Hello Central

Los Angeles A.A. Central Office Magazine

冬天 2018

IN THIS ISSUE

CHECK OUT
HOLIDAY PARTIES
Christmas/Hanukkah/New Years Eve
Staying Sober No Matter What

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NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS
THAT SUPPORT RECOVERY

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THE LACOAA SPEAKER LIST
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For Fun & For Free
**Introduction** - Hello from Hello Central! I am so honored to be the co-editor for the Winter issue! I have been so blessed to be able to use my gifts since I got sober, and honored to be a part of this creative process! As the holidays come around, I have so many mixed feelings about it all. The celebrations, the feelings of family and belonging along with the notion that sobriety can be a time of reflection, intention, and the clarity that sobriety brings to me and how I see the world. I know that the holidays can be a hard time for the normies and those in sobriety alike. I was told that these times of year are like any other. Statistically, it is a time of year when relapse is known to be more frequent. I have been told it is the AA Bermuda Triangle. A relapse trifecta - more people try to get sober at the beginning of the year than any other time of the year - times for rebirth and regrowth, or time for new beginnings. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

In these articles we can be encouraged and inspired to bring our sobriety right into the new year with new energy and perspective. We have a choice. For me, sobriety has given that back to me. I hope you enjoy this issue as we have enjoyed putting it together and we hope you add this to your toolbox and come back to it whenever you feel you need to be reminded of what your sobriety means to you. Peace and blessings to you and yours!

- MJ B. - Co-Editor, Hello Central, pronouns: they/them/theirs

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L.A. Central Office Manager’s Corner

LACOAA’s office manager takes a moment to discuss how the Traditions influence her work at Central Office.

From the chapter on Tradition 12 in the book 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, “Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public”.

As a ‘special worker’, the A.A. Traditions are my go-to reference. When calls come in asking for Central Office’s official position, I cite the Traditions. Often the answer is Tradition 4, which states each group is autonomous. I tell the caller each meeting is self-managing, self-supporting and just one person willing to speaking up about a Tradition can inspire decision making that will be for the group’s ‘common welfare’.

In accordance with Tradition 7, Los Angeles Central Office does not accept money from outside our fellowship. For example, Central Office receives giving campaign funds from verified member-contributors only. With more than 80% of support coming from members and A.A. groups, L.A.C.O. is self-supporting primarily through the contributions of its membership.

“Tradition 4 states that each group is autonomous.”

Formed and funded by A.A. groups, your Central Office handles the business and services individual meetings are ill equipped to manage on their own, such as maintaining lacoaa.org and offering low-cost A.A. literature. Its most important work by far is operating as a call center, where volunteers answer calls 365 days a year.

L.A.C.O. serves you and your meetings by helping to make 12 Step work possible. Insure your meeting has a voice at Intergroup; elect a Central Service Representative today.

Another great A.A. tradition is we are there for each other. During this winter season, I wish you joy and staying close with A.A. family – the gift of having each other can carry us through the holidays and into the New Year, one day at a time.

- Kate M. manager@lacoaa.org

“Hello, Central?”

Central office needs your help as a phone volunteer. You can make a positive difference in the community by directing callers to local A.A. meetings and much more!

Email us at Volunteer@LACOAA.org
Or call: (323) 986-4343

- Kate M. manager@lacoaa.org
The holidays can be a wonderful time for sober folk to come together & enjoy each others’ company in a drug and alcohol-free environment. But, attending or throwing seasonal soirees can be riddled with pitfalls. So, we asked two sober professional party planners, Craig and Gordon, to share some trade secrets on holiday parties.

Hello Central: Hi, and thanks for joining us. First of all, we’d love to hear any tips you have for newly sober people going to holiday parties.

Gordon: Sometimes holiday parties can be a real trigger, so load up on meetings and sober activities. I would suggest that you invite a sober plus one. Craig: Right, and make sure you’re not in HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.) Personally, I never let my drink go out of my sight. And if I get uncomfortable with people drinking or drugging around me, I leave and call a sober, supportive friend.

Hello Central: What are the major pitfalls of people planning for a sober holiday?

Gordon: Thinking no one will show up. (laughs) It’s best to just plan the party and the ones who show up are meant to be there. Craig: First, know your budget. Don’t try to be a big shot and spend more than you can afford. Also, don’t over-plan activities or performances, as the best things will probably happen naturally.

Hello Central: What is the best time of day to throw a sober party?

Craig: Ideally not during a meal time (less pressure & expectations), but if you are planning on providing food, you might make it a potluck. Also, don’t be afraid to host a party on the actual holiday, because there are plenty of people who have nowhere to go and they will be very grateful to have a safe loving place to attend & not be alone.

Hello Central: How can your party best accommodate drinkers and sobers alike?

