

FEAR NOT

Sober Suggestion Cards (v 8.09)

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NEWCOMERS

ADVANCED

EMERGENCY!

EMERGENCY!

FREAKING OUT? FIRST DO THIS:

1. Sit down.
2. Breathe slowly.
3. Relax your face, shoulders, stomach.
4. Focus on your body.
5. Recognize that you are not dying.
(repeat as necessary)

THEN

6. Pray for relief.
7. Find the story that's upsetting you.
8. Recognize that it is only a story, and
9. Let it go.

ONCE YOU CALM DOWN A BIT

10. Call another alcoholic, talk about it.
11. Get to a meeting.
12. Reach out. Ask for help.

DO NOT!

- DON'T drink or use!
- DON'T go near your old bars!
- DON'T call non-AA friends for advice!
- DON'T isolate yourself! **This is vital.**
Running home is not "taking care of yourself."

THE BIG FIVE

Remember to practice the following suggestions every week:

Meetings
Prayer
Service
Fellowship
Steps

If you are feeling like you're off the beam, do *more* of these things, and less of *everything else*.

5/09

NEW

ADV

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TAKE SUGGESTIONS

An essential way to practice turning your will over. Taking a suggestion – even one you don't understand the purpose of – lifts responsibility from your ego, the source of your troubles. Sometimes the *content* of the suggestion isn't as important as the *act* of following it.

The untreated alcoholic ego *instinctively* rejects suggestions of any kind. Learn to observe that reaction in yourself and remember that it is a facet of your disease. Then observe how you feel when you stop fighting and take advice. It's usually a huge relief.

NEW

ADV

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LET GO OF THE STORY

Your ego tells stories; that's pretty much what it's for. Some stories are useful, like "eating raw chicken is dangerous." But most of the time, when you're upset, it's because your ego is telling you a less useful story.

When you get upset, try to see the story your ego is telling you, and recognize that it is just a story, and that if you let the story go, you will be fine.

NEW

ADV

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PRAYERS

Thank you for keeping me sober.

Please keep me sober today.

Relieve me of the bondage of self.

Show me how I can be of service.

Help me let go of my will.

Help me accept life on life's terms.

Help me see the beauty of the world.

Help me to stay in the moment.

Help me to meditate.

Help me be grateful for what I have.

Help me do the next right thing.

Help me let go of the story.

Help me to listen without judgment.

Relieve me of this obsession.

Let the right words come to me.

Give me compassion for those who are still sick and suffering.

SELF-WILL SPOT CHECK

SYMPTOMS OF SELF-WILL:

- You are getting upset.
- You are telling endless stories in your head.
- You are justifying your actions -- to yourself or others.
- You're making a lot of plans.
- You think you can (or should) handle everything alone.

SIGNS YOU ARE TURNING YOUR WILL OVER:

- You are calm.
- You are not plagued by stories.
- You feel no need to justify your actions.
- You are focused on the next right thing.
- You are open to help and suggestions.

ISOLATION, SELF-WILL, JUDGMENT, DISHONESTY, RESENTMENT, SHAME

This is the true shape of alcoholism. You can take away the drink and drugs, but if you don't learn to treat these primary symptoms of your disease through daily maintenance of your spiritual condition, you will continue to suffer terribly, and end up defenseless against a return to the chemical solution that will never again bring relief.

The 12 steps are designed to systematically address each of these ego-based behavioral symptoms of our disease. So work the steps and get the relief that is waiting for you.

NEW

ADV

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CALL YOUR SPONSOR DAILY

This simple act is a bonanza of sobriety.

- It's a daily reminder of your powerlessness (step 1).
- You turn your will over to your sponsor's advice (step 3).
- It lets you unload secrets and admit wrongs (step 5, 10)
- And since helping you is essential to your sponsor's sobriety, your call is service too!

If you haven't been doing it, try it for two weeks and see how you feel.

NEW

ADV

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THINGS TO AVOID IN EARLY SOBRIETY

You know to avoid major changes. Run this checklist on changes that seem minor, and beware if the answer is yes.

Will this choice...

- ... add stress to my life?
- ... increase my responsibilities?
- ... decrease my free time?
- ... tend to draw my primary focus away from sobriety?
- ... place me in situations or around people dangerous to my sobriety?

NEW

DO LESS

Seriously. Just do less.

NEW ADV !

