

# alternative

NEWSLETTER OF THE READING-BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

## NEWS & notes

### Did Someone Say "Alcathon"?

With New Year's Eve and the annual Alcathon only a few months away, the RBI is in need of a new individual or group to organize and set up for the and evening-long fellowship event.

If you are interested, or if your group would like to take on the event, contact Kenny T., RBI Chairperson, at 610-207-1486 or email to [Chairperson@ReadingBerksInterGroup.Org](mailto:Chairperson@ReadingBerksInterGroup.Org).



### Big Book Step Meeting Offered at W.S.R.G.

The Walnut Street Recovery Group is now offering a new Big Book Step meeting. The meetings are held Tuesdays from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm in the group's serenity room. The Walnut Street recovery Group is located at the Easy Does It Clubhouse at 647 Walnut St., Reading.

### Help Support Thursday Women Living Sober Group

The Thursday morning Women Living Sober Group could use some support in their efforts. The group meets at 10:30 am at the Atonement Parish Center, Penn Ave. in Wyomissing. The group's monthly schedule is as follows:

1st Thursday: Living Sober  
2nd Thursday: Step Meeting  
3rd Thursday: Big Book  
4th Thursday: Tradition  
5th Thursday: As Bill Sees It

### Dist 66 Open House Planned for Oct. 14

District 66 will be holding an Open House at Wilshire on Thursday, Oct. 14 at 7 pm. Look for more info next month.

## Intergroup Picnic Sept. 26 At Gring's Mill Park

The picnic season doesn't end with the passing of Labor Day, at least not for the Reading Berks Intergroup. So mark your calendars and pack your baskets for the annual RBI "End of Summer Picnic" planned for Sunday, Sept. 26 at Gring's Mill Park.

Slated from noon to around 5 pm, the picnic area is located by the picnic tables up the hill from the parking lot — same place as last year.

The annual event has proven to be both fun and popular for intergroup members and their guests.

"Last year we had 80 or more people at the picnic and people are welcome to bring friends and family," Says Carrie C., RBI Unity Chair.

Intergroup provides most of the essentials for the picnic including hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, buns, coffee, utensils, and plates.

"We need people to bring desserts, covered dishes, snacks, ice, etc. They should also bring volley balls, soccer balls, or any other outside sporting equipment they want to use," adds Carrie.

Volunteers are always needed with set-up and should arrive early at about 11:15 am. Volunteers are also needed with clean up, including taking things to the trash and brining extra food to a shelter or half way house of some sort.

Gring's Mill Recreation area is located on Tulpehocken Rd. in Wyomissing.

## Volunteers Sought For Nov. EPGSA Convention

Volunteers are needed to assist in a variety of ways at the upcoming Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Convention and Assembly.

The 52nd annual convention will be held Nov. 12 - 14, 2010 at the Lancaster Host Resort & Conference Center in Lancaster, PA.

Because this is an election year at the convention and many delegates will be busy in other capacities, additional volunteers are needed.

The event will include Workshops, Panel Presentations, GSR Orientation, Speaker Meetings, Spanish/Bi-Lingual Meeting, Open Mike Session, "God As I Understand Him" Meeting, Ask-It-Basket, Dance & Ice Cream Social.

Day Only Registration: \$20 per person (includes all convention activities for the entire weekend, *except* the banquet)

Day Only Registration & Saturday Banquet: \$50 per person (includes all convention activities for the entire weekend *plus* the banquet)

For more information or registration forms, go to [www.area59.aa.org](http://www.area59.aa.org).



## Group Histories Still Needed

The RBI Archives Committee is still in need of a number of group histories. If your group is listed below please contact Henry at 484-794-6363 or email to:

[Archives@ReadingBerksInterGroup.Org](mailto:Archives@ReadingBerksInterGroup.Org). He can provide your group with a simple questionnaire to complete.