Craig: I would inform all invitees in advance that it will be a “Mixed Party” of recovery folks and others. And, if you serve alcohol, consider having it in a different location/room than the non-alcoholic beverages. Gordon: If you’re ok with having alcohol around for those who drink, buy a few for them and if there’s any left over, pour it out during cleanup, or send it home with a drinker.

Hello Central: What are your beverages suggestions for sober holiday events?

Gordon: I like to serve a premixed “mock-tail”, like fruit punch mixed with energy drinks, ginger ale and lemonade, which makes a great celebratory punch. Craig: 100% NOT Martinelli’s Sparkling Cider! Try something fun and different. Flavored sektzer water is popular now, and have sodas with and without sugar; with caffeine and without; and lots of flat water. Don’t forget about ice & chill tubs!

Hello Central: Finally, what are the do’s & don’t for planning a sober holiday party?

Craig: Lighting & Music really help create a comfortable, fun & memorable environment. Don’t be afraid to ask for help from people prior to the party & at the party. Keep an eye out for isolators & introduce them to others, (or delegate to a friend to do so). And let your neighbors know you’re having a party. Gordon: A personal call as an invite is best, and follow it up with a text including all of the info. But, if its a big party use Evite or create a facebook event so all the children know you gonna throw down!

Hello Central: Thank you for your insights guys.
Finding time to relax and unwind isn’t always on our list of priorities. However, it can help our bodies heal, and increases our mental & spiritual well-being.

So, take a moment to silence your electronics.

Close your eyes and meditate.

Soak in a quiet bath.

Listen for love.
This season is a time to turn inward, to reflect on the past year, and to connect with those I hold closest. Some folks go to church for that. I go to AA meetings and yoga and potluck dinners hosted by friends. In any case, the holidays are not worth drinking over. Reach out to someone. I promise there’s another person who feels the same.

An AA with 6 years of sobriety:
This time of year, I always notice that the wine and liquor displays become bigger and more prominent in stores and in advertising. I also receive quite a few bottles from clients, which I give away to colleagues and friends who appreciate good wines but are not alcoholic. As an atheist, I treat all of the holiday celebrations – Thanksgiving, Christmas, Yom Kippur or Ramadhan – as a time to gather with family and friends for the fun of belonging. As a practicing alcoholic, I drank every day, most often to excess. As a sober person, I take the attitude that every day is Christmas and every meal a feast.

An AA with 16 years of sobriety:
I grew up in a non-religious home, but observed early on that the holidays gave everyone free reign to be greedy, gluttonous and drunk. Later on, as I became familiar with astronomy, I grabbed hold of the fact that the winter solstice meant the coming of more light, not less. That was something to celebrate and I celebrated as alcoholics do. What do I do to counter the winter affect, now that I’m sober? I throw myself into helping others. I’m grateful to AA and want to help others learn what I’ve learned.

An AA with 19 years of sobriety:
This time of year, I always notice that the wine and liquor displays become bigger and more prominent in stores and in advertising. I also receive quite a few bottles from clients, which I give away to colleagues and friends who appreciate good wines but are not alcoholic. As an atheist, I treat all of the holiday celebrations – Thanksgiving, Christmas, Yom Kippur or Ramadhan – as a time to gather with family and friends for the fun of belonging. As a practicing alcoholic, I drank every day, most often to excess. As a sober person, I take the attitude that every day is Christmas and every meal a feast.

An AA with 31 years of sobriety:
When I drank, holiday visits home were tense and anxious, because I worried about being found out. Sobriety has restored my ability to enjoy family holiday gatherings nearly as much as I did as a child. My family’s heritage is Irish and Catholic, so this usually involves attending Mass, which I do - not as a believer, but respectfully. But, I disagree with the suggestion that lack of faith makes one vulnerable at Christmastime. With respect to beliefs, I remain a confirmed skeptic, more concerned with truth value than consolation.

An AA with 1 year of sobriety:
I don’t have traumatic memories attached to the holidays, but there is emotional weight. Holidays require me to spend time with family and families are complicated and imbued with history. In my case, holiday drinking was fueled by an urge to escape the family physically, and to escape emotionally from the memories.
Imagine being elected as group secretary. After all of the congratulatory remarks have been made and you’re on your way home, it hits you...one of your duties is to invite speakers out to your meeting! Wait, that’s 52 weeks and 52 different people. Panic begins to set in. You don’t know where to find that many people to invite to come out and share at your group, nor do you know how you’re going to fit such a task into your already laborious schedule. Then you find out that Los Angeles Central Office has a list of women and men who are willing to go share at meetings.

