



EXPLORING THE JOURNEY WITH ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: DOES IT WORK

Dr. Manoj Kumar Sharma* | Mrs. Romena Begum** | Mrs. Bina Halder***

*Principal, R. B. Memorial School of Nursing, Darbhanga, Bihar, India.

**Tutor/ Clinical Instructor, AIIMS Kalyani, West Bengal, India.

***Tutor/ Clinical Instructor, AIIMS Kalyani, West Bengal, India.

<https://doi.org/10.47211/idcij.2025.v12i03.007>

ABSTRACT

"Exploring the Journey with Alcoholics Anonymous(AA)", highlights the critical role of AA groups in supporting individuals to overcome alcoholism. It delves into the significance of the Big Book as a fundamental resource for recovery, providing both guidance and inspiration through its personal stories and practical advice. The article also determines AA's unique decentralized leadership model, which fosters a democratic environment by rotating leadership roles among members and emphasizes shared responsibility. Additionally, the study explores the 12 Traditions and 12 Steps, which form the cornerstone of AA's approach to achieving sobriety and maintaining unity within the community. These principles not only guide individual recovery but also help preserve the organization's integrity and coherence, ensuring that AA remains a supportive and effective resource for those battling alcohol addiction.

Key Words: Alcoholics Anonymous, Big Book, 12 steps, AA's approach ,12 Tradition, self-help Group.

ABOUT AUTHORS:



Dr. Manoj K. Sharma is the Principal of R.B. Memorial School of Nursing, Darbhanga, Bihar, India. He has authored several academic books and learning materials for nursing students, recognized for their clarity and practical orientation. His work reflects a strong commitment to advancing nursing education and professional excellence in healthcare.



Mrs. Romena Begum is a Tutor and Clinical Instructor at the College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Kalyani, West Bengal, India. She has experience in guiding nursing students through both theoretical instruction and clinical practice. Her academic and clinical engagement emphasizes skill-based learning, professional competence, and evidence-based nursing education.



Mrs. Bina Halder is a Tutor and Clinical Instructor at the College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Kalyani, West Bengal, India. She is actively involved in nursing education, combining classroom teaching with clinical training to strengthen student learning outcomes. Her professional contributions focus on enhancing clinical competence, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice among nursing students.

INTRODUCTION



Alcoholics Anonymous, the world's largest and oldest alcohol support group, is dedicated to helping members overcome alcoholism. An A.A. group consists of two or more alcoholics seeking recovery with no other affiliation. Membership is open to all desiring recovery, with no dues, fees, requirements, or formal application. (3)

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a worldwide organization founded in 1935 by Dr. Bob Smith and Bill Wilson in Akron, Ohio. It supports former alcoholics in their recovery journey while maintaining sobriety. Today, AA groups are available in cities globally, offering inclusive meetings for individuals of all backgrounds, including family members of those in recovery. (2)

AA is a worldwide organization where men and women support each other to maintain sobriety and lead fulfilling lives through a twelve-step program. Membership only requires a desire to stop drinking. Key components include alcoholics helping one another and prioritizing principles over personalities. Founded in the U.S. in 1935, AA is the oldest and largest self-help group globally. (4)

