

# **Modern 12 Step Recovery Standard AA Meeting Readings \***

- Serenity Statement
- Meeting Preamble
- The Promises
- How It Works
- More About Alcoholism
- Acceptance

\* These are standard readings used to open and close AA meetings. There have been minor edits to these to make these compatible with the Modern 12 Steps.

## **Serenity Statement**

Grant me the serenity:

To accept the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can, and

The wisdom to know the difference.

## **Meeting Preamble**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a mutual support network 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.

## **The Promises**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that our external resources are doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

## How It Works

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol - cunning, baffling, and powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there are external resources available. May you find these now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked for inspiration and guidance with complete abandon.

Here are the Steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction – that our lives had

become unmanageable.

2. Came to trust that resources outside of ourselves could restore us to rational thinking and behavior.
3. Made a decision to turn our direction and actions over to the guidance of those resources.
4. Made an honest and thorough list of the issues in our lives.
5. Admitted to ourselves and another person our specific role in those issues.
6. Became entirely ready to make changes in our character.
7. Began making changes in our thinking and behavior with humility and honesty.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to those people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to be aware of our thoughts and actions and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Pursued a program of ongoing self-improvement and empowerment through meditation, reflection, and study.
12. Having experienced a personal transformation as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this program to other addicts and to practice these principles in all aspects of our lives.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That outside support would be required to relieve our alcoholism.
- (c) That these resources would help us if we sought these out.

## More About Alcoholism

Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think that they are bodily and mentally different than others. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday you will control and enjoy your drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals--usually brief--were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a person that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period, we get worse, never better.

We are like people who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other people. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances, there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.



Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing an inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people!

Here are some of the methods we have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums - we could increase the list ad infinitum.

## **Acceptance**

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me. I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly as it is at this moment. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and my attitudes.