

The Bottom Line

A Publication of the Debtors Anonymous Intergroup of Greater New York

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www.danyc.org

Editor's Notes

Hi, Folks,

As most of us who are involved in giving our time, energy & talent are, I am so grateful for the chance to do this DA service.

I would like to offer a recommendation to those who feel their program needs a boost. Get involved! Find out what work your group or Intergroup needs doing and volunteer to do it! I guarantee the satisfaction gained this way will be good for everyone's recovery & DA's future.

Our NYDA website is a great site, professional, easy to use, filled with DA info & looks good, too. Check it out at www.danyc.org

I wish to applaud the fantastic work that Tom & Philip have done with it. & I also appreciate the new front page Bottom Line access link. Thanks, guys!

Just a reminder -- send your stories as a Microsoft Word file or as text in the body of an email to

bottomline@danyc.org. Or send typed or handwritten submissions to: **The Intergroup of DA - ATTN: Bottom Line, P.O. Box 452, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163**. The Guidelines for writing are on the back page of this publication.

Peace & Prosperity,
Gretchen

Serving as the President of New York Intergroup

D.A. is now in its 27th year, a mere youngster with some great assets. One of those assets - the "service asset", as it was called by John H, a D.A. pioneer, and Bill W., co-founder of A.A.- is the Intergroup.

I first came to D.A. about 21 years ago. Back then; we didn't have the Bottom Line, the Hot Line or the Meeting List. Our Meeting List was only by word of mouth. We never knew exactly where the meetings were. We never knew anything exactly.

I believe an Intergroup is born when the first Meeting List is set on paper. That happened in 1982, when our six New York City meetings informally typed their addresses and schedules on a wallet-size list, which was made available hand to hand. That little scrap of a Meeting List eventually led to the birth of the Intergroup.

That first list was of great service to me. I remember the hilarious encounters prior to the written list because we all had different information for the same meeting. Leave it to debtors to scramble up dates and addresses!

Two years later, in about 1984, we had at least 15 meetings throughout the city Intergroup was already functioning with a budget of a few hundred dollars, and monthly business meetings like the one we have now were held at St. Barts on the last Thursday of the month.

That same year, one of our first pamphlets, The Tools of D.A., was informally created by group conscience and put to paper by Mike D. It never ceases to amaze me that when I meet Mike at meetings, so many years later, and we talk about D.A. old times, he never claims authorship of the Tools. Mike often asks me tongue-in-cheek, "Do you think these Tools work, Alex?" "Here's the proof that they work," I assure him, "you are sound and solvent and so am I!"

My term as Intergroup President is past (our terms are limited to two years). In my second year, with things finally starting to make sense, it was time for me to pass the position on to Saul.

While chairing the Intergroup, I experienced that the ultimate authority of the Intergroup resides with the collective conscience of our people, not in the "executive branch." Sometimes the real fun at Intergroup is learning how people around the room - many of them newly elected Intergroup Reps.- start a new event, change an old procedure, or derail a major service drive that the "executive branch" had painstakingly planned.

What does the President do when one of these frustrating reversals happens? At first, it wasn't easy for me to be flexible and attentive to the group. When one of my own business proposals: "Price the books for positive cash flow" was overruled, discontinued and summarily reversed by a round table of newcomers, gloom and doom seemed to win. I still wasn't happy after things were 'settled' and our books were priced to break even, or to even lose a little. But my pricing idea was not the group's will and the group, I learned, is the boss. Sometimes it is capricious and errant, but it's always the boss. I've learned many things about myself from attending D.A. meetings and from participating in Intergroup. A meeting is always an experience in surrender and a lesson in lis-

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The opinions expressed here are those of the individuals who gave them and do not represent DA as a whole.

tening and learning about ourselves.

When John H. was alive, I remember talking to him often about these "service" frustrations at Intergroup. John always made me feel that I was doing the right thing, and encouraged me to just stay put. He used to tell stories of how he traveled to A.A. World Conferences with Bill W. and how long and painful the debates on issues, such as the price for literature could become.

John thought that the organizational model of A.A. and D.A. would one day govern the entire "civilian" world. "All American corporations will use our model," John used to proclaim. I sometimes share his dream and I know that "surrender" and "acceptance" are characteristics I wouldn't have developed if I weren't forced to deal with them at NYC Intergroup on the last Thursday of every month at St. Bart's. I invite you to join us at 7:00 p.m. sharp (6:30 for new rep. orientation) to help us mind business for debtors in our fellowship throughout the glorious City of New York (and our region). It's fun, really!

