Alcoholics Anonymous – Melbourne Men's Group – MMG

Newcomers Handout Pack





Meeting Type	Meeting Time	Location
Men's Big Book Steps	**6.00 – 6.45pm**	**Mary Kehoe Community Centre**
Men's Recovery Meeting	**7.00 – 8.00pm**	**224 Danks Street Albert Park**

Melbourne Mens Group
Contact and Sponsorship List

Name	Sobriety Date	Phone Number	Location
Peter T	15th June 1991	0425 812 333	Aberfeldie
Dean B	27th March 2001	0405 494 568	St Kilda

Matt B	12th January 2009	0401 364 991	Prahran
Phil W	19th January 2015	0450 567 824	Carnegie
Stephen M	3rd September 2017	0431 446 520	Southbank
David G	23rd December 2017	0410 313 431	South Yarra
Alex C	12th June 2018	0431 167 189	Elwood
Shane D	2nd February 2019	0438 606 077	Croydon
Damo B	22nd March 2019	0411 143 568	Brighton
Dieter B	1st November 2019	0435 062 383	Dromana
Beau B	6th January 2020	0421 813 836	Hoppers Crossing
George B	20th January 2020	0421 902 738	Brighton
Patrick K	27th May 2021	0473 677 035	Windsor
Kelvin N	3rd April 2022	0478 131 863	South Melbourne
Paul T	27th August 2023	0423 563 525	Mooney Ponds
Brendan E	6th December 2023	0434 561 652	Brighton East
Dan O	15th January 2024	0400 068 101	Brighton
Jeremy R	1st August 2024	0415 188 701	Heidelberg
Lachie M	29th December 2024	0419 261 362	Clayton
Tom R	16th January 2025	0413 339 920	Elsternwick
Beau H	5th April 2025	0437 797 456	Upper Ferntree Gully
Dylan K	6th August 2025	0421 959 747	South Yarra
Leigh Q	21st December 2025	0417 931 909	Cheltenham

Information on Alcoholics Anonymous For Anyone New Coming to A.A.

For Anyone Referring People to A.A.

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. This sheet tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does not do.

What Is A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency.” Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Nonalcoholics may attend open A.A. meetings as observers, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed A.A. meetings.

What Does A.A. Do?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or “sponsorship” to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.

a. Open speaker meetings — open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members “tell their stories.” They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous.

b. Open discussion meetings — one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up. (Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.)

c. Closed discussion meetings — conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.

d. Step meetings (usually closed) — discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.

e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional facilities and treatment settings.

f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings about A.A. are not regular A.A. group

meetings.

What A.A. Does Not Do

A.A. does not:
1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
2. Solicit members.
3. Engage in or sponsor research.
4. Keep attendance records or case histories.
5. Join “councils” of social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them).
6. Follow up or try to control its members.
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses.
8. Provide detox or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment.
9. Offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats.
10. Engage in education about alcohol.
11. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services.
12. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
13. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources.
14. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

Members From Court Programs and Treatment Facilities

In recent years, A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment settings. Some have come to A.A. voluntarily; others, under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet “How A.A. Members Cooperate,” the following appears:
We cannot discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.
Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in A.A., many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. But continual exposure to A.A. educated us to the true nature of the illness.... Who made the referral to A.A. is not what A.A. is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern.... We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

Proof of Attendance at Meetings

Sometimes a referral source asks for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.
Groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group’s involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.
Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have an A.A. member acknowledge attendance on a slip that has been furnished by the referral source. The referred person is responsible for returning the proof of attendance.
This proof of attendance at meetings is not part of A.A.’s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus alleviate breaking A.A. members’ anonymity.

Twelve questions only you can answer

Only you can decide whether you want to give A.A. a try — whether you think it can help you.

We who are in A.A. came because we finally gave up trying to control our drinking. We still hated to admit that we could never drink safely. Then we heard from other A.A. members that we were sick. (We thought so for years!) We found out that many people suffered from the same feelings of guilt and loneliness and hopelessness that we did. We found out that we had these feelings because we had the disease of alcoholism.

We decided to try and face up to what alcohol had done to us. Here are some of the questions we tried to answer *honestly.* If we answered YES to four or more questions, we were in deep trouble with our drinking. See how you do. Remember, there is no disgrace in facing up to the fact that you have a problem.

Answer YES or NO to the following questions.

1. Have you ever decided to stop drinking for a week or so, but only lasted for a couple of days?

Most of us in A.A. made all kinds of promises to ourselves and to our families. We could not keep them. Then we came to A.A. A.A. said: “Just try not to drink today.” (If you do not drink today, you cannot get drunk today.)