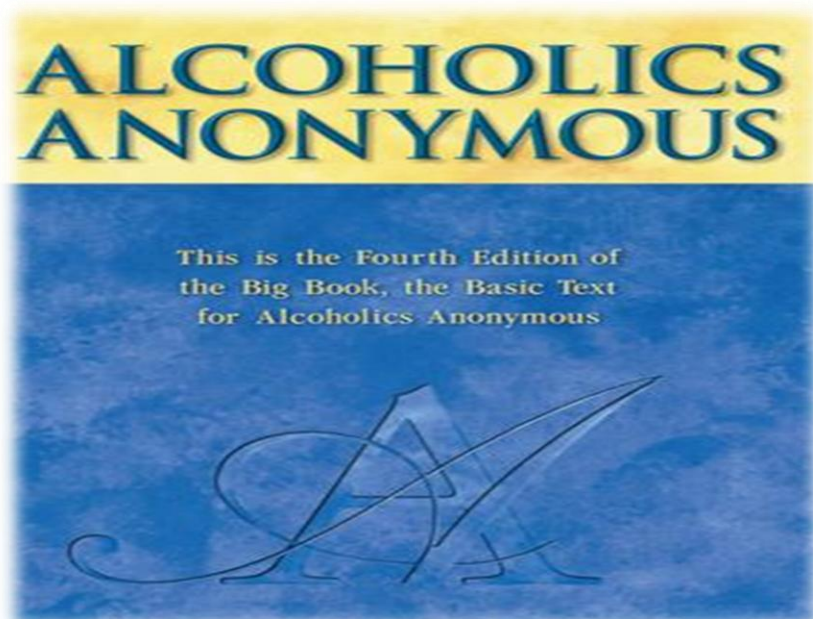


Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous: Bill Wilson and Bob Smith

What's the purpose of A.A. groups?



1. **Support and Encouragement:** AA provides a supportive environment where individuals can share their struggles and successes with others who understand their experiences.
2. **Maintaining Sobriety:** Members help each other stay sober by offering guidance, accountability, and practical strategies for coping with triggers and cravings.
3. **Spiritual and Personal Growth:** The 12-step program encourages participants to explore spiritual principles and pursue personal development, fostering emotional healing and self-awareness.
4. **Fellowship and Camaraderie:** AA meetings offer a sense of belonging and camaraderie among members, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness often associated with addiction.
5. **Service and Giving Back:** Through service opportunities within the group, members have the chance to give back to the community and support others who are still struggling with alcohol addiction.



The Big Book, published in 1939, outlines the Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) program for recovery from alcoholism. It shares the experiences of the first 100 A.A. members and is translated into over 70 languages. (1)

The Big Book offers inspirational stories and recovery tools to support your long-term sobriety journey. It covers AA's 12 steps and traditions, alongside personal accounts of overcoming alcohol use disorder (AUD) in the second half. (2)

The Organization Of AA

AA, led by former alcoholics, operates without a formal leadership team. Its 100,000+ self-run groups rely on donations. Rotating service positions encourage active involvement. A 2014 survey showed 27% sober for less than a year and 22% sober for over 20 years. (2)

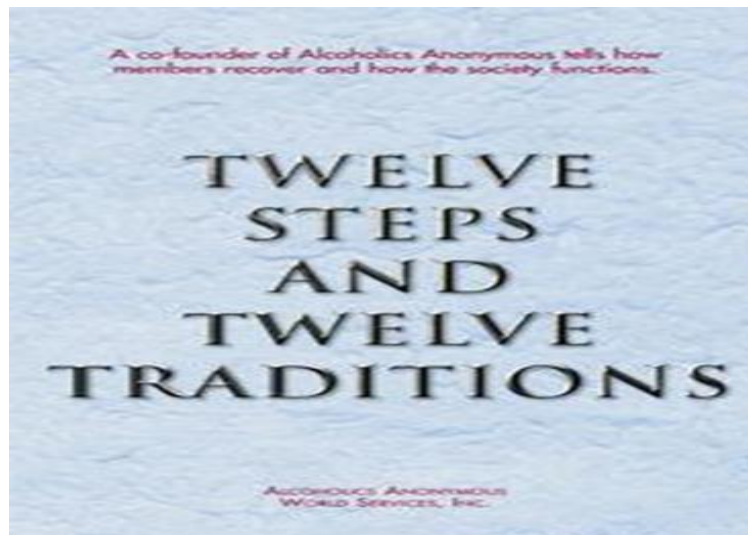
The 12 Traditions

The 12 traditions of AA serve as the foundation of the organization. Because of these, members are able to rest assured that AA is a safe place to share their experiences and get support for their alcohol use disorder (AUD).

