

The Serenity Prayer and the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

The Serenity Prayer

God 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.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*

1 We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10 Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12 Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of the steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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It is often difficult for people to stop drinking when they enter treatment. Some reasons for this follow.

Triggers for alcohol use are everywhere. It is sometimes hard to do anything social without facing people who are drinking. **How can you get together with your friends without drinking?**

Many people use alcohol in response to internal triggers. Depression and anxiety seem to go away when they have a drink. It's difficult for people to realize that sometimes the alcohol causes the depression. **What moods and feelings make you want to have a drink?**

If a person is dependent on an illicit drug and uses alcohol less often, alcohol may not be viewed as a problem until the person tries to stop drinking. **What challenges have you faced in stopping drinking since you entered treatment?**

Alcohol affects the rational, thinking part of the brain. It is difficult to think reasonably about a substance that makes thinking clearly more difficult. **How does it feel to be sober at a party and watch people drink and act stupidly?**

Alcohol dulls the rational brain. Alcohol lowers people's inhibitions and can make people more sexually aggressive, less self-conscious, and more sociable. People who use alcohol to decrease inhibitions and help them socialize may feel uncomfortable without it. **In what ways have you depended on alcohol? For sexual or social reasons?**



Many of us grow up using alcohol to mark special occasions.

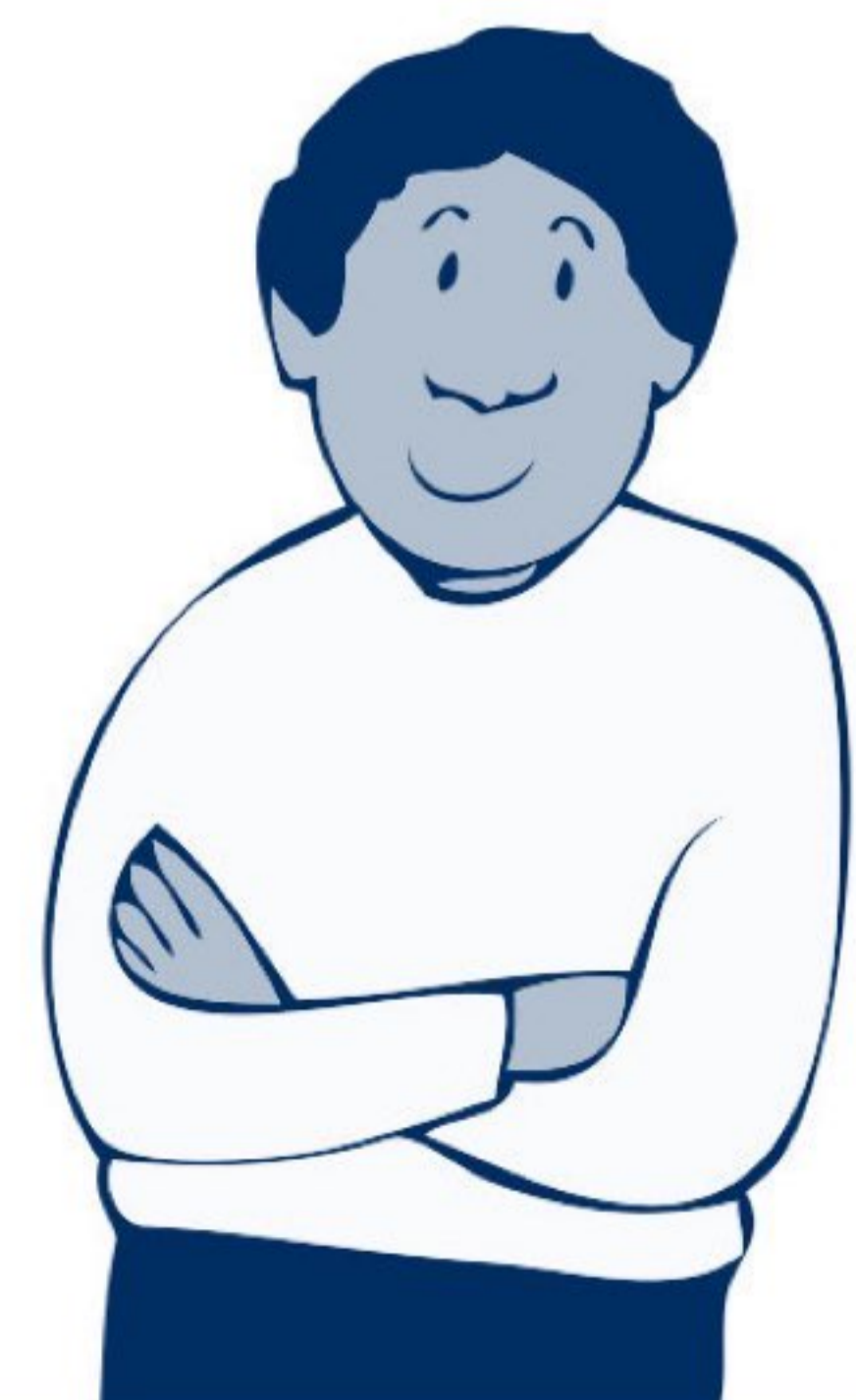
It is hard to learn how to celebrate those times without drinking. **What special occasions did your family celebrate with alcohol?**

