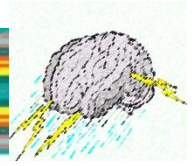
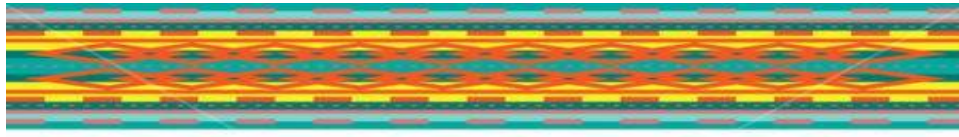


NAIGSO-AA 2018 Spring Equinox Edition



# *NAIGSO-AA*

## *Four Directions Newsletter*



*Native American Indian General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous*

*PO Box 838*

*Rogersville, AL 35652*

*256-762-0329*





## Thoughts from Our General Manager

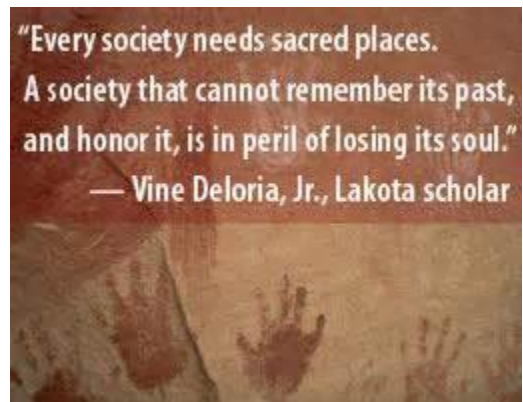
Though, it became necessary to reorganize the legal formation of NAIGSO and move the center of operations, Earl's vision is still alive and it still sits on our shoulders. Many of our elders have passed to the spirit world and the need of supporters has become vital. Just as New York GSO

found it necessary to create the General Service Conference made up of AA area delegates and AA staff members, NAIGSO must grow and evolve to keep Earl's vision circling in Indian Country.

New York AA GSO has made great strides in carrying its message to Native American alcoholics but it still continues to miss the mark. It has made history in many ways in its usual fashion-slowly. It has taken them forty years to formally acknowledge the need of Native Americans to include their customs and ceremonies into their AA recovery program. Meanwhile Native American alcoholics still suffer from the devastation of alcoholism at ten times the national rate.

NAIGSO will continue to print and distribute the "Daily Readings from the AA Lodge"- free of charge- to all AA members who request a copy. This is our primary financial burden and the focal point of Earl's vision today. As of this printing, we have sent out over 1000 copies at a cost of nearly \$20 each. Of the many emails and phone calls we receive about the manuscript there have been about 2 people who have had negative comments. And of those, one was really more about how NAIGSO is not AA! Though, I am not sure what authority gave him the power to declare us "not AA."

We will continue to support the inclusion of our peoples' customs and traditions into the functioning of AA in the Indian way to sobriety.



NAIGSO is now a legal entity in the state of Alabama and has regained its charitable, tax-exempt status with the IRS and is current in all filings to maintain that status. All monies donated to NAIGSO go directly to the printing/distribution of our manuscript and the maintenance of our website. Few other charitable organizations can claim 100% usage of funds to support its purpose and mission. All workers give freely of their time and their love of AA and Indian peoples.

In the AA Spirit of Service,  
Gary C  
GM, NAIGSO-AA  
256 762-0329

## **The Human Element of the East Direction; the Mind**

De' go:wah:eh no'khwe' oh? A'na eh go waa' swaahdyoohs? Neh kuh a'naeh go was'da doh gah gwaah' ne noh'do nyoh'shah ne swa 'nyah'sa goo?

"Why are you angry? Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"

Wiyo'weh e'deh! (Good day!) Have we all made peace with our mortality today? If not, perhaps you can go outside and greet the morning sun and thank the Creator for another day to share with others. This is the way of the East direction, stone #10. It has been said that the greatest gift you can give to your fellow man is to give back the gift of your presence. The East direction provides us that opportunity.

**The Spirit keeper of the East (stone #10) is the Golden Eagle, Kane'kwa:e**, bringer of peace, new beginnings, wisdom, truth, harmony, and collective consciousness.



The colors of the East are red or gold. The season or time of year is Spring when the earth is reborn, plants sprout, new life abounds, and life blossoms all around us. The time of day is dawn, and the time of life is childhood. The mineral totem of the East is pipestone, very

sacred to the Native Americans as the material used for constructing the sacred pipe and has been used ceremonially for thousands of years. This mineral is found mainly in the Dakotas and Minnesota. The legend of the pipestone is that there was a time when wars amongst the tribes had gotten so bad that the Creator turned the blood of the fallen into mountains of stone. Whenever there were discussions of war, they were instructed to make and smoke the pipe of ancestral blood which helped remind them to start new dialogues of peace. The stone promotes healing, peace, truth, clarity, wisdom, and most importantly helps us leave our narrow-mindedness to move toward a more enlightened consciousness (illumination). Tobacco is the totem plant of the East. Tobacco is one of the 4 sacred herbs used by most tribes to help communicate with the Spirit. It is used as an offering of

humility, used as a poultice, and is said to help bring clarity to the user.