SIT UP FRONT

An easy way to maintain emotional distance is to create physical distance. Like all forms of isolation, both of these are dangerous for an alcoholic.

Sit at the front of the meeting instead of the back, with your view blocked. Look at the speaker instead of texting, doodling, or picking at your coffee cup. Turn towards the speaker, positioning your body to receive instead of hunching protectively inward. You *will* feel better for it.

NEW ADV !

SHARING

The only thing you should try to do while sharing in a meeting is be honest about *your* feelings and experience.

- don't lecture
- don't try to entertain
- don't try to prove how sober you are
- don't pretend everything is okay if it's not
- don't crosstalk (i.e., don't respond directly to another person's share)

NEW

WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING BEFORE YOUR SOBRIETY?

This is a good question to ask periodically, because it often happens too gradually to notice. It most frequently takes the form of blowing off meetings (in favor of work, socializing, relationships, or even just to isolate). But we can also stop praying, calling our sponsors, or being of service.

They say that you will lose whatever you put before your sobriety. So what are you willing to lose? Your home? Your family? Your career? Your marriage?

NEW ADV !

NEVER LET AN ALCOHOLIC GO TO VOICEMAIL

Always answer a call from an alcoholic unless you really can't answer it. Service keeps you sober, and you should be grateful for any opportunity to do service. Any call from an alcoholic could be an urgent cry for help.

Remember how it feels to reach out and have no one answer – alcoholics don't handle rejection well. If you don't have time to talk, just pick up quickly and say so.

NEW ADV !

THIS TOO WILL PASS

No matter how upsettingly permanent your situation seems, or how terrible your feeling feels, it will pass. Everything does.

The flipside of the impermanence of "bad" things is the impermanence of "good" things. Attaching to "good" things will cause you to suffer when they pass, too.

The truth is that there is no such thing as "good things" or "bad things" – just *things*. When you learn to accept things *as they are*, that's living life on life's terms.

NEW ADV !

SAY HI TO A NEWCOMER

Remember how scared you felt when you first started coming around, especially in a new meeting? It was scary as hell. You probably had your arms crossed defensively and a "go away" look on your face. Maybe you were texting so you wouldn't look or feel so alone. Maybe you just stood by yourself, hoping someone might ask you to come to coffee.

Well, look around the meeting before it starts. Find that terrified newcomer and say hi. After the meeting, ask a daycounter how they're doing and offer them your number.

NEW ADV !

CALL 3 OTHER ALCOHOLICS TODAY

A good way to get out of yourself when you're feeling self-obsessed is to call three other alcoholics. You could:

- Call your sponsor and check in.
- Call someone with less time and ask how they're doing.
- Call someone with more time and ask for suggestions.
- Invite someone to come to a meeting with you.
- Make a plan for fellowship.

!

SHARE YOUR DAYCOUNT

It's not just for your own benefit; it's another way of doing service. Sharing your daycount is vital because it:

- combats the alcoholic urge to isolate;
- serves as a daily affirmation of your progress;
- encourages other daycounters to share their counts;
- lets you say out loud that you're an alcoholic;
- dispels the idea that shame should keep relapsers from coming back to the rooms.

NEW

ASK FOR HELP

Just because you can give good advice doesn't mean you can handle everything alone. We all give better advice to others than we can give to ourselves. Your alcoholic ego always wants to tell you that your ideas will save you. Ignore that voice.

Total self-reliance is a perfectionist myth told by our disease. Yes, you've got tools to handle most situations, but don't lose sight of the fact that your ego is the wellspring of your troubles, and reliance on your self-will is straight-up deadly!

Stay humble! Pray for guidance. Ask your sponsor and sober friends for help, advice, and input.

NEW ADV !

DON'T PLACE EXTERNAL CONDITIONS ON YOUR HAPPINESS

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you'd be happy "if only" certain external conditions were met. The right job, lover, or house won't make you happy. Happiness is a *side effect* of doing the right thing and living life on life's terms.

This mental habit can slip back into our lives like a ninja if we don't maintain our spiritual condition. Be vigilant!

NEW ADV

DO THE NEXT RIGHT THING

This may seem like cryptically unhelpful advice at first – how, after years of constantly doing the wrong thing, are we suddenly supposed to know the right thing at any moment? The answer is that we get better with time.

