

Let's not beat about the bush, Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous - carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. Without it, the Fellowship would wither and die. Yet, even at its simplest level this vital contact between one alcoholic and another involves an investment of time and money.

Bill W., in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, recounted how Ebby's actions in helping Bill laid the foundations.

"He called me on the phone and then got into the subway; total cost, ten cents. At the level of the telephone booth and subway turnstile, spirituality and money began to mix. One without the other would have amounted to nothing at all.

"Right then and there, Ebby established the principle that AA in action calls for the sacrifice of much time and a little money."

The fact that AA declines outside contributions -- in order to maintain its autonomy and financial independence -- means that the money necessary for AA's survival and day-to-day operations can only come from individual AA members and groups within AA.

As Bill W. put it in 1957, "our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if as a society we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with the responsibility -- one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skip when the Treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas and AA as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.

"When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat with giving token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are grateful to share what we have found with all those who still suffer". (The Language of the Heart, page 221)

"The paradox of AA is that financial independence and the support of our Fellowship by alcoholics and alcoholics alone not only enhances A.A. ~ of importance to each of us, but stimulates our engagement in our own recovery."

Time as contribution

Apart from the important financial aspect of "contribution" – it is clear from Bill W.'s quote above that there is the big sacrifice (meaning contribution in this sense) of personal time. Where would the Fellowship be if it were not for countless hours months and years of patient time contributed not of course just by members to members and the still suffering alcoholic but by many others (non-members) for us, members in the Fellowship.

Although as a Fellowship and as Groups within the Fellowship our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers - wherever he or she may be – is clear... I want to suggest to individual members that the broader idea of contribution as found in the prayer of St Francis (set on in the Chapter on Step 11) –of it being better to give than receive etc. – is another meaning that can be given to this theme.

Step 12 is 'contribution' par excellence

In other words if we lived the steps, one day at a time, it would help us all to recover as we trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

(This article draws on the US AA publication "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix")

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