Tobacco has been used incorrectly by modern man and has become a toxic substance as a result of abuse. *When used correctly and respectfully as a sacred herb, it is not indulged in daily. As a person who struggled with tobacco addiction, I have chosen to no longer smoke it, but I do use it ceremonially as an offering or in a smudge.* This is just an example of how the process of the MW can vary from one individual to another. If a pipe is offered to you and you are like me, you take the pipe respectfully and raise it up to the Creator, hold the bowl of the pipe loosely in your left hand and rotate it once clockwise with the right hand, bring it to your heart and pass it to the next person on your left. Different tribes may go counter-clockwise and that is up to you. But when you are only a participant in the ceremony, you should respect the way the leader performs his/her ritual and follow suit.



### **The Natural Element of the East is Air (ado'es:we).**



The air is invisible but ever present. We cannot see it but we know it is there. The element of air is represented by the mind or intellect. Within this inner sanctum are our thoughts which no one can know unless we share them. It is also where we retain knowledge of the world about us; and that too is only known by the soul who owns this mind. From the mind we can devise all manner of workings, good and evil. We can justify and rationalize our thoughts through right reasoning, or with devious motives. It can be a dangerous place or a place of peace. The analogy might be that when we go into the dark places of our minds, if we can resolve to wait for truth, it will come to us as the rising sun in the morning. Once light is shone upon darkness, it will fade, dissipate, and disappear, perhaps to reveal what we need to change about our own thinking. But as is sometimes the case, we can also

deceive ourselves even when we believe we are in the light/right. Nothing will change if we are not open to honesty and truth about ourselves and what is motivating our thinking. The same is true of the intellect. We can become so egotistical that we refuse to see the light around us. In that respect we are blinded by the light because our eyes are closed to the possibility that we may be wrong. The light (truth) is so intense that we cannot bear to look at it. So it is with recovery.



**The Spirit keeper of the East, Kane'kwa:e**, belongs to the **Thunderbird (Hino Ji 'neo)** Clan, the messenger who brings goodness, kindness, healing, humility, and gives in service to others, and cleanses our minds with clarity of vision. The morning sun is a reflection of Thunderbird's beauty and its energy revitalizes us and helps us continue our journey by giving us another day, a new beginning, But, we must remember, he is just a messenger, And, as it is with all messages; we can choose to accept or reject the message depending on our state of mind. Remember this: **Okashewakon Manitou, the great and holy spirit and Hanissee'ono, the great and evil spirit**, that neither of these spirits has any power or control over us, other than that which we allow.....the East direction.....God's Peace.....Ush`ka Waso'

*As you think, so you are.  
As you are, so you act.  
As you act, so you attract. - James Allen (1864-1912)*

### ***Creating Your Own Reality in Recovery***

Starting off this new year in line with recovery principles, and in line with the four elements of the human condition; physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, I thought it might be interesting to look inside the mind of an alcoholic since this is the spring equinox edition and the human element of this direction is the mind.

The Big Book tells us over and over that our thinking is our problem and that alcohol is but a symptom of our illness. However, our thinking can also be our solution. Such has been the case with me. **I must declare that this article is my own and anyone is free to debate, disagree or agree, wholly or partially, with its content.**



Our intention creates our reality. We are powerful beyond measure.

When I was a ha`dik'sha wakon (sacred little being), a child of five years old, I was removed from my biological and Native American family. I was separated from my natural siblings, heritage, culture and belief systems and raised in an all-white community in a white foster home with two active alcoholics. I was indoctrinated with the ways of the white man; his religion, his prejudices, his politics, his lies. Needless to say, I was baffled and confused beyond measure. I had lost my entire identity and had no right to self-determination. I was raised as surely as if I had been in a literal prison without the power of choice. And, as a ward of the local court foster system, and as a ward of the state being an *Indian*, while growing up I was refused the right to make my own decisions on anything. My name was even different than that of my foster parents. **I was locked in their box. Who was I?**



And, even though this was true, I was saved from certain death at the hands of my drunken, French-Canadian, biological father who beat us and our Indian mother mercilessly and committed acts of incest against us. But when we are very small children, this all seems normal. *It is what we know* by personal experience, therefore, it must be true. This too was a prison of the mind. And, as any person who has been in prison knows, you either adjust and conform to their way of thinking, you wither and die, or, you create a new reality by changing the way you think....Ush`ka Waso'

Have you made the connection to alcoholism/addiction yet? The next quote from Joseph Campbell will lead us into, and out of, the world of alcoholism:

**"We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us."** - Joseph Campbell, American writer



The caterpillar has been asleep over the winter in its cozy cocoon or chrysalis unaware of the metamorphosis it is undergoing. It has been oblivious to the bitter cold of winter, the long dark days, or any of the Earth Mother's doings. It will awaken to a new existence, in a different form than its former self as a crawler on the surface of the Northern physical direction. Now it will emerge as a creature of the air, of the Eastern direction, of the mind. Now it is truly free to be what Hot`ye Nok'ta always intended it to become.

