Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our *twelfth suggestion:* Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Experience has taught us that working with other alcoholics is the most effective way to keep from drinking. It works when everything else fails. This is why the *Twelfth Step* is: "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." We can help other alcoholics when no one else can! We know what they have gone through, so they will trust us when they cannot trust anyone else.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

When we start to help other alcoholics, life becomes more meaningful. Watching other people

recover, watching them help others, seeing their loneliness disappear is an amazing experience. You will also feel a fellowship growing around you and discover that you have many friends. This is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Spending time with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Perhaps you are not acquainted with any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, ministers, priests or hospitals. They will be only too glad to assist you. Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately a lot of prejudice exists. You will be handicapped if you arouse it. Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish, but it happens that because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. So cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim.

Maybe you don't know any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, faith leaders, or hospitals. They will be glad to help you find people who are ready to get sober. When we first start talking with newcomers, we try not to be preachy or judgmental. Many people are uncomfortable with "God talk," and unsure about A.A. when religion is brought up. You don't want to ruin your chances of helping others by talking about faith too soon. Faith leaders and doctors are skilled at talking about tough topics, and you can learn from them if you want. But it's your own drinking experience

that will make you most useful to other alcoholics. So cooperate, and never criticize. Being helpful is our only goal.

When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him. If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for his family also. They should be patient, realizing they are dealing with a sick person.

When you meet someone who might be helped by Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about them. If you find out they do not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to convince them. They may feel ready later. Forcing them too soon will ruin your chance at helping them. This advice should also be given to their family members. They should be patient, and understand they are dealing with a sick person.

If there is any indication that he wants to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in him—usually his wife. Get an idea of his behavior, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition, and his religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if the tables were turned.

If there is any indication that this newcomer wants to stop drinking, have a good talk with the person most interested in their well-being. This is usually their spouse or partner. Get some information about their behaviors, problems, and background. Find out how serious their drinking problem is right now, and ask if they are religious. You need this information to understand what this

problem drinker is going through. You need to think about standing in their shoes. Doing this will help you figure out how to begin your conversation, and what to say.

Sometimes it is wise to wait till he goes on a binge. The family may object to this, but unless he is in a dangerous physical condition, it is better to risk it. Don't deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let his family or a friend ask him if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so. If he says yes, then his attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered. You should be described to him as one of a fellowship who, as part of their own recovery, try to help others and who will be glad to talk to him if he cares to see you.

Sometimes it works best to wait until the individual goes on a drinking binge. Their family may not like this plan. But unless their physical health is at risk, it can be the most effective way to approach them. Don't have a conversation when the person is very drunk, unless they get mean and their family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or until they are somewhat clear-headed. Then let the family or a friend ask them if they want to quit for good. If they say yes, they should be encouraged to talk with you. The family should describe you as a person who has recovered. They should say you are part of a fellowship of people who try to help others stop drinking. They should also say you will be glad to have a conversation about recovery.

If he does not want to see you, never force yourself

upon him. Neither should the family hysterically plead with him to do anything, nor should they tell him much about you. They should wait for the end of his next drinking bout. You might place this book where he can see it in the interval. Here no specific rule can be given. The family must decide these

things. But urge them not to be over-anxious, for that might spoil matters.

> If the individual does not want to see you, don't force them. When you speak with their family, ask them to avoid being dramatic or overly emotional. Tell the family to say very little about you. They should wait for the end of the next drinking spree. If the family wants to put a copy of this book somewhere in the house where the problem drinker can see it, they can do so. It's up to them. But urge family members to be as calm as they can.

Usually the family should not try to tell your story. When possible, avoid meeting a man through his family. Approach through a doctor or an institution is a better bet. If your man needs hospitalization, he should have it, but not forcibly unless he is violent. Let the doctor, if he will, tell him he has something in the way of a solution.

> Usually the family should not try to tell your story. In fact, when possible, it is better to meet a problem drinker through a doctor or treatment center than through their family. If the problem drinker needs to be in the hospital that's fine, but they should not be forced to stay unless they are violent. Let the doctor tell the problem drinker about A.A. as a possible solution.