But the key here is the word "next." It's much easier to figure out the problem that's *right in front of you* when you're not obsessing about every event that follows it. And it turns out that if you keep doing the right thing in the moment, the larger picture will just take care of itself.

NEW

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ASK SOMEONE WHY THEY RELAPSED

This is a win-win proposition: you get really useful information that you can apply to your own sobriety, and you allow someone else to be of service.

Don't be shy. Most people are happy to tell you what they've learned. And maybe in the process of explaining the situation to you, they will make new discoveries about their relapse.

NEW

MAKE A GRATITUDE LIST

If you feel off the beam, for whatever reason, try listing, out loud, twenty things for which you're grateful. Say: "I'm grateful for ____" every time. If twenty seems like too many, remember to mention people individually. If you can't think of things you're grateful you *have*, try listing bad things you're grateful you *don't* have.

If possible, spread the gratitude by sharing your list with a sober friend, either out loud or by email.

NEW ADV

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MAKE YOUR BED

Another suggestion that shouldn't work as well as it does. Try it for a week when you're feeling shaky, and you might be amazed, in spite of yourself, at how it makes you feel.

NEW

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DON'T GOSSIP FOR A WEEK

Everybody gossips, right? It's like your birthright.

Fuck that shit. Gossip is a betrayal of implicit or explicit trust, and as such, it's dishonest, and will fuck *your* shit up. If you don't think so, try to remember times when you felt hurt by being the topic of gossip. And carefully observe how you feel after gossiping.

One way to practice this is to avoid saying anything about somebody else that you wouldn't say if they were standing right next to you. Try it for a week.

ADV

AN EXPECTATION IS THE FASTEST ROUTE TO A RESENTMENT

When people let you down, they haven't actually *harmed* you. They just failed to meet your expectations.

Your ego tells you that you deserve to have your expectations met: that *your* expectations are justified and right. But that's bullshit. Or it may be true sometimes, but it's not *useful*. The story – your expectation – is the real cause of your suffering.

NEW ADV

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DON'T GIVE UNSOLICITED ADVICE

When we first came in, our desperation made us open to suggestion, and we were glad for advice that helped us stay sober. But most people with even a little sobriety bristle when they receive advice they didn't ask for. *Asking* for help is often the key to being able to receive it.

More importantly, it is harmful to us to succumb to the grandiosity that so often accompanies unsolicited advice-giving. Keep your awesome advice to yourself until asked.

NEW ADV

DON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT YOUR SPONSEES

Stay grateful for your sponsees, because even at their most stubborn, oppositional, whiny, or disinterested, they are helping you stay sober.

Complaining about a sponsee in public (especially at a meeting) is a violation of your sponsee's trust. If you need advice as to how to handle a specific sponsee's problem – or if you need to vent about a sponsee – you should only talk to your own sponsor about it.

ADV

QUIT ISOLATING!

You are not better off alone in your apartment all the time. Call it "me time" or "taking care of yourself," but it's still just isolating, and it is alcoholic behavior. When you feel it creeping back into your life, pay attention.

Fight isolation with meetings, service, fellowship, and phone calls.

NEW ADV

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YOU DON'T HAVE A DOG IN THAT RACE

This is how my sponsor tells me to mind my own business. It's probably also his way of telling me not to gossip. He's right, and it's amazing how freakishly *involved* I used to feel in everybody else's drama. It really felt like my drama too.

But it's not. Don't take other people's inventory, don't try to solve their problems, don't hold their grudges for them. Keep your focus on your side of the street.

NEW ADV

DON'T THINK LESS OF YOURSELF — THINK OF YOURSELF LESS

Beating yourself up will tend to make you forget that your experience can benefit others. Instead of obsessing over all the things you could have done better this week, or your grandiose plans for the coming year, try looking for a way to do service. Help somebody else!

NEW ADV !

REMEMBER THE END OF YOUR DRINKING, NOT THE START

When things get bad in sobriety, we can reflexively turn to thoughts of chemical relief, and we usually think back on the early days of our use, when booze or drugs still made us feel better.

Instead, try to remember what your life looked like just *before* you hit bottom, because *that's* where a relapse would take you. There is no more relief in chemicals. Relief lies in working your program.

NEW ADV !

YOU'RE ONLY AS SICK AS YOUR SECRETS

Don't carry an unnecessary burden around. If you've got something to admit, just call your sponsor, or whoever else is concerned, and tell them about it.