Alcohol keeps us from achieving the fulfillment of our purpose and makes us as oblivious to our world as the caterpillar is within its cocoon. Sobriety gives us the opportunity to become a new creature and that which our Creator originally designed. Now that we are free, what will we do with this gift? It is always our choice.

“The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” Hell may be interpreted as a relative term and usually implies negative consequences for decisions *we only thought* were the right ones. It may have been innocent decisions. But more often than not, if we search our minds and our hearts, the Creator will speak to us in our “consciousness of conscience”. What we discover, if we are open-minded, is that evil frequently comes to us as something that is good and/or desirable. Modern technology proves that out. Many of our people have become addicted to gaming, texting, facebook, television, and the internet because it delivers a small shot of dopamine, the “feel good drug” to our brains. Every alcoholic is seeking a way to feel good, escape from reality, or gamble on an easier softer way to fortune or fame. So, is it any wonder why the good alcoholic, now being dry, engages in other destructive activities that provide him the same comfort that alcohol once had?



Pages 151-152 of the Big Book of AA tells us;

“Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did - then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen - Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand!

Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, "I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time." As ex-problem drinkers, we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn't happy about his sobriety. **He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it.** Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.

We have shown how we got out from under. You say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? **Have you a sufficient substitute?"**

It is pretty clear from these passages that quitting drinking was not enough. The highlights in red declare his terror, bewilderment, frustration and despair, the hideous four horsemen described in front of this reading. In desperation he asks, "*Have you a sufficient substitute?"*"

But on his own, will that dry drunk choose to go to an AA meeting to find the answers to his dilemma? *Chances are he will end up like the cartoon of the smoke signals above.* When we leave our home-fires, our people, our traditions, and our beliefs, we are seeking out those sordid places looking for something we already have because we are blinded in the mind and spirit by alcohol.

The same thing can happen in an AA group. AA members can be so blinded by their own pursuits of power, prestige, and intellectualism, within their group that they carry the wrong smoke signals to those of us who were raised in a different culture. With some of us, AA misses the mark because they have closed their minds to other schools of thought.



The foreword to the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, starting on page xxiii of the Big Book, throws caution at us:

“As the **message of recovery has reached larger numbers of people, it has also touched the lives of a vastly greater variety of suffering alcoholics.** When the phrase “We are people who normally would not mix” (page 17 of this book) was written in 1939, it referred to a Fellowship composed largely of men (and a few women) with quite similar social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Like so much of A.A.’s basic text, those words have proved to be far more visionary than the founding members could ever have imagined. **The stories added to this edition represent a membership whose characteristics—of age, gender, race, and culture—have widened and have deepened to encompass virtually everyone the first 100 members could have hoped to reach.** While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, **sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship.** Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. **In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.’s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”**



So, how does AA become more willing to change and accept these vastly different ages, gender, identity, orientation, race, and culture without demanding from those who enter the rooms that they comply and assimilate to a strictly Judeo-Christian philosophy and belief system? Are we in AA foolish enough to believe that the Muslim alcoholic is going to adopt the Big Book in its entirety and conform, for example, to saying the Lord's Prayer after each meeting? No. The foreword allows us to **"share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics"** which requires us to **"speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity"**.

But, what is the language of the heart in the mind of a Native American, or a Chinese Buddhist? What is *their* personal experience, strength and hope within their cultures, political environment, socio-economic situations, and religions or philosophies? Is it the same as the white, Anglo-Saxon American Christian and is it conveyed by the same vessel? It is because of these reasons that we at NAIGSO-AA.org continue to appeal to a rational AA World Services and GSO in New York's main offices to accept our Native American view as legitimate as any AA meeting around the globe. We AA's proclaim to others a spirit of love and tolerance, of acceptance and inclusion. Yet, we choose to exclude those who adapt the principles of AA in a way that their individual cultures and races can understand the language of their hearts. The NAIGSO-AA organization is as legitimately an AA entity, and in line with all the same principles, steps, and traditions, as any other GSO worldwide. It would please us greatly for the New York offices to acknowledge and accept us as such. All it would require is a change in thinking; honestly, open-mindedly, and willingly. And what is that!?!.... It is keeping it simple!... Ush'ka Wa'so

**Please share your thoughts with us!**

Send your articles on Native America and your own personal recovery from alcoholism to:

[Newsletter@NAIGSO-AA.org](mailto:Newsletter@NAIGSO-AA.org)

**Did you know?:** Until March 12, 1880 Judge Elmer Dundy resolved that Native Americans are indeed "persons within the meaning of the law" and have the same rights as any other person? Before then, it was debated whether and Indian was a real person or an animal. *Now that is an example of humans changing the way they think!*

*We are a diverse group of Native American people, tribes, and bloods in recovery from the disease of alcoholism who advocate that "love and tolerance is our code". Please remember that whatever opinions are expressed in this newsletter they belong to the author of that article. Peace and serenity is our goal so please keep an open mind to other schools of thought. Thanks, from the editor, Jamie T-H*





## Numbers

I am 5 in line at birth. I had lots of trauma. they had booze and gave it to us to snooze. When I was 6 I found my own bottle, brown liquid sliding down. made me happy and numb at times a clown. And then at 12, I was on my own learned to run. full of lessons of "TLC"; thievery, lies and cheating

By the time I was 14 I was locked up, messed up. practicing family skill. still looking for a thrill. Got out of there and found I had nothing else to do so I got married at 16. I was out of the frying pan into the fire as that saying goes

running was a skill I learned as in life is FUBIL. "F U buddy I'm Leaving"

Still no goals so at 18 joined military for lack of any other option, Vietnam, fly high, I did and more. By 25 my perceptions said all is fine. booze my closest friend. we'll be together til the end. I had trouble ahead. trouble behind, their fault, his fault, not mine.