How do you celebrate now?

In many families and social groups, drinking is a sign of strength or maturity. Drinking often is seen as a way of being “one of the gang.” **Do you feel less “with it” when you are not drinking? If so, in what ways?**

Drinking can become linked to certain activities. It can seem difficult during early recovery to do those things without a beer or other drink (for example, eating certain kinds of foods, going to sporting events). **What activities seem to go with drinking for you?**

It is important to remember that everyone who stops drinking has these problems at first. As you work through the difficult situations and spend more time sober, it does get easier.





Often people who stop using drugs say life feels boring. Some reasons for this feeling include the following:

- A structured, routine life feels different from a lifestyle built around substance use.
- Brain chemical changes during recovery can make people feel listless (or bored).
- People who use substances often have huge emotional swings (high to low and back to high). Normal emotions can feel flat by comparison.

People who have been abstinent a long time rarely complain of continual boredom. The problem of boredom in recovery does improve. Meanwhile you should try some different activities to help remedy the problem of boredom in recovery.

List five recreational activities you want to pursue.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Have you started doing things that you enjoyed before using drugs? Have you begun new activities that interest you? What are they?

Boredom



Can you plan something to look forward to? What will you plan?

How long has it been since you've taken a vacation? A vacation doesn't have to involve travel—just time away from your regular routine. What kind of break will you plan for yourself?

Here are some tips to reduce feelings of boredom:

- Recognize that a structured, routine life feels different from a lifestyle built around substance use.
- Make sure you are scheduling activities. Forcing yourself to write down daily activities helps you fit in more interesting experiences.
- Try not to become complacent in recovery. Do something that will further your growth. Sometimes boredom results from not challenging yourself enough in your daily living.

Which of the suggestions listed above might work for you? It is important to try new ways of fighting boredom. Boredom can be a trigger that moves you toward relapse.

How Relapse Happens

Relapse does not happen without warning, and it does not happen quickly. The gradual movement from abstinence to relapse can be subtle and easily explained away or denied. So a relapse often feels as if it happens suddenly. This slow movement away from abstinence can be compared to a ship gradually drifting away from where it was moored. The drifting movement can be so slow that you don't even notice it.

Interrupting Relapse Drift

During recovery people do specific things that keep them abstinent. These activities can be called "mooring lines." People need to understand what they are doing to keep themselves abstinent. They need to list these mooring lines in a specific way so they are clear and measurable. These activities are the "ropes" that hold recovery in place and prevent relapse drift from happening without being noticed.

Maintaining Recovery

Use the Mooring Lines Recovery Chart (RP 3B) to list and track the things that are holding your recovery in place. Follow these guidelines when filling out the form:

- Identify four or five *specific* things that now are helping you stay abstinent (for example, working out for 20 minutes, three times a week).
- Include items such as exercise, therapist and group appointments, scheduling activities, 12-Step meetings, eating patterns.
- Do not list attitudes. They are not as easy to measure as behaviors.
- Note specific people or places that are known triggers and need to be avoided during recovery.

Avoiding Relapse Drift

You should complete your Mooring Lines Recovery Chart weekly. Place a checkmark next to each mooring line that you know is secure and record the date. When two or more items cannot be checked, it means that relapse drift is happening. Sometimes events interfere with your mooring lines. Emergencies and illnesses cannot be controlled. The mooring lines disappear. Many people relapse during these times. Use the chart to recognize when you are more likely to relapse, and decide what to do to keep this from happening. (After 5 weeks when the chart is full, transfer the list of mooring lines to a journal or pages 12 and 13 of your *Client's Treatment Companion*, and continue to check your mooring lines.)