YesNo

2. Do you wish people would mind their own business about your drinking– stop telling you what to do?

In A.A. we do not tell anyone to do anything. We just talk about our own drinking, the trouble we got into, and how we stopped. We will be glad to help you, if you want us to.

YesNo

3. Have you ever switched from one kind of drink to another in the hope that this would keep you from getting drunk?

We tried all kinds of ways. We made our drinks weak. Or just drank beer. Or we did not drink cocktails. Or only drank on weekends. You name it, we tried it. But if we drank anything with alcohol in it, we usually got drunk eventually.

YesNo

4. Have you had to have an eye-opener upon awakening during the past year?

Do you need a drink to get started, or to stop shaking? This is a pretty sure sign that you are not drinking “socially.”

YesNo

5. Do you envy people who can drink without getting into trouble?

At one time or another, most of us have wondered why we were not like most people, who really can take it or leave it.

YesNo

6. Have you had problems connected with drinking during the past year?

Be honest! Doctors say that if you have a problem with alcohol and keep on drinking, it will get worse — never better. Eventually, you will die, or end up in an institution for the rest of your life. The only hope is to stop drinking.

YesNo

7. Has your drinking caused trouble at home?

Before we came into A.A., most of us said that it was the people or problems at home that made us drink. We could not see that our drinking just made everything worse. It never solved problems anywhere or anytime.

YesNo

8. Do you ever try to get “extra” drinks at a party because you do not get enough?

Most of us used to have a “few” before we started out if we thought it was going to be that kind of party. And if drinks were not served fast enough, we would go some place else to get more.

YesNo

9. Do you tell yourself you can stop drinking any time you want to, even though you keep getting drunk when you don’t mean to?

Many of us kidded ourselves into thinking that we drank because we wanted to. After we came into A.A., we found out that once we started to drink, we couldn’t stop.

YesNo

10. Have you missed days of work or school because of drinking?

Many of us admit now that we “called in sick” lots of times when the truth was that we were hung-over or on a drunk.

YesNo

11. Do you have “blackouts”?

A “blackout” is when we have been drinking hours or days which we cannot remember. When we came to A.A., we found out that this is a pretty sure sign of alcoholic drinking.

YesNo

12. Have you ever felt that your life would be better if you did not drink?

Many of us started to drink because drinking made life seem better, at least for a while. By the time we got into A.A., we felt trapped. We were drinking to live and living to drink. We were sick and tired of being sick and tired.

YesNo

Did you answer **YES** four or more times? If so, you are probably in trouble with alcohol. Why do we say this? Because thousands of people in A.A. have said so for many years. They found out the truth about themselves — the hard way. But again, only *you* can decide whether you think A.A. is for you. Try to keep an open mind on the subject. If the answer is **YES,** we will be glad to show you how we stopped drinking ourselves. Just call. A.A. does not promise to solve your life’s

problems. But we can show you how we are learning to live without drinking “one day at a time.” We stay away from that “first drink.” If there is no first one, there cannot be a tenth one. And when we got rid of alcohol, we found that life became much more manageable.

What is sponsorship?

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!

He found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need AA was born. The word sponsor was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.

What does AA mean by sponsorship? To join some organisations, you *must* have a sponsor - a person who vouches for you, presents you as being suitable for membership. This is definitely not the case with AA. Anyone who has a desire to stop drinking is welcome to join us!

In AA, sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr. Bob did. Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through AA

When we first begin to attend AA meetings, we may feel confused and sick and apprehensive. Although people at meetings respond to our questions willingly, that alone isn’t enough. Many other questions occur to us between meetings; we find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to live sober.

So we select an AA member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and confidentially, and we ask that person to be our sponsor.

Whether you are a newcomer who is hesitant about bothering anyone, or a member who has been around for some time trying to go it alone, sponsorship is yours for the asking. We urge you: *Do not delay*. Alcoholics recovered in AA *want* to share what they have learned with other alcoholics. We know from experience that our own sobriety is greatly strengthened when we give it away!

Sponsorship can also mean the responsibility *the group as a whole* has for helping the newcomer. Today, more and more alcoholics arriving at their first AA meeting have had no prior contact with AA they have not telephoned a local AA intergroup or central office; no member has made a Twelfth Step call on them. So, especially for such newcomers, groups are recognising the need to provide some form of sponsorship help. In many successful groups, sponsorship is one of the most important planned activities of the members.

Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal, but it is a basic part of the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism through the Twelve Steps.

We hope that this pamphlet will provide answers to some of the often-asked questions about the rewarding two-way street called sponsorship - for people who may be seeking sponsors - for AA members who want to share their sobriety through sponsorship and for groups that wish to develop sponsorship activity.