Again, I ran, those darn geographical cures never worked but the insanity of trying was all I knew, In another State at 30 I add cocaine so to drink more. Someone's knocking at the door. Then bang bang bang, bullets fly, people go down.

The courts, say it's my fault counselor says its booze, clergy says get help, judge gives me nudge to AA. So, in I saunter, all my resentments and rebel without a cause. 3 years, 3 meetings a week or prison. hate you hate them, hate me. I sit, rebellious ears closed. 5 years ears open. Your story is my story. I still hate you and me

7 years, find a friend, a sponsor they say. Talk to me in way I understand, give me a dare. sage, tobacco, sweat lodge rebirth. Standing still for long time looking at me and old enemy booze.

fast forward bunch of time. Still sitting holding my seat. I like you, I like me and especially the we. booze my enemy is concrete.

anonymous



# Changing the Way I Think

by Diane B.



*Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words. Be careful of your words, for your words become your actions. Be careful of your actions, for your actions become your habits. Be careful of your habits, for your habits become your character. Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny. — Chinese proverb, author unknown*

Many people have seen and read this poem. But have you really thought about what it is saying? The way I read it, it is telling me that my mere thoughts can change my entire life; that they can ultimately determine my destiny!! That is a very strong statement and it looks great on paper. But how do you literally change your thoughts so that they become a great destiny? Although changing the way you think might sound like a rather abstract concept, there are actually some easy, concrete steps you can take towards achieving your incredible destiny.

First and foremost, you must never underestimate the power of positivity. When you begin to look for what is right in your world instead of what is wrong, life becomes undeniably better. You become filled with a deep sense of gratitude for all you have instead of constantly seeking what you do not have. You naturally become a happier person.



*Clarity*

If you are a bit on the pessimistic side, try saying positive affirmations out loud to yourself. Stand up and say, “My world is a peaceful, loving, and joy-filled place to live.”<sup>1</sup> Say it again. Yes, out loud. (I know it makes you feel silly, but do it anyways. I promise it will make you feel better.) Then say, “By allowing myself to be happy, I inspire others to be happy as well.”<sup>1</sup> Now you have not only made yourself feel better; you have let yourself know that you positively impact people. When you are happy and full of joy, you make others happy.



*Illumination*

So, going back to our ancient-Chinese-proverb-formula: you thought a happy thought, then you said happy words, and that helped make someone else happy. And that felt so good that you decided to keep doing it and it became a habit. This habit of yours – being happy – becomes your trademark. People know you by it. “Oh, that girl...she is just a ray of sunshine. She never has a bad word to say and I just love being around her.” Now it has become your character.

This little trick works with any positive character trait you might wish to develop. Perseverance, patience, tolerance, open-mindedness, and selflessness are just some of the character traits you might care to be known by. You can simply Google “how to write affirmations” or “positive affirmations” if you are having trouble creating your own statements. As your character develops, you will naturally find yourself around others who are like you -- people who want to make the world a better place to live and are not afraid to help others make it that way. You will find that other positive people are drawn to you like a magnet.

(What your mother told you about birds who flock together is true.)

Your positive thoughts, turned into positive words, will create positive actions. Those actions do become habit, which will create your character. Because of your fabulous character, you will become surrounded by equally fabulous individuals who will walk alongside you to help you create your shiny new destiny. Now get out there and get it!!

*Wisdom*



<sup>1</sup>Davenport, B. “Positive Affirmations: 101 Life-Changing Thoughts To Practice Daily,” <https://liveboldandbloom.com/09/quotes/positive-affirmations>, (September 22, 2014).

## The Concept of God By Diane B.



In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light there than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And, moreover if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is She now?"

The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist."

Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist."

To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

Maybe this was one of the best explanations to the concept of GOD.





## The Blessings of Open-Mindedness

by Art C.

As I have learned it is a blessing to me to be open-minded. I have 20+ years in sobriety. I haven't picked up alcohol since I found recovery in a treatment center and AA at age 24. Since then, I went through hardships, divorce, depression, family separation, death of a parent, other failed relationships, etc. The only thing I held onto during extreme difficulty was that I was sober. There was a flicker of hope that if I didn't engage in self-defeating behaviors, that I might have the chance to someday enjoy life again. It was my sobriety time that I held onto. I don't want to go through the early days in the fog of alcohol-clouded perceptions. My options after picking up alcohol are entirely unpredictable.

I do not boast of my sobriety, rather I use it as the success of holding onto, and remaining committed to, the first step that I cannot safely use alcohol, and that I personally do not drink for any reason other than to change my reality and to get out of myself so I do not have to deal with reality.

