

## **AA LITERATURE**

*“We study the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous to strengthen our understanding of compulsive disease. We can identify with many of the situations described therein by substituting the words ‘compulsive debt’ for ‘alcohol’.”*

### **Why Do We Read A.A. Literature?**

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) was the first Twelve-Step program and has been very successful in helping alcoholics recover from their disease. Debtors Anonymous (D.A.) has yet to develop its own literature to the extent A.A. has. So we read A.A. literature to better understand our own compulsive behavior. A.A. literature shows us how A.A. members have used the Twelve Steps for their individual recovery and the Twelve Traditions to develop and protect their Fellowship. We find that these Twelve Traditions are just as crucial to maintaining the D.A. Fellowship.

### **How Do We Use A.A. Literature?**

Without D.A. most of us have found that we are powerless to stop incurring unsecured debt. Many of us were surprised to learn that incurring unsecured debt is a compulsion. By substituting “incurring unsecured debt” for “drinking” and “compulsive debtor” for “alcoholic” in the A.A. literature, we can identify the compulsive, self-destructive patterns described. In the past, many of us may not have seen the connection between ourselves and alcoholics. However, upon surrendering to our powerlessness over unsecured debt, we find we can identify closely with the compulsive behavior of the alcoholic.

In reading A.A. literature, we can see how our compulsive behavior resembles the alcoholic’s drinking behavior. The following are examples of our common experiences:

- Breaking promises not to drink/incur unsecured debt again.
- Trying to fix the symptom rather than the underlying problem, e.g., “consolidating” debt leads to more debt just as “switching drinks” provides the illusion of a cure to the alcoholic.
- Incurring unsecured debt and feeling elated as an alcoholic does when drinking; the later feeling hopeless to find a way out afterward.
- Using credit to feel grown-up and like we are “enough.”
- Like the alcoholic who continues to drink, believing that “this time it will be different,” we continue to incur unsecured debt, believing this time it will work out okay for the better.

- Believing we can handle our problems ourselves.

These are just a handful of the many examples of compulsive behavior illustrated in A.A. literature. We suggest you read the A.A. literature to find similarities that fit your individual situation.

## **What Types of A.A. Literature Do We Use?**

D.A. members find they benefit greatly from most of the A.A. literature available. The main sources of information are *Alcoholics Anonymous*, commonly known as the “Big Book” and *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

The Big Book talks at length about the compulsion and tells many stories of A.A. members and their experiences of recovery. It explains the basic concepts of the Twelve Step program and the spiritual changes necessary to be relieved of our compulsion to incur unsecured debt. *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* takes us through the Twelve Steps of recovery more in detail.

Some specific D.A. issues are addressed in the A.A. literature. For example, on page 79 of the Big Book, we read of a man who owed alimony and thus was in debt to his ex-wife. We read how he wrote a letter to her suggesting what and how he could pay and how he started making payments as a Ninth Step amend.

We also read about work and money issues on pages 120-122 of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. We see that some of the first alcoholics recovering in A.A. had money problems as well as the compulsion of alcoholic drinking. The Twelve Step spiritual recovery program had to be applied to all areas of their lives, not just alcohol. In the same way, we realize we can apply the Twelve Steps to all areas of our lives, not just those involving unsecured debt.

As described on page 82 of the Big Book, a person who has only stopped drinking is like “the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, ‘Don’t see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain’t it grand the wind stopped blowing.’” This story reminds us that sobriety/abstinence is just the beginning. We see that we must have a spiritual change if we want to be relieved of our desire to incur unsecured debt.

D.A. members can also benefit from other A.A. literature such as *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Pass It On*, and *Doctor Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, which

relate the history of A.A. We have found that reading about the history of A.A. and its Twelve Traditions can help us in our own D.A. program.

## **What Other Types of Literature Do We Use in D.A.?**

D.A. does not endorse any literature outside of its own General Service Conference approved literature. A better understanding of why D.A. doesn't endorse any other literature can be found by reading the chapter on A.A.'s Tradition Six ("An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or our outside enterprise, lest problems of property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.") in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. However, our program encourages the use of outside sources.

## **Where Can You Get A.A. Literature?**

You can purchase A.A. literature at some D.A. meetings. Literature may also be obtained from local open meetings of A.A. Each meeting may differ in what literature it carries. If it is not available there, A.A. has local area Intergroups all over the country and in many places abroad. Check your local directory for their phone number.



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