- 24-Hour A Day Group
- A Fresh Start
- AA Back To Basics
- Congo Big Book
- East Reading Group
- Frog Pond Group
- Glenside AA Meeting
- Hamburg Big Book
- Honeybrook Big Book Step
- Just For Today
- Kutztown Group
- Kutztown Book & Breakfast
- Kutztown Step Meeting
- Live & Let Live
- Morgantown group
- Mustard Seed
- Nolde Forrest Group
- Reflections on the Mountain
- Riverside Group
- Spiritual Milestone Group
- Topton group
- What Women Need
- Wires Meeting
- Women Do recover
- Women Living Sober
- Young People's Meeting

Next R.B.I. Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 28 @ 7:30 pm



# READING-BERKS INTERGROUP

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## commitments INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

### Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Men Sundays 7 pm

Sept. 5 Caron Alumni  
Sept. 12 Oley Group  
Sept. 19 YASNY  
Sept. 26 Shillington Lifeline  
Oct. 3 Caron Alumni

### Wernersville State Hosp. See Guard in Building 34 Mondays 7 pm

Sept. 6 HOLIDAY  
Sept. 13 Alpha Group  
Sept. 20 Hilltop Group  
Sept. 27 Alpha Group  
Oct. 4 New Life

### Reading Detox Unit Every Other Tuesday 8 pm

Sept. 7 Leesport Group  
Sept. 21 Time To Start Living  
Oct. 5 Oley Group

### Reading Detox Unit Thursdays 8 pm

Sept. 2 Sunday Morn. Speakers  
Sept. 9 New Life  
Sept. 16 Congo Big Book  
Sept. 23 Happy Hour Group  
Sept. 30 Walnut St. Group  
Oct. 7 New Millennium

### Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Women Sundays 7 pm

Sept. 5 Caron Alumni  
Sept. 12 ———  
Sept. 19 Happy Hour Group  
Sept. 26 Shillington Lifeline  
Oct. 3 Caron Alumni

### St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit 3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts. Mondays 7:30 pm\*

Sept. 6 Alpha Group  
Sept. 13 Sober @ Six  
Sept. 20 Leesport Group  
Sept. 27 Alpha Group  
Oct. 4 Birdsboro Group

### Caron Foundation Young Adult Female Fridays 8 pm

Sept. 3 Sober @ Six  
Sept. 10 Congo Big Book  
Sept. 17 New Millennium  
Sept. 24 Hilltop Group  
Oct. 1 Sober @ Six

\*Note New Time for St. Joe's Monday Meetings. Call 610-378-2000 and ask for Berkshire Pavilion before going.

*I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help  
I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that...  
I am responsible!!*

If you take a commitment for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact the hospital first to see if there are any alcoholics there: 610-378-2000. *When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group.*

These may be the only meetings that the patients may have. Remember, "You Are Responsible", when you commit your time. PLEASE don't let these commitments go unattended. If you cannot make your commitment please notify Steve at 610-750-4019.





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

**THIS** is the Step in which we do our best to put right past wrongs. Before getting into any of my own ideas and experiences, I'd like to touch briefly on some points the Big Book makes about the Step, which have been useful to me.

*We don't recover and then take the Ninth Step. We take the Step in order that we might recover.*

*There is more danger in waiting too long to take it than there is in taking it too soon.*

The early members of AA didn't wait ten months or three years before they started making amends. Dr. Bob spent the first day of his sobriety personally seeing his patients and making the very difficult amends an alcoholic physician would have to make.

*The purpose of the Ninth Step is 'to clean our side of the street. We don't criticize or take the other man's inventory.*

*The amend in the situation involving wrong on both sides is as important for us to make as the one in which we are totally wrong.*

The Ninth Step is a spiritual process but, in some respects, it is a lot like getting in condition to play a sport or having an infection drained.

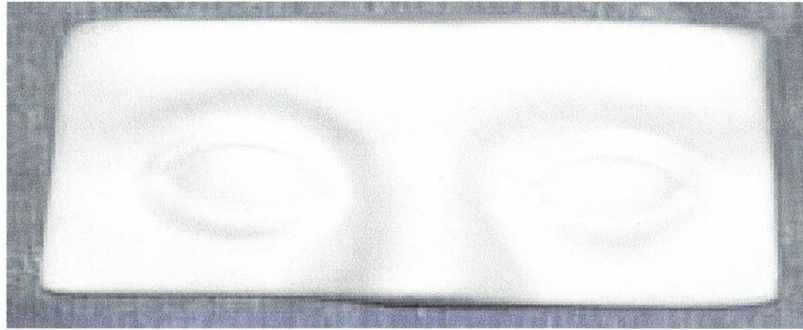
The end result of each process is a healing or strengthening, and in each case we have to sit still for a controlled, limited amount of pain before we can enjoy the result.