For the person seeking a sponsor

How does sponsorship differ from Twelfth Step calls?

A Twelfth Step call - visiting an alcoholic who has asked for help and talking about the AA program with him or her - may become the *beginning* of sponsorship, but by itself it is not necessarily sponsorship.

Sponsorship, with its *continuing* interest in another alcoholic, often develops when the second person is willing to be helped, admits having a drinking problem, and decides to seek a way out of the trap.

Sponsorship is Twelfth Step work, but it is also *continuing responsibility* for helping a newcomer adjust to a way of life without alcohol.

How does sponsorship help the newcomer?

It assures the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation fully and *cares* - one person to turn to without embarrassment when doubts, questions, or problems linked to alcoholism arise. Sponsorship gives the newcomer an understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most. Sponsorship also provides the bridge enabling the new person to meet other alcoholics - in a home group and in other groups visited.

How should a sponsor be chosen?

The process of matching newcomer and sponsor is as informal as everything else in AA often, the new person simply approaches a more experienced member who seems compatible, and asks that member to be a sponsor. Most A.A.s are happy and grateful to receive such a request.

An old AA saying suggests, Stick with the winners. It's only reasonable to seek a sharing of experience with a member who seems to be using the AA program successfully in everyday life. There are no specific rules, but a good sponsor probably should be a year or more away from the last drink - and should seem to be *enjoying* sobriety.

Should sponsor and newcomer be as much alike as possible?

Often, a newcomer feels most at ease with a sponsor of similar background and interests - another physician or another homemaker, another churchgoer or another agnostic, another Irish-American or another black. But many A.A.s say they were greatly helped by sponsors totally unlike themselves. Maybe that's because their attention was then focused on the *most important* things that any sponsor and newcomer have in common: alcoholism and recovery in AA

AA experience does suggest that it is best for men to sponsor men, women to sponsor women. This custom usually promotes quick understanding and reduces the likelihood of emotional distractions that might take the newcomer's mind off the purpose of AA

What should a newcomer expect from a sponsor?

An AA sponsor does not provide any such services as those offered by a social worker, a doctor, a nurse, or a marriage counsellor. A sponsor is simply a sober alcoholic who helps the newcomer solve one problem: *how to stay sober.*

And it is not professional training that enables a sponsor to give help - it is just personal experience and observation. A sponsor was once a newcomer, too, and has tried to use the AA

program to deal with problems similar to those the newcomer is facing now.

Must the newcomer agree with everything the sponsor says?

If the sponsor's ideas sound strange or unclear, the newcomer had better speak up and ask questions. Theirs is supposed to be an easy, open relationship, in which both parties talk freely and honestly with each other.

The AA program is simple, but it didn't seem that way to many of as at first. Often, we learned by asking questions, at closed meetings or - most especially - in conversations with our sponsors.

What is the sponsor is unavailable when needed?

It is the whole AA program - not the individual's sponsor - that maintains the newcomer's sobriety. Sponsorship is just the best way we know of introducing a newcomer to that program.

So we have many recourse's when we are unable to contact our sponsors. We can telephone other members; go to an AA meeting; phone or visit the nearest AA office or clubroom for sober alcoholics; read AA books or pamphlets or our magazine, the AA Grapevine, to find answers for almost any problem troubling us at the moment.

May a newcomer have more than one sponsor?

Of course. In fact, a good sponsor sees that the newcomer meets many other seasoned members as soon as possible. The newcomer with more than one sponsor shares in a wide range of experience and hears a great variety of ways to use the AA program. In addition, here is a means of averting the crisis mentioned in the preceding question - it's unlikely that two or more sponsors would all be unavailable at the same time.

May a newcomer change sponsors?

Again, the answer is yes. We are always free to select another sponsor with whom we feel more comfortable, particularly if we believe this member will be more helpful to our growth in AA

If a newcomer has received a thorough course of treatment and indoctrination in an alcoholism program outside AA, will a sponsor still be needed in AA? Is a special approach needed?

The alcoholism programs of government, industry, and other agencies are referring more and more alcoholics to AA. These newcomers usually reach us in a physically dry condition, at a somewhat later stage in recovery than the shaking newcomer of the past. Detoxification is often weeks and even months in the past and the physical compulsion to drink is gone. But the mental obsession with alcohol may still be there and, as AA groups that have welcomed such newcomers generally believe, sponsorship is necessary as soon as possible to help overcome that obsession.

This newcomer may have learned many medical facts about the disease of alcoholism. But learning *about* alcoholism in an institutional setting is one thing, and functioning as a sober alcoholic in a drinking world is quite another, we find. The sponsor is ready to share experience in how to cope with this situation.