I take with me a message of Hope, of the fact that Alcoholics Anonymous works. I share that message in the local detox unit, and the local county jail. The epidemic of addiction has become part of mainstream society, and folks are younger and younger with multiple relapses. Those who are living in addiction may not have another chance at recovery should they pick up again as I have learned by watching the evening news.

I suggest encouraging and celebrating not picking up. I suggest sticking with the program no matter what. Faith is not about feelings, Courage is not letting the things around you become an influence. Hope is something that you hold onto despite all other indications. Addiction is not something that you feed once in a while and expect to make progress at finding serenity and meaning in life.

My primary purpose is to stay sober and to encourage others to remain sober. With this one statement that I believe with all of my being, I am able to participate in life. I am able to be a voice against the madness that is a life consumed by addiction. I can enjoy waking up in the morning.

I thank you for reading this article. I wish you much happiness in your journey, I know that your message needs to be heard by others just as strongly as mine. We are to enjoy our journey and discover that we are each individually special... that we each have our own message to offer others to help them find their way.—Art C.



## Quotes from our Ancestors

Perhaps we humans should all listen to the voices of our ancestors? Mother Earth will heal if we change how we think and take action....NOW!

“When the Earth is sick, the animals begin to disappear. When that happens, the Warriors of the Rainbow will come to save them. Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to

ourselves. All things are bound together. All things are connected.” --**Sealth** (Chief Seattle, 1785-1866)

“We do not want schools....they will teach us to have churches. We do not want churches.... they will teach us to quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that.” --**Chief Joseph** (Heinmot Tooyalaket), Nez Perce leader

“The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes from the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan tanka, the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each one of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this. The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is known that true peace which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men.” – **Black Elk**, Oglala Sioux 1863-1950

“And when I stood there I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that we are not physical creatures having a spiritual experience, but that we are spiritual creatures having a physical experience.” – **Black Elk** from the book “Black Elk Speaks”

“So live your life, that fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion, respect them in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life. Perfect your life, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, even a stranger when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and grovel to none. When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. **Chief Tecumseh**, Shawnee, 1768-1813



“We return thanks to our Mother, the Earth, which sustains us. We return thanks to the rivers and streams which supply us with water. We return thanks to all the herbs which furnish medicine for the cure of our diseases. We return thanks to the moon and stars which have given us their light when the sun was gone. We return thanks to the sun that has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye. Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, Okashewakon Manitou, in Whom is embodied all goodness, and Who directs all things for the good of Her children.” – **Handsome Lake** (Ganio Dai'io) the Seneca Prophet of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee), 1735-1815



“I am poor and naked but I am the chief of a nation. We do not want riches but we do want to train our children right. Riches would do us no good. We could not take them with us to the other world. We do not want riches. We want peace and love.”— **Red Cloud**, Oglala Sioux 1822-1909



### ***For better or for worse***

by Sarahi A.

I will be obviously honest in the next sentence; changing sucks. Over the past two years, life has brought a ton of drastic changes in my life. When I refer to “life”, of course I mean the swirling, bone crushing and rude awakening of mind, body and soul of getting clean and sober. Comparing my life to how it was when I was using substances to fill all the empty voids, to first getting clean, to now, is like comparing a fish to an elephant and expecting the elephant to do its laundry. You see what I'm saying? Elephants don't swim, they also don't do laundry. It might seem like my analogy doesn't make any sense but if you keep reading you will understand.

Getting clean is like that fish and elephant, you never thought in your wildest dreams that getting clean and sober was going to work out, yet it does. The thing about addiction is that it distorts every possibility of hope. It diminishes your self-worth and doesn't take no for an answer. It finds every fear, magnifies it 20x, and promises to make it all better with some help.



And now, as for me, it hasn't always been only addiction that has distorted my thinking. You see, I have multiple mental illnesses that combine into one and get all twisty and nasty and tell me that it won't get better. Then, the disease and its allies work in such a way that it distracts me from who I am, and what I would like to be, and just plays on who/what I used to be. But you see, I am not that anymore. Of course, yes, I let it get to me and I absolutely hate changing and have a constant fear of doing so. But without that change, I wouldn't have gotten here. It is that same fear that keeps my light burning and alive. It is those same reality checks that help me get to where I am and not where or who I used to be.

Just recently, I began to get bad again, I was stagnant in my recovery for all these same reasons, the old thinking and the fear. It began eating away at me, without granting an escape, but I didn't realize I had the solution all along. Right in front of my face was the freedom and release that I had been taking for granted because it seemed like it was too big to overcome. And, all along, I knew I had hope and have always had that. I've always said that nobody is hopeless, I was that revolving door drunk that couldn't stay sober, and yet here I am with a little over two years clean and sober, struggling, but still kicking.

That is what this program is about, finding the impossible, that fish and elephant and teaching the elephant to swim and do laundry. Today I am that elephant, learning more or less to be the best version of myself I can muster up that day to be; even if it means just getting the courage to do something different and talking to the spirit of the universe. Today I know that for better or for worse, I am dedicated to staying clean, sober, and true at all measures. Today I know, that for better or for worse, I am me, and I will own that, even if it sucks sometimes.—Sarahi A.



