

VENTURA COUNTY AA HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

# **Panel Format**

## **Suggested Format**

**Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am an alcoholic.  
Serenity Prayer**

**This is a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous that we bring to this facility. Myself and the people with me tonight are sober members of A.A. We come here tonight by invitation of this facility and under the direction of the Ventura County Alcoholics Anonymous Hospitals and Institutions Committee.**

**Read Introduction**

**Go around the room each person introducing themselves and the nature of their disease.**

**Read portion of chapter 3**

**Read portion of chapter 5**

**Read twelve traditions**

**Describe and offer literature**

**Short leader qualification**

**Introduce each speaker**

**Closing reading (“A Vision for you” or “The Keys of the Kingdom”) followed by the Serenity Prayer or the Lord’s Prayer**

## **Introduction**

**Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.**

**The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.**

## **Chapter 3**

### **[More about Alcoholism]**

**Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.**

**We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.**

**We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no real alcoholic ever recovers control. All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals --usually brief-- were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.**

**We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men. We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.**

## **Chapter 5 [How it Works]**

**Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.**

**Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided, you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps.**

**At some of these we balked. Thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.**

**Remember that we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power that One is God. May you find Him now!**

**Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.**

**Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:**

- 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.**

(continued on next page)

**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. Were 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.**

**Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.**

**Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventure before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:**

**(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.**

**(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.**

**(c) That God could and would if He were sought.**

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## **The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous**

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. 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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.**
- 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.**
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.**
- 6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every A.A. 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. A.A., 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 A.A. 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.**

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## **A Vision for You**

**Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.**

**Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.**

**May God bless you and keep you—until then.**

## **The Keys of the Kingdom**

**A.A. is not a plan for recovery that can be finished and done with. It is a way of life, and the challenge contained in its principles is great enough to keep any human being striving for as long as he lives. We do not, cannot, outgrow this plan. As arrested alcoholics, we must have a program for living that allows for limitless expansion. Keeping one foot in front of the other is essential for maintaining our arrestment.**

**A complete change takes place in our approach to life. Were we used to run from responsibility, we find ourselves accepting it with gratitude that we can successfully shoulder it. Instead of wanting to escape some perplexing problem, we experience a thrill of challenge in the opportunity it affords for another application of A.A. techniques, and find ourselves tackling it with surprising vigor.**

**There is no more “aloneness,” with that awful ache, so deep in the heart of every alcoholic that nothing, before, could reach it. That ache is gone and never need return again.**

**Now there is a sense of belonging, of being wanted and needed and loved. In return for a bottle and a hangover, we have been given the keys of the Kingdom.**

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