

# **Little Rock Plan Gives Prospects Close Attention**

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(Following is another of the reports published from time to time by The AA Grapevine on group methods and techniques. The reports, in addition to correlating information on group activities, show how varied are the methods and techniques followed by different groups in different parts of the country and how policies which might not work in one area or work in another.)

From Little Rock, AR

Greater Little Rock AA was seven years old last March and has helped establish most of the groups within the state. More than five hundred men and women have been initiated into AA through the Little Rock Approach Plan since its creation seven years ago when five men got together and began to use the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, which had just been published.

It is interesting to note that of these men, the founders of the movement here, all are alive and only one ever had a relapse. They are living, walking proof of the statement that "it works."

## **Records Carefully Kept**

The Little Rock Plan was, we believe, the first of its kind in the country. By adhering strictly to the "Plan" hundreds have been brought into AA and because this group has kept accurate records and statistics, we can report that our success is better than the national average of 75%; or to put it another way, our "slip" record is lower than the 25% expected and reported from other groups over the country.

It is not easy to become a member of this group. When a person has expressed a desire to achieve sobriety and has had a sponsor appointed for him, he must leave his work or position for at least two weeks. Usually the prospect is required to spend that entire time within the confines of the club rooms, studying, preparing a case history, meeting and filing assignments laid out by the sponsor.

If, after two weeks, he has discharged his assignments to the satisfaction of his sponsor, he is brought before the executive committee and there his request for membership is presented by his sponsor in his presence. In some instances, because of the peculiarity of the case, he may not be admitted for varying periods as high as six months in some cases. However, if he is deemed eligible by the committee, he is brought before the next meeting, receives a warm welcome, is handed a copy of the "Approach Program" and the 12 Steps.

This is not all, however. We do not simply say, "Now here you are, you have had it all, go your way, and may God bless you." No, we do not cut him off in mid-air, so to speak. We give him a small diary and ask that each day thereafter for 28 days, he record his impressions of the day, any event, whether a happy one or a sad one, and enter therein, "I have not taken a drink this day," and sign his name.

At the end of this period he returns the diary to the club, is again welcomed and is admitted in full membership, the privilege of the ballot and an unrestricted part in the activities of the fellowship. He is then assigned to a squad, given some definite task, and encouraged to work, guided by some older member, with new prospects.

In dealing with the new man, here are other procedures. First of all, in addition to being required to adhere strictly to the assignments required by his sponsor, he serves his apprenticeship in what is known as "The Prospect Squad." Here he learns from a squad leader various phases of the work of AA, mingles with other neophytes, hears their experience and contributes his own. If he needs guidance or advice this is where he gets it, along with other new men seeking the way out.

There is the "slip squad," where the man who has suffered a setback, no matter how severe or how light, must serve from two weeks to six months before he is again recognized as a full fledged member. Often the slippee is assigned tougher, more strenuous assignments than when he first was admitted. Here he discusses the slip freely with those men, who like himself, have "missed the boat" somewhere down the line. He tries to find out why he made the mistake and learns again that "to err is only human" and that a slip in the beginning is not uncommon, certainly not fatal.

The executive committee is comprised of representatives from each squad. The squads meet once a week on nights other than the regular

meeting and transact the actual business of the Fellowship.

We spend much time in planning and executing the new man's graduation from the freshman stage. We carry him slowly and carefully through the "Prospect Squad"; admit him to membership; keep our contacts with him through that critical period, the first month or so, through his daily diary; put him in a squad after he becomes a full member and then if he slips, put him through again (and again if necessary) by way of the "Slip Squad."

Credit is due the State Hospital and Fort Toots, one of the Southwest's largest veterans' hospitals, where we have complete cooperation from the entire staff of doctors and psychiatrists. From Fort Roots especially, come more and more men, having been told by the psychiatrists, "We can do nothing for you, your best bet is AA. It works." The courts of law in Arkansas in general and Little Rock in particular without exception lend a willing ear and helping hand to unfortunates who stand before the court and even so much as intimate that they would like to quit drinking. While we have gone far and progressed much, no small amount of credit is due to all these factors plus the attitude of all business men of this city.

-G.H.R.

## **Actual Pamphlet**

### **- CONTACT -**

A prospect should never be approached unless he personally has requested an interview; the only exception being a person whom you personally know. When a member of the family or the friend of a prospect requests you to contact him, advise that such an unsolicited contact would be unsatisfactory and might result in creating such a prejudice in the mind of the prospect that he would not later request help from AA. In such case, explain the AA Program to the friend or family and secure for them a copy of the Saturday Evening Post Story. Suggest that this be given the prospect and that he be told that if he desires more information about the program, he should contact a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

(If a prospect is a friend, you may handle the contact in a way best suited to the status of your friendship. However, in contacting a friend, it is suggested that the best results can be obtained by merely telling him in an impersonal way, what AA has done for you. Refrain from

creating an impression that you are trying to obtain his acceptance of the program. If he is ready for the program he will evidence it by asking questions.)