Alex

Living in Deprivation

I feel like I've been living in depravation forever. Even though I live in New York City, I feel removed from the center of things on my quiet block at the bottom of a hill, a 10-minute walk from the subway. My finances are low, my health is poor, and I was feeling pessimistic about the future.

I had applied in November 2002 for disability insurance, having been diagnosed with several chronic conditions over the past few years. In February 2003 I received notification that my claim was denied.

None of my conditions was totally "disabling," but I felt overwhelmed by life, and I wanted someone or something to take care of me.

Since I needed to support myself, I called my old freelance position, and they hired me back at my usual rate of pay, even agreeing to a limited schedule of three days per week. It felt good "to have somewhere to go," and I looked forward to being back in the flow.

But world events were disheartening. First the Challenger accident, then the war in Iraq; severe cutbacks were being announced by the mayor, as well as a poor economy still suffering the aftereffects of September 11.

And over it all, the spring that wouldn't arrive. Snow, snow, and snow. Snow, followed by rain, wind, and cold.

The job proved to be more stressful than I remembered. There was a looming deadline that we couldn't possibly meet, and everyone was feeling the pressure.

Finally the day came when the sun came out and it was 65 degrees, and spring was surely approaching. I let the sun and air melt the frozen part of me. I saw the forsythia that somehow always remembers to bloom, and the daffodils and hyacinth in the florist's window.

I saw how I had been living in a state of mental deprivation, and how painful and yet comfortable that was. I was so used to it I didn't recognize it as such, until I sat on a park bench and started to feel abundance.

As I listened to music on a Sunday afternoon, I again felt a feeling of fullness and plenty. I recalled how good it feels to feel this good.

And I didn't have to spend anything to learn this lesson. I only had to spend time listening to Higher Power's voice, the one that says it's okay to enjoy myself.

I realize that HP is the only one who can really "take care of me?" My inner deprivation may never vanish completely, but today I am aware of it and that I have a choice. Let me remember that the power is within me, if I choose it.

L. .G.

"Debt is borrowing from the future to pay for today."

Expect a Miracle

"Expect a Miracle" was just a bumper sticker when I took my last drink in December 1984. Little did I know that it would become a way of life in DA.

I went to my first AA meeting in January with an old college friend because I was new in New York. and I thought it would be a great way to meet people. But I wasn't ready for a new way of life and so I returned to New Mexico.

After 16 years of sobriety, I moved back to New York and traded in AA for DA, unaware that DA was considered the post-graduate of all 12-Step Programs. It was finally time to tackle the stumbling block of my finances. Later I would learn that "DA isn't about the money;" but at the time, it was about my DEBT. I had some experience with DA in New Mexico and Atlanta, Georgia, so I began to pay back my credit card debt, stopped using credit cards, and stopping taking cash advances.

When I first returned to New York, I slept on a friend's living room floor. When a check arrived from a former employer, I found a place to stay in an International Youth Hostel in midtown. Thanks to all the Gratitude Lists I had made in DA. I was able to appreciate three small miracles that occurred: each night I had a room of my own, even though I was willing to bunk with someone; I moved from a noisy front room to a room near a bathroom; and finally got a room with a television.

A week later, when my money had run out and my pride wouldn't allow me to stay another night at a friend's, I slept in a homeless shelter. It was tough, but I remembered the spiritual significance of the three little miracles I had experienced at the hostel and reminded myself that I was being taken care of. Even though I now had a new job - where I am still employed - I cried at the prospect of yet another evening at the shelter. When a friend suggested that one of his friends was looking for a roommate, I took the train to Queens that evening, got a good feel for the place - and put up bedroom curtains the next day!

The miracle continued when my new roommate decided to live with his girlfriend. Two years later, we split the rent, he visits the apartment when I'm at work, and I enjoy the use of his computer and phone.

Larger miracles became apparent in my First year at my under-earning retail job. After keeping my numbers for a year, I was able to buy myself something special.

Through service as a Literature Person, and consistent attendance at my home group, I have completed 90 meetings in 90 days. However, deprivation continues to be my toughest area. I realized that I debt to myself in terms of time, education, self-care, comfort, friendship and fun. As I learned to take better care of myself, my life is beginning to take shape.

