

# Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. This sheet tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does *not* do.

## What Is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

## Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as "substance abuse" or "chemical dependency." Nonalcoholic are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Anyone may attend *open* A.A. meetings, but only those with a *drinking* problem may attend *closed* meetings.

A renowned psychiatrist, who served as a nonalcoholic trustee of the A.A. General Service Board, made the following Statement: "Singleness of purpose is essential to the effective treatment of alcoholism. The reason for such exaggerated focus is to overcome denial. The denial associated with alcoholism is cunning, baffling, and powerful and affects the patient, helper, and the community. Unless alcoholism is kept relentlessly in the foreground, other issues will usurp everybody's attention."

## What Does A.A. Do?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or "sponsorship" to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.
  - a. Open *speaker* meetings -open to alcoholics and nonalcoholic. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members "tell their stories." They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous.
  - b. Open *discussion* meetings -one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up. (*Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.*)
  - c. Closed discussion meetings- conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
  - d. Step meetings (usually closed discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
  - e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional and treatment facilities.
  - f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings *about* A.A. Are *not* regular A.A. group meetings.

## What A.A. Does Not Do

### A.A. does not:

1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
2. Solicit members
3. Engage in or sponsor research
4. Keep attendance records or case histories
5. Join "councils" of social agencies
6. Follow up or try to control its members
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
8. Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment
9. Offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats.
10. Engage in education about alcohol