If he does not evidence this interest, he is doubtless not ready and you will accomplish no real lasting results by attempting to "sell" the program. You will have done all that is possible by making the program available to him, and the chances are that it will not be long before he will seek you out for more information.)

### **FIRST INTERVIEW**

Your principle objective in the first interview is to establish in the mind of the prospect the fact that you have a sympathetic understanding of his problem and that this understanding springs from the fact that you have yourself had the same problem. You can accomplish this understanding by being certain to tell the prospect your history.

If the prospect is in the throes of a hangover, determine the seriousness of it. If his physical condition requires a drink, first get him to his home or room and then see that he gets a drink. However, the sooner the liquor is cut off the better. Tapering off methods are usually unsuccessful unless rigidly administered to the patient. If he is not in shape to talk, your first problem is to help him to get over his hangover.

When the prospect is in a physical condition to talk, begin by telling him of your alcoholic problem, of your drinking experiences, and try to get him to talk of his. Then tell him something of your experience with AA and explain the program as you see it.

The program discussion should end with the propounding of these questions:

1. Are you in your own mind convinced that you cannot handle your alcohol problems?
2. Are you willing to let a group of fellows who have had the same problems prescribe a course of treatment for you?
3. Are you willing to do ANYTHING to eliminate alcohol entirely from your life?
4. Do you believe in a power greater than the power of man?

If the prospect answers these questions in the affirmative then tell him that AA has the answer to his problem, the same as it gave the answer to your problem and the problems of several thousands others and that you are sure that he would enjoy the book - "Alcoholics Anonymous", which you will leave with him if he is ready to read it.

(If the prospect is sober when first contacted he must be required to get the Book himself, at the office of the Assisting Secretary at the Club Rooms or wherever you designate.)

If the prospect is not certain that he can answer the questions in the affirmative, tell him this is not unusual; but emphasize that it is necessary for him to be able to answer them honestly in the affirmative before the AA Program can be successful. Suggest that his hesitancy indicates he is thinking honestly and being honest both with himself and with you which is the first stone upon which the program is built.

Suggest that he think through what you have told him and meantime read the AA Book. If he accepts the book, emphasize that it must be read and returned in three days.

Handle the interview in such a way that you evidence a sympathetic understanding of his hesitancy to answer the question, yet at the same time be contrarily firm in saying to him that the program will not work successfully until and unless he is able to honestly answer the four basic questions in the affirmative; tell him that he is not quite ready for the program until he can accept wholeheartedly and believe in the affirmative answers; otherwise he might get the idea that the program will pull him through merely by exposure to it. In other words, do not try to sell the program. Let the prospect know that he must want the program above all else; and then if he does, you can assure him that his problem will be solved.

If the prospect is not ready to read the book in three days, do not insist. Tell him to call you in a few days and you will tell him how to secure a copy of the book.

You might ask him if you can have his permission to send other associates to call on him. At the next regular meeting of your squad make a brief report on the case.

Be sure that you have told the prospect your case history and impress on the associates who are asked to call on the prospect that they each must above all else tell the prospect their case histories.

Should the prospect accept the book, impress on him that it must be completed (or returned if prospect secures book from secretary) on schedule. Explain that the reason should be obvious. Unless the solution of his alcoholic problem is sufficiently important to make the reading of the book the next most important step in his life, he has failed to recognize his situation. Also point out that the program is directed toward the building of a new way of life, that we alcoholics have formed many habits that must be replaced by new, constructive habits in order to build this new way of life; that one of the worst habits of an alcoholic is procrastination, and that we start out in the beginning to replace this habit with the habit of doing things when they should be done.

Before leaving the prospect tell him that you are asking him to make only three promises to himself and to you.

1. That he will read and study the book and will complete it within three days.
2. That if he feels that he has to take a drink before he has completed the book he will call you and wait until you get to him before he takes a drink. You in turn promise that you will get to him immediately on receipt of such a call and agree that if after talking to him he has to have a drink you will secure one for him. (Do not ask him not to take a drink.)

Then tell the prospect that you will see him at least once each day while he is reading the book.

If the prospect is up and in condition to be out and about when you locate him and is able to go to the Corresponding Secretary for the book, then it is all right for you to arrange to have the prospect meet you at some place and time mutually convenient each day during the time he is reading the book. (You may find it best to go to the home of the prospect for these interviews.)