My name is Gary and I am an alcoholic. However, those words mean something totally different than they did the day I was led into Alcoholics Anonymous, by (I believe) the Great Spirit. You see I had **“put-the-plug-in-the-jug,”** a whole four days before that. I had sworn off after being arrested for drunk driving. But King Alcohol had other thoughts and I had a strong desire to drink again that day. When I got home from work I ate supper and took a bath- knowing I was either going to get drunk or go to AA. Being so smart, I had a plan, I would use AA to get out of my legal troubles. Thus I had looked up the phone number for AA and had scoped out the two local meeting places, so I knew where the meeting was that night. It was a Thursday, so the meeting was right across the street from the package store where I had been buying my beer from several months. I left home not knowing whether I was going to drink or go to a meeting.



At the time, my transportation was an old 350cc Honda motorcycle. I topped the hill just before the meeting hall and the package store, desperately trying to make up my mind which way to turn. The next thing I knew I was parked in front of the door with the little sign with just two A's on it, taking off my helmet. I had, and still have, no conscious thought of deciding which way to turn or even making the turn. There is a complete blank spot between topping that hill and parking.

AA's Big Book speaks of that strange mental blank spot we experience in relation to the suffering caused by drinking. Well, apparently Creator uses strange mental blank spots too! This was the start of my journey in sobriety and my involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Later, I was asked to take care of coffee and soda supplies for my home group. This meant I was allowed to have a key to the building. Working contract construction I often had too much free time on my hands and would go to the meeting hall and read the AA literature I couldn't afford to buy. I became very well versed in the history of AA and began to grasp the strong visions involved in the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. And also some of the less than upright methods Bill W used to promote Alcoholics Anonymous to the hopeless drunks around the world. What all of this did was slowly replace my addiction to the drunken lifestyle. So if you think an AA group is just trying to find a free janitor when they try to recruit you to clean or take care of supplies it might just be the Great Mystery in action and you may be experiencing a strange mental blank spot too.

Quite a few years later I was dropped off a cliff and became responsible for developing a district AA website. During my learning experience to achieve this goal I was browsing the Internet to see what other AA entities were including on their websites and discovered the Native American Indian General Service Office website ([naigso-aa.org](http://naigso-aa.org).) Having become somewhat of an AA lawyer by this time, I found multiple violations of the AA Traditions on this website! So naturally I emailed the current General Manager to discuss these issues. Well it might have been another of Creator's tricks because I was introduced to another world of visions.

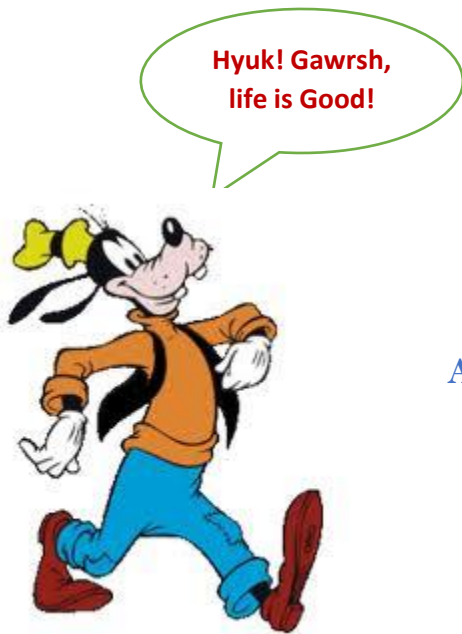


NAIGSO-AA is founded on a vision given to Earl L (known as the "Pissed Off Paiute.") Earl passed into the Spirit World many years back, but his vision lives on through many avenues of Native American AA, not just NAIGSO. Earl started the first-ever National/International Native American AA convention. In 1991, he just stood up in an AA service assembly and announced

he was starting a Native American convention. That first convention was held in Las Vegas, NV in 1992. When he continued to follow his vision in the creation and implementation of NAIGSO-AA the convention committee he formed decided to kick him off their committee. But Earl stuck to his vision and continued to support NAIGSO-AA. Hummmm, maybe Earl was experiencing a strange mental blank spot too.

One of our Native American elders speaks of visions taking you down paths you may not want to follow. Bill W suffered many setbacks following his vision of AA service. In fact, he was censored by the very committee he started (AA's General Service Conference.) But he persevered in his effort to follow his AA vision. Earl was censored by his own committee and he, too, stuck to the course of his vision.

So today, when I tell you my name is Gary and I am an alcoholic, it might just mean I have been given a vision that might be taking me down paths I would not choose to follow on my own accord.—Gary C.

