

# The SantaFeAAan

## STAY!

By Kristina F.



My first drink was at 16, when it stopped me from crying over a very difficult event in my life. I understood at that moment why grownups drank. It was for the effect. Eventually, I drank because I loved the taste of booze – my favorite food group. I never considered not drinking once I could do it legally. In fact, alcohol got me over what I thought were much worse problems: bulimia, social anxiety, and depression.

I learned about the disease of alcoholism at a professional conference when I was 26. *“If you’re thinking about drinking when you are not drinking, you are at risk. Most alcoholics can’t imagine a life without it. Over any considerable period of time they get worse, never better.”* Since all this was true for me, I knew I must be alcoholic. But not having any problems in my life – in fact, winning at the game of life – I figured I could just live with the diagnosis and keep going.

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Keeping going meant perfecting the double life where I could sleep with married men, undermine the careers of my rivals, find an acceptable mate (and cheat on him), get my way with hung-over tantrums and glamorous apologies, resent my children for having needs of their own, move, and move again. I avoided all confrontations with scornful judgment, people-pleasing, and gourmet, booze-infused dinner parties.

Keeping going meant obsessing about my physical appearance and criticizing yours. It meant planning my dinners around what I wanted to drink that night. It meant cutting the last client of the day short so I could rush

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## TURNING MY FEAR INTO A TEACHER, BY THOMAS H.

I would like to begin with my gratitude for all the many of our fellowship who took to heart one of our most honored platitudes: Every time I have reached out, the hand of A.A. has been there. I would also say it is my intention to use the words of the people who have helped me. All I have to offer is the wisdom of my teachers.

I've heard several acronyms for the word fear. Failure expected and received, fix everything and recover, false evidence appearing real, forget everything and run. I recently heard an acronym that works for me as a learning tool, as long as I remember to pause and use it. This one is similar in spirit to fix everything and recover. It has both direction and kindness in it. It is: Find, Embrace, Abide, Remember. Find the source of the discomfort in my body,

Embrace it, Abide with as it moves thru me, and Remember.

### Find

Finding the discomfort in my body is usually not difficult. I am the Big Book's "restless, irritable and discontent." I am familiar with that tightening sensation, the feeling in the pit of my stomach, the warmth around my neck. I am learning that when I pause and focus on what I feel now, instead of trying to avoid the feeling, it does something that amazes me. Finding where the sensation of discomfort is in my body connects me with the present moment.

### Embrace

Embracing is hard work for me. I do avoidance well even though it seems to lead me back to where I began. Moving into what is making me uncomfortable, restless, or discontent furthers my



connection to now. It is joining in with the experience at hand instead of avoiding, rejecting, or medicating it.

### Abide

Staying with the feeling and allowing space for the feeling grounds me and allows the feeling to move thru me. Then I can use my energy with the feeling—bringing me more present—instead of using energy to resist. I do my best to drift past labels or judgments, and just abide. Trying to avoid feelings is the root of my addiction.

### Remember

I try to remember that we share the same experiences. I try to remember to be.

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## GIVE IT AWAY TO KEEP IT! LOCAL AA SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Male and female volunteers are needed for county jail meetings. Contact Joe L. at 505-577-7477.

For questions about taking meetings into treatment centers, or to start a new group commitment, call Celia N., District 2 Treatment Chair, 803-429-0628.

AA District 2 (including Santa Fe, Eldorado, Pecos and Madrid) meets at the Friendship Club every second Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Santa Fe Intergroup, the clerical and administrative arm of District 2, meets at 6 p.m. bimonthly on the first Monday at St. John's United Methodist Church. Upcoming meetings are Feb. 5 and April 2.

Write for the *SantaFeAAan!* Email submissions to [santafeaaan@gmail.com](mailto:santafeaaan@gmail.com).



## MY FAMILY AFTERWARDS

BY ANNE M.

I should be online right now, picking a puzzle to send, along with some Mexican cheese, to my nephew across the country who turns 8 this week. It will be a pleasure to pick out a puzzle for him. It will make me miss him and the too-few moments I've spent working puzzles by his side. The cheese is a joke. When I was visiting last year, we took a walk around his neighborhood and we laughed at his newfound fondness for the three-cheese blend marketed as "Mexican cheese." We imagined a mansion made of the stuff where he would love to live.