Yes, that’s correct, Los Angeles Central Office (LACO) has made a speaker list available to A.A. groups for several decades. Over time, many changes to the way the lists are handled have occurred. Currently, to obtain a copy of the list, the designated person of the A.A. group (oftentimes the group’s secretary) can request a copy of the list if the meeting is listed in the meeting directory. Once the requester submits a request to speakerlist@lacoaa.org including the name of meeting, physical meeting address, day, and time of the meeting, the Speaker List Coordinator reviews the information. If all checks out, the lists are emailed to the contact person of the meeting. This list is also available to committees responsible for inviting speakers to A.A. conventions and other events. The committee person emails, the name of the event, date(s) and location. Speakers can and are invited to speak anywhere there’s an A.A. event in and outside of the United States of America.

By now you’re probably wondering how to get involved. To become a Speaker on the list, you must be an admitted alcoholic with a minimum of five years of uninterrupted sobriety, and live within the LACO zone map (zone information is in the meeting directory, and can also be verified by calling LACO). A potential speaker must email their name, sobriety date, distance they are willing to travel to speak, and mailing address to the Speaker List mailbox (speakerlist@lacoaa.org). Mailing addresses are for LACO records only and are never shared with anyone. Information of the person requesting to be added to the list is reviewed and forwarded to the speaker list coordinator. So, who’s the Speaker List coordinator? He/She is a sober member of A.A. who has a minimum of three years of sobriety. This person is selected by the Central Service Committee, whose, for a period of two years, sole responsibilities are to maintain the lists by making sure, to the best of his/her ability, that all information on the lists remain current, sends out lists to committees and or groups who have requested them and have emailed all required information to the speaker list mailbox.

In love and service,
Mikki H. LACO Speaker List Coordinator
AA in Japan was started in 1975, however, being a sober Japanese American alcoholic in Japan in the early 90’s was a challenge. With 5 years of sobriety I attended 4-5 meetings a week in the US and suddenly found myself in Gifu, a small city with one Japanese meeting a week which Brian H., a member listed as an international contact led me to. This meeting had 4-6 regular members. I imagined it was similar to what an AA meeting was like in its infancy. There were no Big Books, 12 & 12s or pamphlets. Simply a few drunks using made-up names (in order to be even more anonymous) sitting around a table reading the Preamble, Chapter 3, 5 and the 12 Traditions in Japanese from a thin yellow booklet. There was no sign of sponsorship and I couldn’t effectively speak Japanese anyway. Nevertheless, we shared our weekly problems and guess what? It kept us sober. The language of the heart needs no translation! One alcoholic talking to another alcoholic WORKS!

Shortly after returning to Los Angeles in 1993, I met Toshi Y. who was court ordered to attend AA meetings from multiple DUIs. He had a good command of English, however, even I as a native speaker familiar with words such as searching, fearless, moral, and inventory was not sure what they meant when they were all put together. As we attended meetings together, I spent time with Toshi giving away what was given to me. Thus, the idea to create a Japanese meeting was conceived.

We met another AA, Joe K. who had good command of Japanese and an available location, so the 3 of us endeavored to turn a dream into reality. The Japanese meeting was born!

When we signed up with New York GSO we found out that this was the only registered Japanese meeting in the US, Canada & Mexico!

We meet every Tuesday at 7pm in Gardena. Each week is a different format: Speaker, Book Study, Participation and Step Study.

The meeting now has a good inventory of Japanese literature, which we get directly from Japan JSO, including a monthly subscription to BOX 916 which is the Japanese version of the Grapevine.

We are grateful for God’s Grace and all of the members past and present who have supported and kept the meeting doors open all these years!

Many Blessings - Roy A.
As a new year approaches, we often create a list of goals and resolutions. But, one reason we often fall short of achieving these goals is because our list only includes things we feel we have to do, rather than what we really want to do.

When making new year’s resolutions, make sure to do it with an eye on what’s fun and fulfilling. Investing our time, talents, and energy in something that doesn’t interest us just feels tedious, so try setting a strict “no people pleasing” policy this year.

One of my goals was to feel healthy and energetic, but I resisted returning to L.A.’s gym culture, plus I have two kids at home that require a lot of time and effort. Then, I realized I was using these as excuses to avoid making changes that would set me on a successful path to my goal.

Then, a miracle happened. A friend introduced me to a boot camp studio I had never heard of. After much foot-dragging, I reluctantly accompanied her to a class, and surprisingly, the community there was welcoming, fun, diverse and supportive. The music was horrible, but in a way added to the charm of the low-key homegrown atmosphere, and after a few classes I was hooked.

Soon, I was taking a six-week challenge with my favorite instructor at 5:00 AM, (the only class I could fit into my schedule with the kids) but the ridiculousness of the class-time added to the excitement of my commitment. With a little willingness, I was able to turn something arduous into something fun. I enjoy exercising again and it’s the joy that is helping me stay on track with my goal.