Before getting into serious Ninth Step work it is well to understand something of the results of this process and the difficulties. The results are these: peace of mind; the ability to look the world in the eye and weather life's storms one day at a time--and sobriety.

Now, the difficulties:

Interestingly, all that suffers in this process is the ego, my oversensitive little image of me--nothing else. The statement, "Boy, that Ninth Step sure is tough!" is only a half truth. It is tough on the ego, and is intended to be so. All of us as alcoholics are too wrapped up in petty self-concern. Possibly the basic purpose of the Twelve Steps is to reduce this excessive egocentricity. So the Ninth Step is not unique; it is just perhaps a bit more obvious than some of the others in its action of assaulting and reducing this harmful false self-absorption.

When it comes to the real self, though, this



## Amends Are Rough on the Ego?



## Yes, Indeed!

Step is the opposite of rough. It releases us from the prison of our false selves and gives us the freedom to get sober, get sane, get closer to God, and get interested in trying to help someone besides ourselves.

Discretion is necessary in approaching certain touchy amend situations, but this is a razor's edge because it can so easily degenerate into an excuse for procrastination. Since there are no pat formulas, the advice of a sponsor or another experienced AA friend in the confusing situation is usually the best way to a good solution.

The help of my sponsor and other AA friends has meant more to me on the Ninth Step than any other Step. When I became willing to make amends, I had some very definite ideas as to how I should go about it. My ideas seemed quite plausible to me. In each case, I had thought them out carefully. Yet, often my ideas were wrong. Had I stuck to them, I might still be in deep trouble.

One of these amends was a money amend. Under false pretenses, I had taken several hundred dollars from an employer. My idea was to send the employer an elaborate letter of apology. I did, and he sent me a short reply indicating

his willingness to accept monthly installments of eighteen dollars as an alternative to prosecuting me.

My ego's tail feathers were ruffled by such a cold, unfeeling answer. He didn't understand the extenuating circumstances, the stringency of my present financial position. Nevertheless, I started to pay. Then and only then did relief come from the guilt, confusion and resentment this situation had given birth to.

Of all the amends I owed when I first came into the program, in only one case did I really want to make the amend. The people involved had been injured by my selfishness and phoniness. As soon as I started to get on my feet in the program, I wanted in the worst way to contact them somehow and explain away my actions on the basis of my "disease."

When I discussed the matter with my sponsor, he made two points. First, because of the nature of the difficulty, there was no way I could re-enter these people's lives without causing them further pain and, second, the basis of my urge to get in touch with them was not so much a desire to put right past wrongs as it was that my ego was hurting because I supposed these

people (quite naturally) thought me a first-class heel for the way I had acted, and I wanted them to think well of me.

What my sponsor said went down hard, but it was true. In facing this truth, though, I found relief from the pain of this situation.

I also learned that even where direct amends are not in order, very effective indirect amends can be made by praying for the people involved and remaining open to make further amends if circumstances should ever permit.

As one whose life before AA was subject to periodic depressive spells and who still has to watch this tendency in himself, I am deeply grateful for the relief, comfort and strength which have come into my life as a result of working with the Ninth Step.

T. P., Jr.  
Hankins, New York  
Feb. 1967

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*The results are these: peace of mind; the ability to look the world in the eye and weather life's storms one day at a time--and sobriety.*



# So, Who Needs the Slogans?

## *From Stumbling Blocks to Cornerstones of Serenity*

**S**o, Who Needs the Slogans?

Framed prints of the slogans were hanging on the walls at the rehab where I got sober. How I hated seeing those trite and simple phrases. With my complex and intellectual mind, I thought they were ridiculous.