Learning about the AA program is not the same as *living* it. Chances are the newcomer has already learned some facts about alcoholism - but has had no experience in using AA as a continuing program of sobriety maintenance. Again the sponsor's personal experience can enable the newcomer to find guidance in applying AA principles to everyday life - just as any other

newcomer does who arrives at A.A.'s doors for help.

Is it ever too late to get a sponsor?

No. An AA who has been in - or around the Fellowship for many years often finds that getting a good sponsor, talking frankly, and *listening* can make the whole program open up as it never did before.

Sponsorship can be the answer for the person who has been able to achieve only interludes of sobriety. Perhaps such a member has been associating with people who stay on the fringes of AA, attend meetings casually, but have not yet truly taken the First Step. This can nourish secret reservations about one's own alcoholism. Or the member may have drifted into the company of others who slip repeatedly. Obviously, it's impossible to learn from them what they haven't learned themselves. For such a person, a sponsor with a firm grounding of sobriety in AA can make all the difference.

Even if we have many dry years behind us, we can often benefit by asking an AA friend to be our sponsor. We may have been feeling discontentment or real emotional pain because we forgot that the AA program offers a whole new way of life, not just freedom from alcohol. With a sponsor's help, we can use the program to the full, change our attitudes and, in the process, come to enjoy our sobriety.

Why Have a Home group?

In a recent letter to a member of the Fellowship, a member of the General Service Office staff referred to the home group as the heartbeat of AA. That made a big impression on me, and I believe that just as surely as we are aware of, sensitive to, and in need of our own heartbeat, each of us needs a home group.

It all began in the home group, didn't it? Not all of us readily identified that mysterious group of people who were trying to help us get sober as our home group. In fact, I am painfully aware that the commitment to become part of anything escapes many in the early stages of recovery.

Most members of the Fellowship will never have the rewarding experience of attending a General Service Conference. Only a few are even touched by our area assemblies, state and national conventions, and other functions which bring members together from many home groups. Even the district functions might be attended by only a small portion of the membership of the groups involved. To many, their only AA is the home group. If this is so, what should the home group be to the member, and why should a member have a home group?

When we took those first faltering steps to recovery, many of us would have stumbled and fallen once again is we had to make what was to be a miraculous change by ourselves. In my case, the first rays of hope came from those sometimes loving, sometimes cantankerous old geezers who sat around the table in my hometown. A long time before I believed, or even heard, what they told me, I began thinking there might be a chance simply because I thought if they could do it, so could I.

The first slogans I heard came from them. Later, when I heard the same things from speakers at a convention, I thought it was so wise; but it was months before I realised that I first heard those thoughts from the fat little guy who I thought was so windy and who eventually became my sponsor. In fact,

after I got into service work, I thought I needed to go to conventions, assemblies, and Forums to get my batteries recharged because things were so dull and routine in my home group.

Now I know that it's not the wonderful people I've met from throughout these great lands who have helped keep me sober most of the time, but those wonderful people sitting around the table in my hometown who loved me when I could not love, who waited for me to quit lying, who tolerated me when I would be a part of nothing, and who never asked me to leave when I was obnoxious. Because of their love and patience, I was able finally to get outside of myself and make some sort of commitment to the group.

It seems to me that, in the beginning, a home group is all most of us can possibly handle. It's where we first find a sponsor, where someone first sees that we get a Big Book, where we first see the Steps on the wall, where we learn again to pray, and where we first begin to recover. (Remember the heartbeat?) But most of all, because of the trust that develops through the meetings of a home group, it is where we might first begin to care about someone else so that we might eventually begin to love again, both in AA and among our friends and family.

It is where we first learn to take responsibility so that we might eventually take responsibility for our lives. In my case, that began with the simple chore of cleaning out ashtrays. (How wise that they knew I could do no more!). It was there we learned to do Twelfth Step work so that we could eventually pass on to others what was so freely given to us, thereby assuring the very future and survival of the Fellowship. It was there that someone began answering the questions about all the mysteries of what makes the whole thing work.

Oh yes, the home group is the heartbeat of the Fellowship. There are many reasons why the groups need each and every member running through their life veins. But most important, we need our home groups. That's where it all began, and it's where it will all end for us. Yes, all of us have also had the job of burying some of those people who passed the recovery program on to each of us.
This phase of my service to the Fellowship, as Conference delegate, begins to wind down. What will I do now? If I am very, very lucky, those who are doing such a marvellous job of serving the Fellowship in my home group might, just might, allow me to make coffee next week and maybe even talk to a drunk.