When your man is better, the doctor might suggest a visit from you. Though you have talked with the family, leave them out of the first discussion. Under

these conditions your prospect will see he is under no pressure. He will feel he can deal with you without being nagged by his family. Call on him while he is still jittery. He may be more receptive when depressed.

The first conversation

When the person you've helped is feeling better, the doctor may suggest you visit with them. Even though you have talked with the family, leave them out of your first discussion. Doing this helps the individual understand that they're under no pressure. They'll know they can work with you without being nagged by their family. Visit with them while they are still jittery. They may be more open to A.A.'s ideas when still feeling unwell.

See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing, for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If he is in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his.

Speak to your problem drinker alone if you can. Start with general conversation. After a while, talk a little about some phase of drinking. Tell them enough about your drinking habits, symptoms,

and experiences to encourage them to talk about their own drinking. If they decide to talk, let them. Doing this will help you know how to keep the conversation going. If they don't want to talk, describe your own drinking career up to the time you quit. But don't talk about A.A. or how you quit just yet. If the person is in a serious mood, focus on the troubles liquor has caused you. Be careful not to scold or lecture. If the individual's mood is light, tell them funny stories of your experiences. Ask them to share some of theirs.

When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic.

Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If he is alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own.

> When the problem drinker understands that you know all about drinking, start to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell them how confused you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Tell them about how much you struggled to stop drinking. Show them the mental tricks alcoholics play on themselves that lead to the first drink of a spree. (If you don't remember this, look back at Chapter 3. We describe it there, and you can use our description in your conversation.) If the individual is alcoholic, they will understand you immediately. They will see that some of your thinking doesn't make sense—and that sometimes their thinking doesn't either.

If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can—if he is not too alcoholic.

But insist that if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself.

> If you think this problem drinker is a real alcoholic, talk with them about the hopelessness of alcoholism. From your own experience, show them how hard it is to live life drunk. Talk about how the strange mental condition created by that first drink keeps our willpower from working. At this stage, don't refer to this book unless your problem drinker has seen it and asks about it. And be careful not to label them as an alcoholic. Let them decide that for themselves. If they stick to the idea that they can still control their drinking, tell them that might be possible—if they're not too alcoholic. But insist that if they are too sick, they probably cannot recover by themselves.

Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep his attention focussed mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament. Doctors are rightly loath to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose. But you may talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting he has many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic. If his own doctor is willing to tell him that he is alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have en-

tirely admitted his condition, he has become very curious to know how you got well. Let him ask you that question, if he will. *Tell him exactly what happened to you.* Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that *he does not have to agree with your conception of God.* He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. *The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.*

Continue talking about alcoholism as a sickness, and one that leads to death. Talk about the illnesses of body and mind that go along with it. Keep the person's attention focused on your personal experience. Say that many alcoholics destroy their lives without realizing what they're doing. Doctors are reluctant to tell alcoholic patients the whole truth unless they're certain it will help. But you can talk with the problem drinker about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you have a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting they have many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic.

Helpful strategies

Even though the person may not have accepted their own alcoholism, they will become curious. They will want to know how you got well. Let them ask you that question, and *tell them exactly what happened to you.* Be sure to talk about the spiritual aspect of A.A. If your friend is agnostic or atheist, be very clear that *they do not have to agree*

with your own ideas about God. They can choose any Higher Power that makes sense to them. *The main thing is to be willing to believe in a Power greater than themselves, and live by spiritual principles.*

When dealing with such a person, you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles. There is no use arousing any prejudice he may have against certain theological terms and conceptions about which he may already be confused. Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are.

In your conversations, use everyday language to describe spiritual principles. You don't want to make them feel defensive about religion, or start doubting if they can trust you.

Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient. To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action. Let him see that you are not there to instruct him in religion. Admit that he probably knows more about it than you do, but call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink. Perhaps your story will help him see where he has failed to practice the very precepts he knows so well. We represent no

particular faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.