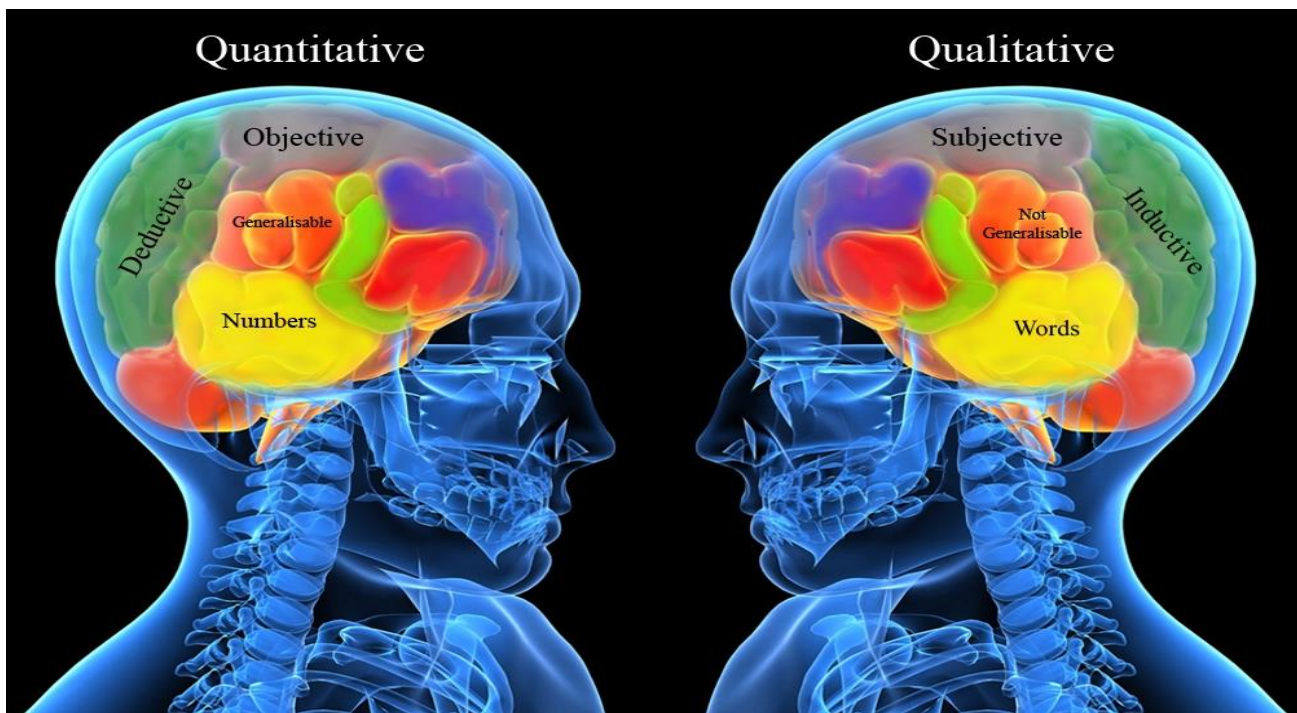


And about to get better!



Meets Here





Research – Rationale -- Reason -- Results = **Recovery**

**Think, Think, Think!**

**Tradition Three**, page 189 of the 12 & 12 states:

“Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence, we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

## CONTRASTING WORLDVIEWS

### TRADE

- Native Americans: way of preserving interdependence and equilibrium between individuals and communities
  - Ceremonies of reciprocity: gift giving and pipe smoking
- Europeans: economic exchange

### RELIGION

- Europeans: single divinity, written scriptures, trained and highly literate clergy and churches with structured ceremonies
- Native Americans: no literary tradition, polytheistic, based in nature, sought to conciliate spirits that surrounded them in natural world



## Using a Concordance with the Big Book and 12&12

By Ralph T.

Do you have a few favorite passages in the Big Book or the 12&12, but can't remember where they are? When your sponsor suggests you read about RESENTMENT in the Big Book, where do you start? If a speaker quotes the literature, how can you find that passage and read more?

You may find that using a "concordance" is the answer. Look up a word such as RESENTMENT and quickly find it in the literature covered by the concordance.

The book *164 and More*<sup>TM</sup> is a concordance. It lists all significant words in the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. A few words of context before and after each word helps ensure this is the exact passage you want.

Unique to *164 and More*, passages are arranged in sequence by the words **following** the word-of-interest. This is a big advantage when looking for a phrase such as the term FIRST DRINK. Both FIRST and DRINK occur hundreds of times in the Big Book and 12&12. Arranging FIRST passages in sequence by the rest of the passage saves time. This clip from *164 and More* (p. 214) conveniently shows all FIRST DRINK references together...