Who in the world could live "One Day at a Time"? I certainly could not! I needed to know what was going to happen so I could plan ahead; I needed to be in control of my daily, weekly, monthly, yearly activities. It was impossible for me to think about today. I was usually worried about yesterday and fretting about tomorrow. I couldn't stay in the day because I couldn't stay alone with myself; being alone frightened me into anxiety and restlessness. I used alcohol to soothe the loneliness. The reality was that alcohol heightened my loneliness. The fact was I wasn't comfortable enough in my own skin to live one day at a time.

"Live and Let Live" seemed easy enough at first. But I was so used to controlling people and feeling responsible for them that my boundaries were practically nonexistent. I personalized everyone else's feelings and reactions, while what I did was a reaction to what I thought others wanted me to do. I had to be involved with others to feel worthwhile so it was difficult to allow others to live their lives without my interference. I wasn't sure they could succeed without me! Or was it that I wasn't sure I could have a relationship with anyone unless I controlled them?

I blew off "Let Go and Let God" as having already been accomplished. I was spiritually very arrogant when I came into the program. Being a religious woman, I felt I had already given everything over to God. However, alcohol had replaced God in my life. I was spiritually bankrupt. Letting go was, in fact, the scariest thing I could imagine. If I let go what would happen? I wouldn't be able to predict the outcome and that paralyzed me.

"Keep It Simple" was a joke. Didn't anyone understand how complex and complicated my life was? Events in my life were anything but simple! My alcoholism had not only cost me a relationship with God, it had caused damaged relationships and separation from everything that was familiar in my life, as well as negligible self-esteem, and failing health. With self-pity oozing from every pore, nothing was simple.



"Think, Think, Think" was an obstacle as well. Thinking meant taking time to be alone. It meant being responsible. I was incapable of being responsible and really didn't want to be. And I couldn't keep my mind on anything for any length of time. All I had thought about for years was getting my own way, getting my

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understand how complex and  
complicated my life was?*

alcohol, or covering myself so people wouldn't know I'd been drinking. There was little time left for quiet thinking.

Since those early days in the program, a gradual change has been occurring. Those slogans have been transformed from stumbling blocks to cornerstones. Today they are sources of freedom and serenity.

"One Day at a Time" frees me to be present to people and things at hand. I'm freer today to think about and be concerned for the day I am living. How wonderful to shed the tension

of living in yesterday and tomorrow. I realize that I only have the grace to live the present moment; I can't do anything about the past and I can't control the future. I'm better able to turn over the results to my Higher Power and be responsible only to plan for coming events.

Control remains a thorn in my side at times, but living today means staying in my own stuff and allowing others to live in theirs. "Live and Let Live" frees me to be truly present and less manipulative toward others. I'm powerless over other people and their choices. It's such a relief to use my energy, which once went into controlling others, to help me to feel serene and liberated.

The Third Step is the basis of "Let Go and Let God" for me today. Becoming right-sized has helped me to recognize my need for others in the program and to trust that my Higher Power

loves me and is present for me. I feel a tightness in the pit of my stomach when I'm being resistant and need to let go of something. That's a barometer for me, a sign that I'm being called to let go and let God. When I do, the tightness goes away and is replaced by a sense of peace and relief.

"Keep It Simple" relieves the complication of life. It's easy for me to complicate the Steps—I can complicate anything. That's why living the Steps is so important. Following the Twelve Steps of AA given to us by Bill W. and Dr. Bob helps me to forge a new way of life.

As my alcoholic fog began to clear, I was able to "Think, Think, Think." I had time in rehab to do just that.

But I need to continually guard against stinking thinking and to take responsibility for my sobriety. Gradually, I have become more comfortable with quiet time.

Today I have a job that I never thought possible, new relationships based on healthy living, a love for myself that I never knew before, a relationship with a Higher Power based on trust, love, and forgiveness. And as my sobriety progresses, so does the importance of the slogans in my recovery. These simple sayings are a cornerstone of truth in my life today.

Joanne N.  
Au Sable Forks, New York  
July 1994

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