> On the other hand, your problem drinker may already be a religious person. Their religious education and training may go deeper than yours. In that case, they'll be curious to learn why their own beliefs have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. Faith must be paired with self-sacrifice and unselfish, helpful action. Let your friend see that you are not there to teach them about religion. Admit that they probably know more about it than you do. Then point out that even if their faith and knowledge is deep, they haven't applied it or they would not drink. Your own story might help them see where they failed to practice the spiritual principles they know so well. We practice no particular religion. We only deal with the general principles that most religions are built on.

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him. Make it plain he is under no obligation to you, that you hope only that he will try to help other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that he place the welfare of other people ahead of his own. Make it clear that he is not under pressure, that he needn't see

you again if he doesn't want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off, for he has helped you more than you have helped him. If your talk has been sane, quiet and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hope-less he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

Next, describe the A.A. program of action. Explain how you made your inventory, how you straightened out your past, and why you are now trying to be helpful to them, as a problem drinker. It is important for them to understand that passing along the message of A.A. is key to your own recovery. Actually, they may be helping you more than you are helping them. Be clear that they are under no obligation to you. Say that you only hope they will try to help other alcoholics when they are on the recovery path.

Explain how important it is that they place the well-being of other people ahead of their own. Make it clear that they are not under pressure, that they don't have to see you again if they don't want to. You should not be offended if they want to call it off. Again, they have helped you more than you have helped them. But if your talk has been sane, quiet, and full of human understanding, you may have made a friend. Or maybe you have just forced them to think about the question of alcoholism. All of these things are positive. The more hopeless they feel, the better. They will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

Your candidate may give reasons why he need not

follow all of the program. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book.

If the problem drinker resists A.A.

Your new friend may give reasons why they don't need to complete all of the program. They may rebel at the thought of doing a thorough house cleaning (inventory). They may not want to talk with other people about their problems. Don't argue with them. Tell them you once felt the same way. Say you don't think you would have made much progress if you took no action.

Unless your friend wants to talk further about himself, do not wear out your welcome. Give him a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let him steer the conversation in any direction he likes. Sometimes a new man is anxious to proceed at once, and you may be tempted to let him do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If he has trouble later, he is likely to say you rushed him. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

Unless your friend wants to talk further about their own experiences, don't force them. You don't want to wear out your welcome. Give them a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let them steer the conversation in any direction they want. Sometimes a person is anxious to start the program right away. You may be tempted to let them do just that. Sometimes this is a mistake. If the problem drinker has trouble later on, they may say you made them feel rushed. You will be most successful with other alcoholics if you don't act pushy or judgmental. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual perspective. Just lay out the kit of spiritual tools for them to look at. Show them how the tools worked for you. Offer them friendship and fellowship. Tell them that if they want to get well, you will do anything to help.

If he is not interested in your solution, if he expects you to act only as a banker for his financial difficulties or a nurse for his sprees, you may have to drop him until he changes his mind. This he may do after he gets hurt some more.

> If they are not interested in doing the work of A.A., you will know. If the person wants you to lend them money or act like a nurse when they go on drinking sprees, you might even stop helping them. You'll need to wait until they change their own mind. This might not happen until they get hurt some more.

If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on. He should not be pushed or prodded by you, his wife, or his friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within.

> If they are truly interested and want to see you again, ask them to read this book before your next meeting. After doing that, they must decide on their own whether or not to go on. They should not be pushed or prodded by you, their family, or their friends. If they are to connect with a Higher Power, the desire must come from within.

If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.

If the individual thinks they can stop drinking in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage them to do what they think is best for them. A.A. does not believe there is one right path to faith. We just have an approach that worked for us. But point out that we alcoholics have a lot in common and you'd like to keep in touch. Let it go at that.

Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our Fellowship failed entirely with his first half dozen prospects. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chance.