ever since man had FIRST crushed grapes.	12&12 p.22, Step One
During those FIRST days of convalescence, this will	BB p.129, The Family Afterward
few A.A. meetings and at FIRST decided they didn't want the	BB xx, Foreword to Second Edition
leave them out of the FIRST discussion.	BB p.91, Working With Others
of this frightening and at FIRST disrupting experience the	BB xix, Foreword to Second Edition
defense against the FIRST drink.	BB p.24, There Is A Solution
experiment of the FIRST drink?	BB p.35, More About Alcoholism
excuse for taking the FIRST drink.	BB p.37, More About Alcoholism
fight whatever against the FIRST drink.	BB p.41, More About Alcoholism
defense against the FIRST drink.	BB p.43, More About Alcoholism
insidious insanity -- that FIRST drink.	BB p.154, A Vision For You
state preceding the FIRST drink.	BB p.157, A Vision For You
insidious insanity of that FIRST drink, and on Armistice Day	BB p.8, Bill's Story
with respect to the FIRST drink as that of an individual	BB p.37, More About Alcoholism
which precedes the FIRST drink, but I was confident it	BB p.40, More About Alcoholism
but like the alcoholic's FIRST drink it would, if taken,	12&12 p.164, Tradition Seven
twist which leads to the FIRST drink of a spree.	BB p.92, Working With Others
condition surrounding that FIRST drink prevents normal	BB p.92, Working With Others
idea why he took that FIRST drink than you have.	BB p.23, There Is A Solution
our friend never took the FIRST drink, thereby setting the	BB p.23, There Is A Solution
necessarily taking that FIRST drink, we often get quite far off	12&12 p.112, Step Twelve
The FIRST edition appeared in April 1939,	BB xi, Preface
in the first printing of the FIRST edition in 1939.	BB xiii, Foreword to First Edition
That is why the FIRST edition of the book "Alcoholics	12&12 p.22, Step One
personal history from the FIRST edition were retained intact;	BB xi, Preface
Since Dr. Silkworth's FIRST endorsement of Alcoholics	BB p.569(571), III - Medical View

Within the A.A. literature are many principles, promises, and prayers. To unlock the gifts in the literature, time and study are necessary. The Big Book and 12&12 are not novels to read once and return to the book shelf. We say "keep coming back" which applies to meetings but also to the literature. Using a concordance like *164 and More* can help you focus on areas of immediate interest.

[this article was written by the creator of *164 and More* who is responsible for its content. *164 and More* is available as a 660-page paper book, website, and mobile app.] Ralph T.



**Looking for a WORD or a PHRASE  
in the Big Book or the 12&12?**

Use the *164 and More™* book, mobile app, or website to find just the passage you're seeking.

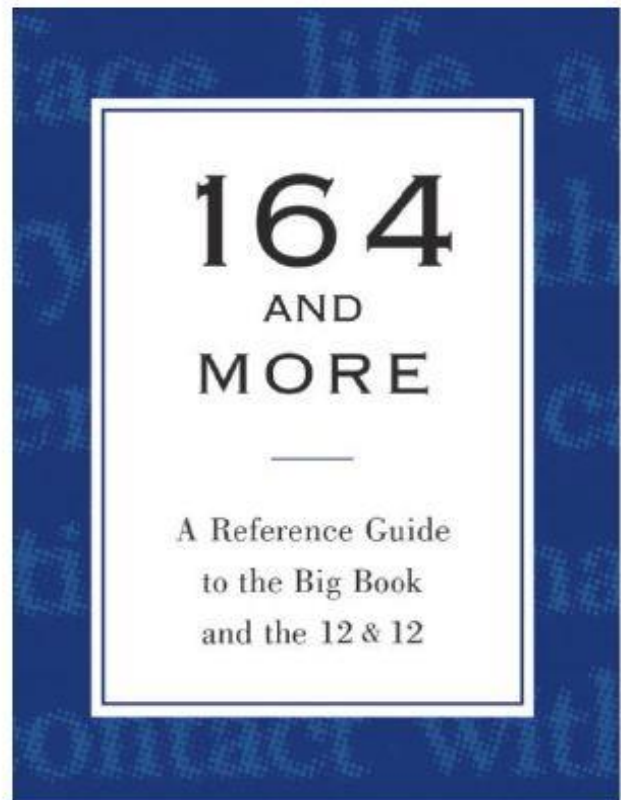
Try the complimentary website or purchase the 660-page spiral-bound book, or the mobile app for Apple phones/tablets, Android phones/tablets, PC and Mac computers, or Kindle eReaders.

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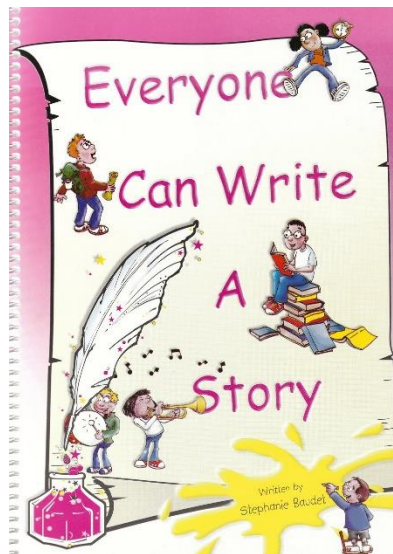
PHONE: 505-980-4294



## Note about the Summer Solstice Edition

\*From the Editor to our readers and hopefully our future authors:

Please consider writing an article for the Four Directions newsletter in time for the Summer solstice edition which will be submitted by June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The Summer edition theme is about the South direction of the emotions and relationships. Staying with that theme one might write about their feelings, emotions, and relationships before they got clean and sober versus the difference after they got sober. As we share our experiences in these areas, it helps the struggling alcoholic better understand how 12-step principles can also work in their lives. Hope is always the theme of recovery! We hope you will consider writing an article to us. Thank you!...Jamie T-H



Send Your Story To: [naigso-aa.org](http://naigso-aa.org)