In all cases write down your office and home telephone numbers for your prospect. At the next regular meeting of your Squad make a brief report on the case.

The prospect is your particular problem and other associates should not attempt to work with him unless you request it. It is your responsibility to see that the prospect carries out the program as outlined on schedule. No prospect (or any other person) is permitted to attend a regular group meeting until he has completed the Approach Program.

At any time during your association with the prospect, you are to seek advice of other associates, especially your Squad, should a problem arise which you are unable to handle alone.

### **AFTER FIRST INTERVIEW**

Do not fail to arrange your call on the prospect at the end of the three day period assigned to reading the book at a time and place so that you and he will have a full discussion. Always be prompt in all of your appointments as you are requesting the prospect to be.

If the prospect is to call at your home or office at the expiration of the three day period - be available at the appointed time.

Discuss the book with him. Tell him of your reactions to it and listen attentively to his. Encourage him to elaborate on his drinking experiences. Then ask him again whether he can answer the four basic questions in the affirmative. If he still cannot, ask him if he would like to give you his reasons.

If you cannot convince him his reasoning is faulty, tell him that in your opinion he is not quite ready for the program. If he approves, give a full report of the case to one or two associates and ask them to make a call. Await further action until you have had a report from these associates.

If he still cannot truthfully give affirmative answers to the four basic questions, return and tell him to continue to think about the program and feel free to call you at any time in the future when he can honestly see the affirmative answers.

Then at the next regular Squad meeting, make a further report on the case. If, on the other hand, the prospect can answer the four basic questions in the affirmative, he is ready for the first test of his willingness to do ANYTHING to conquer his problem.

Should the prospect be unemployed, you advise him that the approach program requires complete attention to the Program and that he could not handle a job and the Approach Program at the same time. Make no promise as to how long it will take a prospect to complete the Approach Program.

The problem of employment must be dismissed entirely from his mind for the time being. He may protest against this. If so, you should tell him that the program in the beginning will require most of his time and thought, and that a search for employment or actual employment would conflict with the proper execution of his assignments and would be an attempt to solve his two problems at once. Emphasize that a job is of trivial importance so long as he has the problem that is certain to make him jobless. The Alcoholic Problem must first be eliminated. Cite the experience of Associates who have completed the Approach Program while jobless and then have experienced amazing economic progress; and the experiences of prospects who have failed on the program because a job was more important to them than the solution of their one big problem.

Should the prospect be employed, you advise him at this point (following the reading of the book) that the approach Program requires complete attention and that he could not handle a job and the Approach Program at the same time. Therefore, he must obtain a leave of absence from his job - if he desires to continue in his present position - or resign from the job - if he is dissatisfied with it. In case the prospect desires a leave of absence, he must go to his boss and tell him the true reason for the requested leave; that he has discovered he is an alcoholic, that he has an opportunity to conquer the problem through association with a group of alcoholics and that his first treatment is a program usually requiring three or four weeks of his entire time.

If, when this request is made, the boss declines the leave of absence, the prospect is to report the fact to you and you will at once call a special meeting of the Committee to deliberate on what steps must be taken.

The next step, after reading the book, is the case history. The prospect is requested to write a case history of his life in chronological order including his family background, his schooling, his martial experiences, if any; his employment, and a detailed account of his drinking, from the first drink up to the time of his contact with AA.

Explain that this is to be a frank, honest story of his life and that if he wishes, you will be the only one to see this history; that the way in which it is written, whether on typewriter, with pen or pencil; the form, the grammar, etc - all is immaterial, that what you want is for him to get everything down on paper so that it will enable you to help him get his mind free and his past cleaned up so that he can start a new life. Tell him the schedule on this is three days. Ask him to call you if he needs anything special during this time. Also you should see the prospect at least once each day or evening during this period. Also during this period, send other associates around to see the prospect.

When the prospect has finished his history, arrange to meet him so that you can spend at least two hours at a time and place that will enable you both to relax and talk frankly and fully. Have him read the history to you. Try to find his reasons and excuses for drinking and be able to point out to him the fallacies in them. Also look for the real cause of his Alcoholism. Be sure to impress at this time that he is now embarking on a program that will enable him to find a new way of life; that he is undertaking the program for himself alone, and not for his wife, for his family, for his economic good, or for any other reason.

Point out that he can solve no problem until he has solved his alcoholic problem, and that when that is solved he will find the solution to the other problems because his mind will then be freed.