Straight up dishonesty will often set off alarm bells, because you know when you've told a lie. But secrets are more subtle, and can creep back into your life if you're not practicing your program. Unburden yourself and move on.

NEW !

LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGING

Meetings are structured to allow us to listen to others without judgment by fostering trust and empathy. But sometimes the format is not enough to disengage our poisonous capacity for judgment.

If you're having trouble letting go and really listening, try sitting up front and staring intently at the speaker's mouth. Look attentively at people who share, too.

If you're still mentally judging everything someone says, try smiling and thinking to yourself: "this is the best thing I've ever heard!" Sounds stupid, but it works.

NEW ADV !

ACCEPTANCE IS THE ANSWER

This is blatant copyright infringement, but I can't say it better:

"And 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, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation....

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 in my attitudes." (AA, pg 477)

NEW ADV !

RELAPSED? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO DIFFERENTLY THIS TIME?

A relapse should be a learning experience, not a reason to beat yourself up. But in order to learn, you've got to be honest about the circumstances preceding the relapse. If you haven't found something to change, you're still vulnerable to the same relapse. What were you doing that you aren't going to do? What *weren't* you doing that you will do more of?

Talk about it. Ask for suggestions. Make a change. Then do service by sharing about the change in a meeting.

NEW !

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF YOU IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS

Another huge relief. Despite what our entire culture tells you, the opinions of others do not define you as a person. If you stop trying to control the views of others, the world would continue spinning. Let it go!

Besides, if you've cleaned up your side of the street and are doing the next right thing, then it becomes obvious that people who are still mad at you are only upset by their *ideas* of you. It's got nothing to do with reality!

NEW !

DO THE NEXT STEP

When was the last time you did stepwork? When was the last time you met with your sponsor? How long have you been working on the step you're on now? What are you waiting for?

If you have sponsees, is it time to give them a nudge to the next step?

NEW ADV !

SOBER TIME WON'T KEEP YOU SOBER — ONLY CONTINUING THE WORK

Most of us have seen people with oodles of sober time get cocky, starting to think they've got alcoholism beat. They cut down on meetings, stop doing service, get isolated from the program. Those stories often end in relapse, and many people don't make it back.

There's no graduation from AA. The daily reprieve only comes from continuing to do the work.

ADV

SAY LESS

I can't even begin to tell you how much trouble I used to get in just by opening my mouth. Even in sobriety, most of my 10th step amends immediately follow saying something gossipy, false, negative, mean, or just unnecessary.

One way to avoid speaking unskillfully is to repeatedly test every possible utterance multiple times before speaking it aloud.

Or you can just say less. That works too.

NEW ADV

CUT DOWN ON FAMILY TIME

I want to show my family that I'm okay, and I want to be able to show up. But my family has a knack for making me feel less sober, and before I know it I feel fucking crazy. After all, they say the people who really know how to push your buttons are the people who installed them.

One day with family is like three normal days. Keep visits as brief as possible. If you're stuck with them, stay close to the program. Make meetings and calls. Don't be a superhero.

NEW

CHOOSE EVENTS WITH CARE

You will hear a lot about the virtue of "showing up," but it's not equally important to show up to every type of event.

It's great to be able to attend weddings without causing a drunken scene, but it might not be necessary for you to tag along to the booze-soaked bachelor/ette party.

It may be important to attend funeral services and lend your support. But maybe you can skip the Irish wake.

As always, if you're unsure whether you should attend an event, or for how long, ask some sober people.

NEW

FEELINGS AREN'T FACTS

The lesson is easy to understand, but hard to internalize: that feeling you're having is not a fact, it's a temporary set of physical reactions with ego-based stories attaching to it.

Try to recognize and accept the feeling. Some people suggest verbalizing this act of acceptance, by saying: "hello, sense of abandonment," or "welcome, anger."

But remember that whatever it is, this feeling, too, *will* pass. Try to relax your body, and let go of the story.

NEW ADV !

DEPRESSION? MAYBE. BUT IT COULD JUST BE UNTREATED ALCOHOLISM

Untreated alcoholism feels a hell of a lot like depression. Go to a shrink and tell them your symptoms, and they'll probably try to prescribe antidepressants.

But remember: if you're feeling RESTLESS, IRRITABLE, and DISCONTENTED, it's because you're an alcoholic.

