

Resources for Working With Wet Drunks

In Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter Seven, "Working With Others," contains specific recommendations and suggestions on how to best carry the message to wet drunks, such as:

"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 for you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help."

Today, it remains the basic script for AAs carrying the message to other alcoholics. To read Chapter Seven, "Working With Others," visit www.aa.org.

AAs have found that when experience is shared, good results often follow. Wanting to increase Twelfth Step efforts and avoid missteps, the St. Paul, Minneapolis Intergroup offered "Tips On Making Twelfth Step Calls" in their May 2001 newsletter, Lifeline. Among the suggestions offered: When making a Twelfth Step call, arrange for another AA member to accompany you. Congratulate the prospect on wanting to do something about his drinking problem. Give him some AA literature. Tell him what you used to be like, what happened, and what you are like now. And note what the Big Book says on page 96: "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." Below is the list in full. You may also wish to contact your local area or intergroup to find more information about how AAs in your area make Twelfth Step calls and work with wet drunks.

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Tips on Making Twelfth Step Calls

When a Twelfth Step call is received, we begin with the assumption that another human being's life is at stake -- literally. This means that, without delay, this call is to be answered at once.

1. Arrange for another AA member to go with you.
2. Have a quiet time, read Chapter Seven in the Big Book.
3. Maintain anonymity.
4. Talk to the prospect alone, if possible. (That is, without his family and friends there.)
5. Congratulate him on wanting to do something about his drinking problem.
6. Give him some AA literature.
7. Note well what the Big Book says at the bottom of page 94: "On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book."
8. Each of you tell him "what you used to be like, what happened, and what you are like now."
9. If he wants to talk, let him.
10. At the top of page 95, it advises, "Give him a chance to think it over. . . . 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. . . . If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval (at least ask him to read the first 164 pages). After doing that (reading the book), he must decide for himself if he wants to go on .
11. When you are ready to leave, tell him you will call on him the following day if he wants, and he will have had time to read the first 164 pages, or had time to think about your conversation.
12. Note that the second paragraph on page 96 says, "Suppose you are now making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume, and he is prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery." At this point you review the Twelve Steps with him, and arrange to bring him to your group meeting. If he does not want to go on, or feels that he can do it some other way, pick up your copy of the Big Book and invite him to call on you again if he changes his mind and decides that AA can be of help.

Finally, note how the Big Book, at the top of page 96 says, "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 cannot recover by himself."

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How Do You Make An Old-Fashioned Twelfth Step Call?

With many treatment facilities closing their doors, more and more A.A.'s are seeking guidelines for making old-fashioned Twelfth Step calls.

The 1998 Conference Literature Committee considered a pamphlet on making Twelfth Step calls that was compiled and in use by Area 25 (Kansas). Although Conference committee members felt this effort was fine for local use, they emphasized the importance of the use of "How It Works" in the Big Book, as well as seeking guidance through sponsorship, the experience of older members and workshops.

One such workshop was held last spring by the Answering Services Committee of the Elmira (New York) Area Intergroup. The area's second Twelfth Step workshop, developed its program along lines of the G.S.O.'s service piece "Suggested Workshop Format." Out of the workshop experience has come some suggested guidelines. Because they have proven so useful, the committee has shared them with G.S.O., as follows, in the hope that others will be helped too:

1. Return calls ASAP. Call back immediately to listen, share and arrange a time and place to meet-but not at a bar. If you are called to a bar, go there only to pick the person up and, preferably, to get him or her to a meeting.
2. Twelfth Step in pairs, with a same-sex member if possible. Twelfth Step calls can be intense, and there is safety in numbers. Besides, two heads are better than one. Be punctual and look your best.
3. Twelfth Step when the prospect is sober or fairly sober. Calls on intoxicated alcoholics seldom work because of blackouts. Wait for the end of a spree or a lucid interval when the prospect is still jittery.
4. During home calls, separate prospect from family if you can (suggest Al-Anon for family members). Too many people butting in to influence you about the "bad guy" can be disruptive. Learn from experienced A.A.s how to interact with family or significant others on the scene, and when it is wiser to leave than to stay:
5. Suggest detox/rehab if needed. If such is indicated, arrange with family or significant others, with prospect's permission if possible. Should violence seem imminent, leave. If necessary, make the appropriate phone call.
6. Share how it was (your own drunkalog). Don't moralize or lecture or brand prospects as "alcoholics." That decision is theirs-even as to tossing out alcohol they have on hand. Detail your own symptoms, drinking habits and other personal experiences with alcohol.
7. Share your understanding of the disease of alcoholism. Let the person know that this disease is progressive and can end with insanity or early death. Describe the conditions of body, mind and spirit that accompany alcoholism.
8. Share exactly what happened to you. The prospect will probably want to know how long you have been in A.A. and how you got and stayed sober.
9. Share your A.A. experience. Share how A.A. has worked for you and helped you to regain your sanity while maintaining sobriety, how it has led to being willing to believe in a power greater than self. Use everyday language and avoid arousing prejudice against theological terms and conceptions.
10. Share how it is now-your recovery program and spirituality. Outline the A.A. program of action and emphasize that this isn't the somber end of something (preferably drinking) but the start of a challenging, rewarding way of living based on spiritual principles.
11. Leave a meeting schedule, A.A. pamphlets and your phone number; and make one follow-up visit or phone call. Offer to return for further questions, and help with transportation to a meeting if possible. Mention Al-Anon meetings available to family members and significant others.
12. Understand that success means YOU are still sober. Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive Twelfth Step work with other alcoholics.

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