attend AA meetings regularly
- 3 seek out the people in AA who have successfully stayed sober for some time
- 4 try to put into practice the AA programme of recovery

## **How can I contact AA?**

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in your local telephone directory; in many places a local AA number is also included in the useful numbers section. These telephones are manned by volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions or put you in touch with those who can. If there is no AA telephone service close to you, write or phone the General Service Office for Great Britain at the address opposite.

Remember that alcoholism is a progressive illness. Take it seriously, even if you feel you are at an early stage of the illness. Alcoholism is a killer disease. If you are an alcoholic and if you continue to drink, in time you will get worse.

## Some other AA pamphlets

Here is a list of other AA publications which will be helpful to you:

*Is AA for you?*

*15 Points*

*How it works*

*Now that you've stopped*

*Young people in AA*

*AA for the woman*

*Letter to a woman alcoholic*

*Problems other than alcohol*

*Do you think you're different?*

*A member's eye view*

**General Service Office AA., P.O. Box 1,  
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[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

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