Following the reading of the history, get a pencil and paper and make out a schedule of activity for the prospect for the next seven days, but give the schedule to the prospect one day at a time. Emphasize to the prospect that he must report each day to you on the results of that day's work and to receive schedule for the succeeding day. Set a definite time and place for prospect to meet you each day.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**First** - Make a list of his creditors. Have the prospect see the local creditors and explain to the creditors that he has found that he is an alcoholic; that he has been introduced to the Alcoholics Anonymous program and has undertaken to follow it, that he is sorry he has not paid his bill, that he is first going to get started on the treatment for his alcoholism and then obtain a job. He will return and discuss a plan for payment of the bill just as soon as he has completed the entrance program and obtained employment.

**Second** - If the prospect has creditors outside the city have him write them and explain the situation in the manner outlined for the personal credit contacts 'above'.

**Third** - Make a list of all former employers for whom the prospect has worked during the time of his abnormal drinking. Have him see each one located in Little Rock and write those located outside of Little Rock. In either the personal calls or the letters it should be explained that he has discovered he is an alcoholic, that he has found the AA Program and is undertaking to follow it, and is putting the first steps into practice by coming around (or writing) to say he is sorry for the fact that he was drinking excessively while working for him, etc.

Do not fail to emphasize to the prospect that he must in every letter or interview say that he is not looking for employment at this time. He must stat that he is not ready for employment and intends to devote is efforts to a recovery from alcoholism until such time as his progress is satisfactory to the AA group.

**Fourth** - Make a list of all people to whom the prospect owes apologies and/or against whom he holds resentments or dislikes.

**Fifth** - Make a list of old friends (not drinking acquaintances) with whom the prospect has not had very close contact in recent months due to his drinking, but with whom the prospect would again like to be on friendly terms. (In the list of assignments have the prospect see at least one of these each day.)

**Sixth** - Give the prospect a list of names, addresses, etc., of members of the group and ask him to see at least one member of the group each day and discuss with him for a few minutes his progress, troubles, etc. Out of the foregoing information and such other necessary clean-up steps as the prospect's history and your discussion with him indicates advisable, give the prospect enough assignments each day to keep him busy that day and continue to do this until completed. Seventh - Interspersed with other assignments for the second week should be the following lectures which should be taken only in this order:

- 1st day- "There is a Solution"
- 2nd day- "More about Alcoholics"
- 3rd day- "How it Works"
- 4th day- "Into Action";

5th day- "Working With Others"

6th day- "A Vision for you".

The associates who will give the foregoing lectures will be assigned by the Committee.

Have him report to you once each day so that you can check over his list of assignments, give him any helpful suggestions and so forth. This is the time when you have the opportunity to do your greatest service. The ultimate success and the solution of the prospect's problem depends much on the sincerity with which you take the time daily to encourage the prospect to "do the best you can this day".

If you are not sincere and helpful to the prospect you can not expect him with a brain befogged by alcohol, to get the habits upon which the success of this program depends. Slips can be traced almost always to the failure of the prospect during the first thirty days to get his mind entirely clear of old troubles and of doing something about the program each day on schedule.

**Eighth** - When the prospect has seen all of his creditors (or written them), his boss and ex-bosses, and has made his apologies, ask him if he has talked the program over fully with his wife; if he has had an honest heart-to-heart talk with her and made all possible amends to her. If he has not, suggest that he do that immediately, and that from then on he should talk over his progress on the program daily with her so that she can begin to understand fully the program and will begin to know that she has a part in the program. (It is desired that the wife read the book.)

**Ninth** - He is then ready to select some minister, priest, rabbi, and or practitioner and go to him for an interview, explain that it is not necessary for him to join a church and that he may tell the clergyman that he is not ready to join a church. The interview with the minister is for the purpose of a "confession" and the assurance a minister can give that God, as the prospect understands Him, is forgiving. He should read his case history to the minister, should explain in detail his problem, giving his understanding of AA and tell the minister what he is doing in putting the program in effect. He must go to the limit (beyond his case history) and confess every wrongdoing to the minister so that his heart and mind will be completely cleaned out.

Following the fulfillment of the foregoing steps, you should arrange to submit your prospect to the Committee at the next group meeting.

The Committee may make any suggestions it thinks necessary, and may make some additional assignments.

Or, as is usually the case, the Committee may approve the Squad recommendation and bring the prospect before the group for vote on admittance. With admittance, the prospect is a Junior Member until he has attended twelve consecutive weekly meetings of the group, then he is a full member.

This Approach Program should be available and of easy access at all times to the associate. Do not hesitate to refer to it at any time during work on a prospect. If it is necessary to refer to it in the prospect's presence be sure to do so rather than make any mistakes. Above all study this program and put it into effect - you will find that if you follow it to the letter you will be successful in handling your prospect.