Then more was revealed!! A customer kept encouraging me to take care of a lesion on my face, which had been growing for several years. He recommended a hospital and doctors for a biopsy. I eventually sought medical attention, which, thankfully, was covered by my job's health insurance. The biopsy indicated a melanoma. I didn't like the first hospital, but I found one that felt right. Although my insurance company deemed the new hospital "out of network," I knew that DA, a Pressure Relief Group and my sponsor, would help me make a good decision.

After facial re-constructive surgery, I became willing to pay \$100 a month and filled out the paperwork for financial assistance. My insurance covered 70% of the cost, and, since I earned such a low salary, the hospital absorbed the balance of the medical and doctor bills.

I also received nine months of free counseling. This year, my therapist told me about a creativity workshop in Italy and suggested a way to finance the trip. I had to qualify for a scholarship by detailing my reasons for wanting to attend a silent retreat in Assisi, Italy. I hadn't participated in other cancer outpatient programs, and I knew that it was time to face my dark, self-destructive feelings, so I wrote about my fear of intimacy and my disfigurement.

All those Visions meetings paid off. This summer, I realized my dream and flew to Italy with another cancer survivor. The trip became a reality by keeping my numbers, having

**"The way
out is
through."**

a prudent reserve, listening to my fellow debtors, taking action, and making better choices about my spending.

Listening to recovery stories and to suggestions from other people in the program taught me to recognize the signs pointing to my prosperity.

With DA, I've learned to trust today. I know that I'll feel better and take more action if I share my ideas with someone else. DA has taught me that miracles will never cease when you're working your program.

A QUIET FOUNDER

I never had the privilege of, meeting John Henderson, since I came to DA in a rural state far from New York. But I did hear a story about John that convinced me I would have liked and admired him a lot if I had known him in person.

A woman who got solvent in a New York meetings, who many years later moved to my state, told of attending meetings in Manhattan for two or three years, and being quietly impressed by a man who spoke softly, in a visionary way, about DA and about his own recovery.

She was impressed, and also puzzled as to who this man might be. After listening to him for a few years, a friend said to her one night, "Don't you know who that is? That's the founder of Debtors Anonymous."

Although this woman went to meetings for some time after that, she never did hear John crow about his role as founder.

In the excellent AA biography of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson, *Pass It On*, the author examines many of the chronic personal problems Bill had as the result of being both the cofounder and a celebrity in his own fellowship. Bill really "was never a member of AA, because we never allowed him to be," the book states. John was aware of the personal cost to his friend, Bill Wilson, and was determined to avoid the same fate. And John despite, the high regard he was held in by many solvent debtors, largely succeeded. He was truly a member of DA as well as the founder, a member who could find personal recovery and emotional and financial healing, and who could even leave New York and the nerve center of the fellowship behind to pursue his personal visions in the Pacific Northwest.

John gave us many years of himself, and then let go of us, so that we could come of age and dream our own visions. Instead of being a celebrity, a big shot, or a permanent power driver, he was exactly what this fellowship needed, a quiet founder who spoke softly and clearly, led by example, and left us space and time enough for our own lives and our own recoveries.

Jan S., Vermont



19th DA World Conference
August 24-28, 2005
 Mt. Laurel, New Jersey (Philadelphia Area)
 Radisson Hotel

Estimated Costs: \$280 conference registration / \$435 lodging and meals / \$45 gala Registration packets...Will be mailed to all registered groups and available online around April 15th

More Information... will be available soon at the GSB and NJPA website:
www.debtorsanonymous.org and www.njpada.org

Early registration deadline... July 15th (\$100 additional after this date)

The World Service Conference is the annual business meeting of Debtors Anonymous. It is where Group Service Representatives (GSR's), Intergroup Service Representative (ISR's) and the General Service Board gather to review the state of the D.A. fellowship, work on topics such as new D.A. Literature and new outreach methods, and vote on important issues affecting D.A. as a whole. Every DA group can send one representative to the conference.

(Look for other updates on our website: www.njpada.org)

"HALT!"
"Don't
get too:
Hungry,
Angry,
Lonely
or
Tired."

The Wisdom of Service Requirements

What a great tool service is!

And where is it considered with more influence than in DA, where there are “requirements”?

Although I took tremendous issue with the requirements when I came to DA, I have since learned to see their wisdom.

I had to first understand the concept of solvency and its importance. If you don't think solvency is important, of course it doesn't make sense to have requirements.

I have found that I pay very close attention to what my service people tell me - my pressure relief people, the sponsors. If they are not coming from a clear (see solvent) perspective, I may feel more chaotic and unsure at the end of the interchange than I did at the beginning.