Don't be discouraged if your new friend doesn't join A.A. right away. Find another alcoholic and try again. It won't take long to find someone desperate enough to accept what you offer. It's a waste of time to keep chasing someone who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, they may soon realize that they cannot recover by themselves. To spend too much time on any one person means denying some other alcoholic the chance to live and be happy.

One member of our Fellowship failed completely with his first six problem drinkers. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he would not have been able to help others who wanted to recover.

Suppose now you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared

to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision and tell his story, but do not insist upon it if he prefers to consult someone else.

The second conversation

Let's say you are now going to your second visit with your problem drinker. They have read this book and say they're ready to do all Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give them lots of practical advice. Let them know you are ready to listen if they want to tell their story. But don't insist if they prefer to do the Steps with someone else.

He may be broke and homeless. If he is, you might try to help him about getting a job, or give him a little financial assistance. But you should not deprive your family or creditors of money they should have. Perhaps you will want to take the man into your home for a few days. But be sure you use discretion. Be certain he will be welcomed by your family, and that he is not trying to impose upon you for money, connections, or shelter. Permit that and you only harm him. You will be making it possible for him to be insincere.

You may be aiding in his destruction rather than his recovery.

> Your new friend may have financial problems. You might help them get a job or offer them a little money. But you shouldn't put your own finances at risk. You may want to let them into your home for a few days. Use your best judgment in doing this. Be sure your family is comfortable with them in the house. Don't let them stay for too long. Be certain they're not taking advantage of you by asking for money, employment, or shelter. If you let that happen, you will be letting them act dishonestly.
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> You may be helping their destruction rather than their recovery.

Never avoid these responsibilities, but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume them. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night. Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home, or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with him if he is violent. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under his direction. Another time you may have to send for the police or

an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions.

> Never avoid these responsibilities, but be sure you are doing the right thing if you accept them. Helping others is the foundation of your recovery. A kind act once in a while isn't enough. You have to be unselfish and helpful every day.
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> You may lose many nights' sleep, be unable to enjoy your hobbies, or need to take time off work. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling worried spouses and relatives, trips to police stations, hospitals, and jails. Your phone may ring any time of the day or night. Your spouse may sometimes tell you they feel neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home, or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with them if they get violent. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under their direction. You may have to call the police or an ambulance.

We seldom allow an alcoholic to live in our homes for long at a time. It is not good for him, and it sometimes creates serious complications in a family.

> We rarely let these people live in our homes for long. This would not be good for them, and it can be very difficult for our own families.

Though an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect his family. You should continue to be friendly to them. The family should be offered your way of life. Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover. And

even though he continues to drink, the family will find life more bearable.

> If you have tried to work with an alcoholic who doesn't end up joining the program, keep in touch with their family. The family should be offered your way of life.[1] Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover. And even though he continues to drink, the family will find life more bearable.

For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to

get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted. The men who cry for money and shelter before conquering alcohol, are on the wrong track. Yet we do go to great extremes to provide each other with these very things, when such action is warranted. This may seem inconsistent, but we think it is not.

> Alcoholics who are able and willing to get well don't usually want a lot of charity. The people who beg for money and shelter before they are willing to give up alcohol are on the wrong track. However, we give each other money and shelter when we feel we must. This may seem inconsistent, but we think it is not.

It is not the matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God. He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—wife or no wife—we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.

> It is not the act of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. As soon as we think of our work with other alcoholics as charity, everything changes. They will start to rely

on us instead of connecting with their Higher Power. They may start to say they can't stop drinking until their basic needs are met. We know this is wrong. Some of us have suffered quite a lot to learn this truth. Job or no job, spouse or no spouse, we just don't stop drinking when we rely on other people more than we rely on our own faith.

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.

Burn the idea into the mind of every such person that they can get well, without anyone else's money or charity. The only condition is that they trust in God and clean house.