The 8-year-old is my middle nephew of five, no nieces. None of my nephews have seen me drink. All of them have seen me play with toy trucks, run and throw balls in their yards, visit their schools, and drive them safely to rock climbing gyms, hiking trails and parks. Because I'm sober, my brothers – my nephews' dads – and their wives trust me unconditionally as a babysitter and an aunt. It didn't have to go that way.

As an older sister to my brothers, I was

the scary trailblazer. I introduced my brothers to drinking and drugs. Around that time, our father plunged from his 20-year dry spell in spectacular fashion. Throughout my late adolescence, the only member of my immediate family not experiencing dramatic, dangerous, and regular alcoholic blackouts was my mother. Miraculously, we all survived.

My dad was the first to find AA and he was sober for a few years before I got here. He and I shared about 10 priceless years of healing and bonding before he passed of cancer in 2011. My brothers never embraced AA but so far they are managing their family lives with few, if any, alcoholic consequences. I keep seats ready for them just in case. My relationships with all of my family members have been some of the most fulfilling aspects of my recovery. I am grateful to be a steady and loving daughter to my mom, an ally for my brothers and sisters-in-law, and a loving aunt to those nephews.

The Big Book warns that alcoholism sickens entire families and that as families recover, "all will not be fair weather." (4<sup>th</sup> ed. p.122) For sure, my family went through rough years during and after the pervasive, active alcoholism that plagued us. And none of us are perfect now. But because of AA, I have been able to contribute more healing, love and stability than anyone would have thought possible when I was in my cups. And as a sober woman, I can truly appreciate the beauty and love my family offers to me. To be sure, alcoholism can wreck families. But AA can allow them to heal.

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home for the first drink. And hiring babysitters to care for the kids while I was home.

After 20 years of full flight from reality, now in my third marriage with an abusive drug dealer/body worker/life counselor, I woke up. It seemed that the disease had in fact grown and I was in real trouble. Where I thought I was a hopeless drug addict, the real problem was and always had been alcohol.

I called the hotline in Petaluma, California on September 14, 1998 and went to my first meeting that day. I'd like to say I stayed sober from then on. I got a service commitment and a sponsor, did the steps, made the amends. I couldn't stay sober. I couldn't tell the truth about the relapses and I couldn't stop relapsing. It seemed to me I needed to keep slipping to keep my marriage going. I now know I needed to keep relapsing because I hadn't yet gotten scared enough to stay.

Fortunately, the Higher Power of my 3<sup>rd</sup> Step kept me alive long enough to get desperate (I now know that my life was literally in danger from the marriage I was trying to save) and the day came when I was able to leave the marriage and start truly working a program. Today what that means is I give away everything you give me. If it's faith, I show up to a meeting when I don't want to. If it's courage, I work with another alcoholic. If it's humility, I do service. On December 2, 2017, you gave me 17 years sober. I have a lot to give back – so I'm staying.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Two new AA meetings** have started: A closed AA meeting 6 p.m. Wednesdays at Intergenerational Center, Room 206, Pueblo of Tesuque and a closed women's AA meeting, 10 a.m. Saturdays at the Friendship Club.

Third annual Area 46 **Three Legacies Workshop**, Jan. 27, hosted by Area 46 young people. Potluck breakfast begins at 8 a.m. with a workshop from 9 to 13:30 p.m. at Sheperd of the Valley Church, 1801 Montano Road NW in ABQ. More info at [ypaa@nm-AA.org](mailto:ypaa@nm-AA.org)

**Grapevine writing workshop**, Jan. 27, from 1 - 4 p.m. at Our Lady in the Valley, 2805 Don Felipe Rd SW in ABQ.

District 12's **fundraiser for the 2018 Area 46 Convention** will be from 6:15 to 8:45 p.m. Feb. 24 at the Heights Club, 8250 Marble NE in ABQ.

Maybe you'll want to giddyup to the **Coastal Bend AA Jamboree**, Feb. 2-4 in Corpus Christi, TX. information at [www.cbjamboree.org](http://www.cbjamboree.org).

**International Women's Conference**, Feb. 15-18 in Phoenix, AZ. More information at [www.internationalwomensconference.org](http://www.internationalwomensconference.org).

The 2018 **Area 46 Convention** will be June 1-3 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in ABQ. \$15 registration until April 15 and \$89 rooms with the group code A46 until May 3. More information at [convention2018@nm-aa.org](mailto:convention2018@nm-aa.org) or 917-676-3674 (Laura S.).