Here is a breakdown of the 12 traditions of AA:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The 12 Steps



The 12 steps of AA discuss how to recover from alcoholism and prevent triggers. Oftentimes, they are introduced in an inpatient rehab setting and are used in aftercare recovery programs. The 12 steps are relevant to many different situations and can help during the good and difficult times.

The 12 steps of AA are:

1. We admitted 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. We're 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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

New Research Affirms Effectiveness of AA and Other 12-Step Programs in Treating Alcohol Use Disorder

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has aided alcohol use disorder recovery for over 80 years, with recent research confirming its effectiveness and cost-saving benefits. AA offers free mutual-help support and is widely accessible. Alcohol use disorder affects 6% of U.S. adults, with binge drinking prevalent among 70% of adults. Those with alcohol use disorder face heightened suicide risk, especially if not accompanied by other psychiatric disorders. (5,7,9)

A review of 27 studies, involving over 10,000 participants, found that Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and similar Twelve-Step Facilitation programs (AA/TSF) were more effective than other treatments in achieving continuous abstinence at 12, 24, and 36 months. Manualized AA/TSF interventions showed the highest rates of continuous abstinence, while non-manualized interventions performed equally well. AA/TSF interventions were also effective in increasing the percentage of days abstinent, especially in the long term. They were as effective as other treatments in reducing drinking intensity and alcohol-related consequences. Additionally, AA/TSF interventions were found to substantially reduce healthcare costs. (6,7,8)



Effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous Groups:

- Research confirms AA's effectiveness: - Review of 27 studies involving 10,000+ participants.
- AA and similar programs more effective than other treatments in achieving continuous abstinence at 12, 24, and 36 months.
- AA interventions reduce drinking intensity and alcohol-related consequences.
- Long-term sobriety: 22% of members sober for over 20 years.
- Supportive community fosters spiritual and personal growth.
- Cost-saving benefits: AA interventions reduce healthcare costs.
- AA offers vital support for individuals seeking recovery from alcoholism.

Alcoholics Anonymous India - Get help for your Drinking Problem

- AA India Helpline +91 9022771011
- GSO (General service office) India Office +91-8097055134
- Email-info@aagsoindia.org

CONCLUSION:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) plays a vital role in supporting individuals on their journey to recovery from alcoholism. With its emphasis on mutual support, spiritual principles, and inclusivity, AA provides a safe and welcoming space for individuals to heal and maintain sobriety.

REFERENCES

1. Alcoholics Anonymous. (2001). *Alcoholics Anonymous* (4th ed.). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/alcoholics-anonymous
2. Alcoholics Anonymous. (2016, October). *A.A. near you*. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. <http://www.aa.org/>
3. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. (n.d.). *The A.A. group*. Alcoholics Anonymous. <https://www.aa.org/the-aa-group>
4. American Psychiatric Association. (n.d.). *Alcoholics Anonymous*. In *APA dictionary of psychology*. <https://dictionary.apa.org/alcoholics-anonymous>
5. Edwards, A. C., Ohlsson, H., Sundquist, J., Sundquist, K., & Kendler, K. S. (2020). Alcohol use disorder and risk of suicide in a Swedish population-based cohort. *American Journal of Psychiatry*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2019.19070673>
6. Ferri, M., Amato, L., & Davoli, M. (2006). Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programmes for alcohol dependence. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2006(3), CD005032. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD005032.pub2>
7. Kelly, J. F., Humphreys, K., & Ferri, M. (2020). Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs for alcohol use disorder. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2020(3), CD012880. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012880.pub2>
8. Kelly, J. F., & Yeterian, J. D. (2012). The role of Alcoholics Anonymous in the treatment of alcohol use disorders. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 20(5), 311–321. <https://doi.org/10.3109/10673229.2012.712842>
9. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2020, March 13). *Meta-analysis supports AA as treatment for AUD*. Research News. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
10. OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT 3.5: Alcoholics Anonymous (04/04/2024–31/05/2024)*. OpenAI.