Now, the domestic problem: There may be divorce, separation, or just strained relations. When your prospect has made such reparation as he can to his family, and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which he is living, he should proceed to put those principles into action at home. That is, if he is lucky enough to have a home. Though his family be at fault in many respects, he should not be concerned about that. He should concentrate on his own spiritual demonstration. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like the plague. In many homes this is a

difficult thing to do, but it must be done if any results are to be expected. If persisted in for a few months, the effect on a man's family is sure to be great. The most incompatible people discover they have a basis upon which they can meet. Little by little the family may see their own defects and admit them. These can then be discussed in an atmosphere of helpfulness and friendliness.

Marriage, spouse, and partner issues

Many newcomers to A.A. struggle with divorce, separation, or just troubled relationships. After your newcomer has made amends to their family and explained the principles of A.A., they can start following those principles at home. Even if their family is the cause of some of their problems, they cannot focus on that. They need to concentrate on their own faith. When you talk with your newcomer, tell them to avoid arguing and blaming others. This may feel hard to do, but they must stick to it if they truly want to recover.

If your friend uses A.A.'s principles at home for just a few months, they will see positive change. We have seen it happen in many homes. Spouses who felt torn apart finally find common ground. Little by little, family members start to see their own defects and admit them. These can be discussed in a helpful, friendly way.

After they have seen tangible results, the family will perhaps want to go along. These things will come to pass naturally and in good time provided, however,

the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that he can be sober, considerate, and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does. Of course, we all fall much below this standard many times. But we must try to repair the damage immediately lest we pay the penalty by a spree.

If there be divorce or separation, there should be no undue haste for the couple to get together. The man should be sure of his recovery. The wife should fully understand his new way of life. If their old relationship is to be resumed it must be on a better basis, since the former did not work. This means a new attitude and spirit all around. Sometimes it is to the best interests of all concerned that a couple remain apart. Obviously, no rule can be laid down. Let the alcoholic continue his program day by day. When the time for living together has come, it will be apparent to both parties.

> If a newcomer is going through divorce or separation, don't rush them to patch things up with their spouse. They need to make progress in their recovery. Their spouse needs to understand and accept their new way of life. If both spouses want to get back together, they need to find new ways to act with each other. Clearly, their old ways weren't working. This means new attitudes for everyone. In some cases, it's better for a couple to stay separated. There are no set rules about relationships. Let the alcoholic continue his program day by day. If the time comes to repair a marriage, both spouses will know.

Let no alcoholic say he cannot recover unless he has his family back. This just isn't so. In some cases the wife will never come back for one reason or another.

Remind the prospect that his recovery is not depen-

dent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God. We have seen men get well whose families have not returned at all. We have seen others slip when the family came back too soon.

> Some alcoholics claim they cannot recover unless they get their family back. This just isn't true. In some cases their spouse will never come back for any reason at all. Remind the newcomer that their recovery is not dependent on people. It is dependent upon their relationship with God. We have seen people get well whose families have never come back to or forgiven them. We have seen others slip when the family came back too soon.

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

> Both you and your friend must walk along the path of spiritual progress. If you keep going and don't give up, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we see that trusting faith brought us wonder. The things that happened when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the guidance of your Higher Power and you will find

yourself in a new and wonderful world.

When working with a man and his family, you should take care not to participate in their quarrels. You may spoil your chance of being helpful if you do. But urge upon a man's family that he has been a very sick person and should be treated accordingly. You should warn against arousing resentment or jealousy. You should point out that his defects of character are not going to disappear over night. Show them that he has entered upon a period of growth. Ask them to remember, when they are impatient, the blessed fact of his sobriety.

When you're working with a newcomer and their family, don't participate in their arguments. You may ruin your chance of being helpful if you do. But do make sure the family understands that the alcoholic is very sick, and should be treated like a sick person. Tell them to do their best not to feel angry or jealous. Point out that the newcomer's character defects can't disappear overnight. Show the family that their loved one is entering a period of growth. If they are impatient, ask them to remember that sobriety is a blessing.

If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your wife settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.

If you've successfully solved your own marriage problems, tell the newcomer's family how you did it. By doing this, you can help them without being critical of them. The story of how you and

your spouse worked out your difficulties will be more helpful than any amount of criticism.