So up your dosage of the medicine that works for alcoholics: meetings, prayer, steps, service, fellowship.

NEW ADV

GO TO SLEEP

If you're at home and freaking out, take off your clothes, get in bed, and turn out the light. Breathe. Pray for relief.

You may not go to sleep immediately, but it's hard to get in too much trouble once you're under the covers.

!

REMEMBER: THOSE WHO CAUSE YOU HARM ARE THEMSELVES SUFFERING

When people do things to us that are painful, insulting, or thoughtless, it's hard sometimes to remember that they are only human, and that their suffering causes them to act unskillfully, too.

The next time you feel wronged, remember: "they're just another person in pain, doing the best they can with what they've got" and "some are sicker than others."

NEW ADV

LEAVE IF YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE

...Especially parties or events with booze. It's one thing to sit with uncomfortable feelings that arise in the course of everyday living. But when you feel discomfort in social gatherings where intoxicants are on hand, your sobriety may be at risk. After all, social discomfort is a major reason many of us started drinking in the first place.

Heed what your body is telling you. Don't let your grandiosity convince you that your absence would *ruin* the party. It's usually not true. Go home!

NEW

LET OTHER PEOPLE BE WRONG

Sometimes other people are wrong. In my experience, it happens all the time.

Part of getting sober was recognizing that I don't have to show everyone how smart I am to prove my worth. I can allow other people to be wrong. Their wrongness probably won't destroy the world, but my prideful ego very well might destroy me.

ADV

HONOR CONFIDENCES OF OTHERS

The advice "you're only as sick as your secrets" only applies to *your* secrets. Gossip often *feels* like a good idea, because sharing secrets – even those that aren't yours to share – is a shortcut to intimacy. But it is at root a dishonest act.

Obviously you don't repeat what you hear in meetings, and you may instinctively respect the confidences of your sober friends. But gossiping – even to civilians, about civilians – will still cause you to suffer.

NEW ADV

DON'T GET OVEREXTENDED

A full life is one of the dubious gifts of sobriety. A full rich life is a wonderful thing, but as soon as it starts to eclipse your program, you are in danger of losing the full life you got sober for!

Give yourself a break! Learn that it's okay to say no to the rainbow of options life throws at you when you're sober – those options, or others like them, will still be there when you are truly ready to handle them.

NEW ADV

DON'T CROSSTALK

At best, meetings create a safe space where we can share without fear. But if people can be publicly corrected, contradicted, criticized, or mocked during a meeting, that safety is jeopardized. Meetings are for honest sharing, not debate or demonstrations of your superiority.

Giving unsolicited advice is alcoholic behavior. Learning to listen without judgment is essential to your sobriety. If you *must* respond to someone's share, talk to them privately after the meeting.

NEW

BRING A SOBER BUDDY

If you're going to an event with booze, bring a sober buddy. A sober buddy is a handy barometer of your mood, makes you less likely to act out in other ways, and helps you remember that it's okay to leave.

But most importantly, they provide you social proof for being sober. When you're surrounded by drinkers having fun, drinking can start to feel like a normal, good idea.

In early sobriety, it's best to leave *any* place with booze if you are the only sober person there. Don't test yourself.

NEW ADV

MEETINGS ARE YOUR MEDICINE

You've got a disease, and it requires treatment. Meetings are an essential part of that treatment. Almost every story of relapse starts with cutting down on meetings. Why mess with that?

When you don't feel like going to a meeting, remember that you almost never feel that way *after* a meeting. The feeling that you don't *want* to go is the surest indication that you *need* to go.

NEW ADV !

BREATHE.

**SIT UP STRAIGHT.
RELAX YOUR FACE.
RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS.
RELAX YOUR STOMACH.**

REPEAT.

NEW ADV !

YOU NEVER REGRET DOING THE RIGHT THING

Sometimes your ego will protest when you set out to do the right thing. It may tell you that if you do the right thing, you're not going to get what you want or need. It may suggest that you can postpone doing the right thing, or that someone you're going to make amends to doesn't deserve it. Or even that it's totally laaaame to do the right thing.

Try to remember that you never regret doing the right thing. Don't give in to self-centered fear.