Of course, too, service is a gift. Not just because “you can't keep it unless you give it away” but also because of the unique joys that it can bring you. For one, the sense of connection with other human beings. All of a sudden, it's not a “dog-eat-dog” world. All of a sudden, you know that there are people who will give, for nothing, with no strings attached. You know it, not only because you received it, but because you gave it as well, and so you know that just as you did it, others will too.

A second gift of service is the sense of being connected, not just to a community--but to the human race, and to another person. When people come to you for help, they are, to a certain extent, vulnerable. What a tremendous responsibility! All of a sudden, you have to set aside your own cares and take the time to look at and listen to another person, and be aware of their process. This is never perfectly done, of course, but there is spirituality in the trying.

A note of caution about service - well, actually, two. One is, as addicts, sometimes we don't know how to set boundaries. I recently took a program call while feeling dizzy to the point of passing out. I have learned not to do that.

Someone had told me once “you give from your abundance, not from your core: I have to remember not to confuse the fact that people need me with the idea that they care for me or that I owe them. Helping someone at your own expense is not Service, it is self-destructive.

The second note of caution - sometimes people are not willing to receive help, even within the program. They tell you “I need so much help” or “I really want to work the program” and then shoot down every suggestion you make. I have learned to steer clear of such people, as they replicate my family of origin and are looking to be enabled, not helped.

Finally, service is not always a happy-happy situation. Sometimes you say things people don't want to hear, and they may resent you for it. In such cases, check your motives. Were you operating from your experience, strength and hope, or are you having a bad day, a lingering resentment, or an unresolved issue?

If none of the above are the case, then it is your responsibility to insist upon your truth (though not necessarily repeat it) because this will serve the person most in the long run.

We are not doing service to be liked, we are doing service because we have learned certain things along the way and are passing them on.

Sometimes when you go to the telephone to try to reach out, you may feel insecure, and perhaps ashamed and uncomfortable, with dialing out to someone. Imagine that the moment you take the phone off its cradle, it is transformed into the wings of an angel. And that once you've made contact with that other DA member, you are touching the wings of an angel. Just a thought that might help a debtor pick up the telephone and reach out to another debtor in DA.

**"I am
&
I owe
are
2
separate
things".**

6 Guidelines for Writing for the Bottom Line

All Debtors Anonymous members are invited to share your experience, strength and hope on the pages of The Bottom Line, a publication of the Debtors Anonymous of Greater New York Intergroup. It features the writings of Debtors Anonymous members and is something like a meeting in print. It is available in its Web form at www.danyc.org as The Bottom Online. Old issues are also available online.

Why Write?

Writing for the Bottom Line is a great way to do service. Without your written experience, the Bottom Line cannot be an effective tool for solvent and serene living, or a vital, accurate picture of the ever-growing DA Fellowship. So, if you've hesitated, thinking you can't do it -- perhaps these guidelines will give you a better idea of how to proceed. Everyone's input is valuable, whether you're a newcomer or an old timer.

Guidelines

As far as what to write about, virtually any DA topic is fine. Tell us about your recovery in DA, tips on using the Tools, experience with the Steps, thoughts on the Traditions--anything is good, as long as it's DA related. Length may be a one-liner, recounting something you experienced in a meeting, a short but sweet incident that you want to relate, or a longer article on a particular subject. No matter how short or long your contribution, the important thing is that you say what you need to say. The average contribution ranges from one to three pages. If the editorial staff feels that a lot of editing is needed, we will seek your permission. We usually edit for grammar and clarity of thought and normally the editing is very slight. Of course, strict anonymity will be kept. You can sign your article with first name only, initials, or any other name or phrase you like.

Please keep in mind that many factors influence the publication schedule, but be assured that all writings will be published unless deemed unsuitable. In accordance with the spirit of the 6th and 10th Traditions, we do not publish anything that could be considered an outside issue. The DA of Greater NY Intergroup retains all copyrights. We do not accept anything published elsewhere, except with appropriate permissions. You do not have to live in NY to contribute.

Where to send your Bottom Line article: The preferred method is to send your submission as a Microsoft Word file or as text in the body of an email to bottomline@danyc.org. Or send typed or handwritten submissions to: **The Intergroup of DA - ATTN: Bottom Line, PO. Box 452, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.**

These guidelines are published by the Debtors Anonymous of Greater NY Intergroup and were adapted from the guidelines for submissions to the AA publication *The Grapevine*.