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we

must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.

Living in the world as an alcoholic

Once we have accepted A.A.'s principles, we can do all kinds of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People say we can't go where liquor is served and we must not have it in our homes. They say we can't spend time with friends who drink. They tell us not to watch movies or TV shows that show people drinking. They say our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses. They insist we can't think about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not actually true.

We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask any woman who has sent her husband to distant places on the theory he would escape the alcohol problem.

We are in situations involving alcohol every day. An alcoholic who cannot deal with them still has an alcoholic mind. That person hasn't truly

found their faith or connected with their Higher Power. Their only chance for sobriety would be to move someplace like the North Pole. And even there, someone might show up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask any spouse who has sent their alcoholic partner to distant places thinking it would solve the alcohol problem. It never works.

In our belief any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself he may succeed for a time, but he usually winds up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed.

We believe that any method of fighting alcoholism that protects the alcoholic from temptation will fail. If the alcoholic tries to protect themself, that may work for a while. But they usually end up going on the biggest drinking spree ever. We have tried these methods. They are attempts to do the impossible, and they have always failed.

So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking, *if we have a legitimate reason for being there.* That includes bars, nightclubs, dances, recep-tions, weddings, even plain ordinary whoopee parties. To a person who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting Providence, but it isn't.

So our rule is not to avoid places where there is drinking, *if we have a real reason for being there.* That includes bars, nightclubs, dances, receptions, weddings, even plain ordinary parties. To

someone who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting fate, but it isn't.

You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on each occasion, "Have I any good social, business, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such

places?" If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, whichever seems best. But be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it. But if you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead!

You may notice that we said we need "a real reason for being there." As an alcoholic who is thinking of going to a bar or party, ask yourself, "Do I have any good social, business, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I hoping to get some secondhand pleasure from watching other people drink?" If you answer these questions honestly, you don't need to worry. Go or stay away, whichever feels right. But make sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you consider going. Also make sure your reasons for going are thoroughly good. Don't think about what will get out of the experience. Think of what you can bring to it. And if you feel shaky or unsure, work with another alcoholic instead of putting yourself at risk!

Why sit with a long face in places where there is drinking, sighing about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means go along. Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place explain to all

your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdraw-ing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to with-draw again just because your friends drink liquor.

> Don't allow yourself to be grouchy or sullen in places where people are drinking. Don't let yourself sigh about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, join others in celebrating. If you're there for business, focus on business discussions with enthusiasm. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, feel free to go along. Let your friends know they don't need to change their habits on your account. When the time feels right, explain to all your friends why alcohol is a problem for you. If you do this thoroughly, very few people will pressure you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are returning to the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends drink alcohol.

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.

> Your job now is to be as helpful as possible to others. Never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You can visit the most dirty, dangerous spot on earth if you go there to be helpful. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God

will keep you unharmed.

Many of us keep liquor in our homes. We often need it to carry green recruits through a severe hang-over. Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue this ques-

tion. We feel that each family, in the light of their own circumstances, ought to decide for themselves.

> Many recovering alcoholics keep liquor in our homes. We often need it to get newcomers through a severe hangover. Some of us still serve it to our friends as long as they are not alcoholics. But others think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue about this question. We feel that each family is unique, and can decide for themselves.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds we are not witch-burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it.

> We are careful never to become intolerant about drinking in general. That attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every newcomer to A.A. seems worried that we will all be hateful about other people's drinking. They are all relieved when they see we are not. Intolerance of all drinking might discourage alcoholics whose lives could have been saved. They might never try to learn about A.A. for fear of being judged. That kind of intolerance is totally useless. There isn't a drinker alive who likes to be told anything about alcohol by someone who hates it.

Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to a better realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem, but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

Someday we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public understand the seriousness of alcoholism. We will never reach that goal with an attitude of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!

After all, we created our own problems. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We don't have a problem with anyone who drinks. We don't even fight alcohol. We just don't need it!