This new year, let’s shift our goals to infuse our resolutions with a sense of fun and excitement. By making this adjustment, 2019 will not only feel successful, but it’ll be infused with joy as our journey unfolds.

- Jesse BH.
For people like me, garland and carols send an icy shiver down my spine, and not the warm and fuzzy variety. Aside from the fact that holiday decorations have never had even an ounce of good taste and most of the music is syrupy crap, the winter holidays are full of nasty memories that threaten to swoop in like the ghost of Jacob Marley and drag me into a Dickensian hell.

I used to use these mind-worms as an excuse to drink and use, but as I’m committed to staying sober, I’ve gotta make peace with them. So, instead of shoving them into a dusty attic, why not grab a mug of cocoa, snuggle up by a roaring Christmas tree fire and I’ll share a few.

As a kid, my wee little head was filled with twinkly fantasies of a white Christmas, which would have truly been miraculous as this was sunny, Southern California. But, reality was never my strong suit, and I dreamed of a perfect Brady Bunch Christmas, but for a few snags:

#1. When I was told that Santa Claus was fake news, which triggered a volcanic rage about the worldwide conspiracy of lies I had been fed since birth...

And, #2. When my well-meaning, devout parents declared a war on Christmas commercialism. So instead of gifts, they gave lofty speeches about the true meaning of blah-blah-blah. Thus, my notions about a happy, traditional holiday were replaced by a pious, holier-than-thou bore.

Later, rum-laced eggnog took the edge off my disappointments, and in time, much stronger stuff kept me numb during “Shistmas,” which lead to some indelible yuletide memories.

“I was told that Santa Claus was fake news”

There are many toasty holiday chestnuts to choose from; like the year I was so broke I had to work as a stripper in Times Square and drunkenly threw up on a customer onstage; then that Dec. 20th when my partner dumped me via e-mail; and finally, that certain Christmas night when I was so high and sleep deprived that I had a psychotic break and broadcast my delusional ramblings about FBI surveillance on Facebook for all the world to see. Good times!

So, you can imagine why the holidays make me hysterical – with laughter! These events, though terrible at the time, seem like something out of a slapstick silent comedy in retrospect. If I ever need proof that I’m an alcoholic, (I seldom do) I think back and laugh out loud - but not out of embarrassment. These events are cock-eyed badges of honor that no longer hold power lover the present.

Mind you, I still have to turn a blind eye to absurdly gaudy holiday decorations and a deaf ear to the latest holiday pop song. My holiday objective is to find joy in a few human kindnessess, until Christmas eve, when I attend a friends’ annual party filled with sober men and women who share a laugh remembering the good-old, bad-old-days, and have a ball in the present without getting altered or wallowing in morbid self-reflection.

I’m not saying that the Christmas blues won’t ever come back, because seasonal depression is a fact for many. But, the ghosts of the past no longer have the power to destroy my Christmas present.

Love,
Pete A.
God, grant us the serenity
To accept the things we cannot change,
Courage to change the things we can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

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Getting Involved

Volunteering for a service commitment at L.A. Central Office is a great way to make a positive difference in the community. Here’s the Fall 2018 lineup of LACOAA’s monthly committees and events that can up your game. Just suit up & show up.

Become the C.S.R. for Your Group!

Bring Your Group’s Voice To L.A. Central Office. Volunteer to be the C.S.R. and Attend your local zone’s meeting. Contact: Volunteer@LACOAA.org

February Intergroup Meeting

Attention CSR’s
Bring Your Group’s Voice!
Call Central Office for Date & Time
(323) 936-4343

Central Service Committee

Meet the Board & Delegates
2nd Thursday of each month
7pm - 10pm. Donuts!
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Archives Committee

(See Page 8)
Meetings held on 4th Sunday of the month from 10am - 2pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005
(no meeting in Dec.)

LAC YPAA

L.A. Co. Young People’s A.A.
Meetings held 1st Sunday of month from 12pm - 2pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Literature Committee

Spread The Message
Meetings held on 1st Tuesday of each month from 7pm - 8:30pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005
Graphic Artists & Writers Needed

Policies & Procedures Committee

The Traditions at Work
Meetings held on 1st Thursday of each month at 7pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Public Information Committee

Reach Out To the Community
Meetings held on 3rd Monday of each month from 7pm - 9:00pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Website Committee

Bring Your Tech Skills
Contact our Web Chair Jake W. at WebTeam@lacoaa.org

A.A. Central Office of Los Angeles
4311 Wilshire Blvd #104, Los Angeles, CA 90010
(323) 936-4343 - www.LACOAA.org
Email us at: staff@LACOAA.org

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