ADV

90 IN 90: NOT JUST FOR NEWCOMERS

When you're feeling off the beam, the best foundation for solid recovery is to go to 90 meetings in 90 days. Get reconnected to the program, fellowship more, share your experience, reach out to newcomers, do service, and let judgment slip away.

It's never a sign of failure to step up your program – it's a decision to live your life to the fullest.

NEW ADV !

GET TO THE MEETING EARLY

This is just an easy way to combat isolation and selfishness. Help set up chairs. Talk to a friend. Talk to a shaky newcomer before you get distracted. Stand by the door and greet people. Grab a seat up near the speaker so you can stay focused and connected during the meeting. Maybe give your number to someone, or get someone else's number.

NEW

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INVITE A NEWCOMER TO FELLOWSHIP

Sometimes you just want to go home and isolate after a meeting. Sometimes you feel like fellowshipping with your good friends, ones with whom you're comfortable. But try to remember that your needs are not the only ones you need to consider, and AA meetings are not there for your social advancement.

Reach out to a newcomer. Invite them out for food or coffee and let them feel the warmth of AA fellowship.

ADV

LET PEOPLE BE MAD AT YOU

In the normal course of events, people may get mad at you, and they may insist that you are the cause of their misery. But just because someone hands you a plate of shit doesn't mean you have to eat it.

Try to assess whether your side of the street is clean. Make amends for any harm you caused (if you're past step 9), but remember that their *feelings* are not your fault.

If you haven't done anything wrong, you don't have to try to fix their feelings, or make excuses, or show them their part. Sometimes it's enough just to listen.

NEW ADV

STOP REPEATING THE STORY

When somebody does something wrong to us, especially something dramatic, we want to tell the story to sympathetic friends, to explain why we're right to be upset.

But everytime we repeat the story, we re-experience the feelings behind the story. Repeating the story is like bashing yourself with a stick, over and over.

To remind yourself to stop, try saying out loud: "this is the last time I'm going to tell this story." And then don't tell it again!

NEW

ADV

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PAUSE

In almost every situation, simply taking a moment to slow down your perceptions and reactions will be of immediate benefit.

NEW

ADV

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DON'T DATE WITHIN YOUR MEETINGS

If you managed to make it a year, you've seen it happen already: people from meetings hook up, go out for a while, break up. Maybe everything is fine. But maybe they avoid each other, and the meetings they both like to attend.

Why would you create emotional landmines in the one space you're truly safe? It's a big world, full of people you can date. Don't shit where you eat.

NEW

ADV

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Giving verbal suggestions to newcomers is great, but people are highly likely to unconsciously imitate the *actions* of those around them. The famous parental admonition "do as I say, not as I do" is bullshit; there's just too much evolutionary programming working against it.

You don't have to be a saint, but be aware of what you say or do around newcomers. Doing the right thing is essential to your own sobriety *and* sets a powerful example for others.

ADV

RIGHTSIZED RESPONSIBILITY

I used to be consumed by guilt for harms that were not caused by my actions. I had grandiose notions of my effect on the world, and believed I had control over far more things than any human could.

I also constantly denied responsibility – to myself as well as people I harmed – for the things I *had* done wrong.

The key for me now is to accept responsibility in more accurate, realistic proportions.

ADV

MISERY IS A CHOICE

What an awful, beautiful thing to know. It can be very seductive to believe that the causes of our misery are external, and the rest of the world certainly seems to believe it. But we know better.

Happily, relief is within your reach. You can wallow in your misery, or you can take steps to relieve it. Start with the basics: meetings, prayer, steps, service, fellowship.

Ask for help. Take suggestions. Choose not to suffer.

NEW

ADV

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WAIT 24 HOURS BEFORE SENDING THAT EMAIL

How many times have you regretted sending an email the instant you hit "send"? Email-based harm is easily avoided.

Especially if you're responding to an emotional situation, just save a draft of your message and read it over tomorrow, and if possible, show it to somebody else before sending it.

NEW

ADV

PERFECTION IS A MYTH

Perfection is a poisonous goal, because it doesn't exist.

Trying to be perfect, in any endeavor, is just as ridiculous as trying to be a unicorn. You can't do it.

Try to accept who you are and how you're doing at any moment, instead of comparing yourself to an ideal that is literally *impossible* to achieve. Strive for progress, one day at a time.

NEW

ADV

START A MEDITATION PRACTICE

If you've been sober a while and feel like you've hit a plateau, think about adding meditation to your routine, whether or not you've reached step 11.

Ask friends who meditate to tell you about their practice. Borrow their meditation books. Check out meditation meetings. Check out your local Quaker meeting house, where they just sit quietly for an hour.

Or just start right now by taking a deep breath and becoming mindful of your body. Meditation rules!

ADV

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STAY AWAY FROM PEOPLE WHO MAKE YOU FEEL CRAZY

Just because someone wants be a part of your life doesn't mean you have to let them. Sometimes we just need a break from certain people, even (or especially!) people we've known for a long time.

Be aware of how other people make you feel, and give yourself time off from people who make you feel bad. A confrontation is usually unnecessary. Just ease off.

NEW

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IT'S NOT YOUR JOB TO MAKE EVERYBODY FEEL OKAY

What a fucking relief.

NEW ADV

HOW OTHER PEOPLE WORK THEIR PROGRAM IS NOT YOUR BUSINESS

You may think other people are totally CRAZY with how they work – or don't work – their programs. But remember that everybody's program is different, and that there are no rules; the entire program is suggested.

More to the point, the only program you have control over is your own (and to a much lesser degree, that of your sponsees). Keep your side of the street clean and let other people worry about their streets and their programs.

NEW ADV

PRAY FOR THE WORDS TO COME

In any situation where you find yourself obsessing about saying the right thing, rehearsing speeches endlessly in your head, recognize that your alcoholic ego is driving you crazy again.

Stop, breathe, clear your mind, and pray for the words to come.

NEW ADV !

PRAY FOR RELIEF FROM THAT OBSESSION

You know that thing that you've been thinking about all day (or week, or month), that problem that you keep trying to solve, bashing your head against fruitlessly? Careful: you're falling back into obsessive, alcoholic thought patterns.

Pretty soon, the obsession will be a bigger problem than the problem itself. Pray for relief from your obsessions.

NEW ADV !

PRAY FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE YOU RESENT

No matter how you say it, this prayer works like a charm, especially with repetition. If you like a Buddhist flavor to your prayers, try saying about the person you resent:

*May they have peace,
May they have joy,
May they be free from suffering.*

Then repeat it about yourself, and then about everybody!

NEW ADV !

STAY IN THE MOMENT

Your body reacts to your daily modern stress by triggering the same panic reactions it once used to make our ancestors run away from slaving predators. In the absence of danger, your ego makes up stories to explain the panic, and your body reacts to the stories with *more* panic.

In moments of great stress, try to remember that – unless you are injured, bleeding, starving, or at risk of exposure – you really are okay. Everything is fine. Look around. Be present. In this moment, you are okay.

NEW ADV !

PRAY TO HAVE THE RIGHT COURSE REVEALED TO YOU

When you are unsure of what to do, ask for help from your sponsor and sober friends. But don't forget to pray about it too. At the very least it helps you to stop thinking about it – which is, after all, the whole point of "turning it over."

Hours or days later, the answer will often be revealed by a subtle intuition; the right course, which seemed so out of reach, will suddenly be obvious.

NEW ADV !

PRAY TO BE OF SERVICE

When entering some of the stressful situations that life throws our way, or ego kicks into high gear, trying to make frantic and complicated plans intended to protect ourselves, or our loved ones, from harm.

In these moments, it's often useful to pray for the ability to be of service if and when the opportunity arises. Don't succumb to the ego-based alcoholic delusion that you must take powerful control and fix everything. Just be of service.

NEW ADV !

GET IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PACK

Lions always take down the wounded gazelles hovering on the outskirts of the pack. The disease of alcoholism is predatory too, and it will take down those who hover on the outskirts of the group. If you want to survive, get in the middle of the pack. Throw yourself into meetings, service, and fellowship as if your life depends on it – because it does.

If you're already in the pack, don't just stick to your friends. Find the people who are isolated at the meeting, and pull them into the pack!

NEW ADV !

EXERCISE, THERAPY, YOGA: NOT SUBSTITUTES FOR MEETINGS

Exercise and therapy are healthy, sometimes essential parts of a sober life. But be careful if you find yourself thinking of them as substitutes for meetings. They are not "as good as a meeting." They can treat the physical and mental aspects of your disease, but treating the spiritual side of your disease should come first. After all, many of us exercised, or were in therapy, for years, but couldn't get sober without AA.

NEW ADV