

Twelve Step Meeting—Step Two

Recovery School Students

Jeffrey has entered the room
"workingsobriety.com"
s.k_011 has entered the room
"workingsobriety.com"
s.k_011: is anyone in here? just want to see if
i made it in right?
Andrew has entered the room
"workingsobriety.com"
austinm62 has entered the room
"workingsobriety.com"
austinm62: Am I in the right place?
s.k_011: I think so I was not sure either
Andrew: yeah according to Jeffrey's email this
is the right place
austinm62: k
s.k_011: ok
austinm62: whats up with noone showing up?
s.k_011: yeah it was just us three last time
aren't there suppose to be a couple more
people
Andrew: I don't know, almost noone replied to
any of my emails when I was trying to set up
the first meeting
Andrew: That's why it took so long to get
going
Andrew: there are 6 or 8 people altogether
austinm62: yeah, i guess 3 is better than 0
Andrew: guess so
s.k_011: yeah
s.k_011: whats the step/topic tonight?
Andrew: We have yet to do Steps 2 and 12

During the course of arranging these on
line meetings, the procedure for
entering the chat room was changed
due to technical difficulties. Note how
the initial discussion moves immediately
to the most important questions of the
moment: first, whether this chat room is
the right place to meet, and second, an
examination of who is showing up. This
sensitivity to process exemplifies one of
the major changes that occurs in
recovery from addiction. The "elephant
in the living room" becomes the topic of
conversation, rather than the source of
denial.

Note also the rapid move towards
acceptance, led by Austin, who not
coincidentally is the chair of the
meeting.

Journal of Groups in Addiction & Recovery, Vol. 2(2–4), 2007

Available online at <http://jgar.haworthpress.com>

© 2007 by The Haworth Press. All rights reserved.

doi: 10.1080/15560350802199504

s.k.011: oh ok cool
Andrew: It's Austin's call as chair for this week
austinm62: oh I didn't realize I was chairing sorry
austinm62: just thought I was organizing, lol
Andrew: oh hah no prob, if you want to chair you can
Andrew: not too much to do
austinm62: Ok well lets get started.
s.k.011: do you think anyone else is coming
austinm62: If they come we'll fill them in when they get here
s.k.011: sounds good
austinm62: we all know the rules and formalities, so the topic for this week is step 2 and 12. Would anyone like to start?
Andrew: should we do both or just one or the other? austinm62: well, we can do both but if we have to choose just do 2nd step
s.k.011: we could do one and then the other if there is time
austinm62: sure lets do that
austinm62: Ok so step 2 we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity
austinm62: My name is austin and Im an addict
s.k.011: hi austin
Andrew: Hi Austin
austinm62: this is a wierd step for me being that I currently identify as an athiest
austinm62: So I guess i'll first go into my history with step 2
austinm62: I came into the program as an athiest
austinm62: I felt tremendous pressure to beleive in some form of higher power when I was in treatment
austinm62: the counselors and my sponsor kept telling me to fake until I make it
austinm62: So I did and with time my life got better
austinm62: at the time I attributed the positive phemonena occuring in my life to God

The position of authority that the meeting chair holds is supported by the members of the meeting. Unlike environments characterized by capricious exercise of authority, the environment of recovery supports authority that is mutually negotiated at all times. Andrew and Austin model this negotiation in exemplary fashion. Lol=laugh out loud
The question of whether anyone else is coming may refer to the late entrance of Vijay at the last meeting.

Note again the negotiation around the meeting topic (Step 2 and/or 12); how each member voices their opinion and then authorizes the chair to make the decision. This process is consistent with the understanding of the group having its own Higher Power determined by the group conscience according to the second of the Twelve Traditions of AA.

Recognizing the absence of a benevolent Higher Power during the active phase of addiction may potentiate finding a Higher Power during recovery. The slogan "fake it until you make it" opens up the possibility of seeing evidence of a Higher Power. Austin articulately describes an operational definition of Higher Power: that to which he can attribute the positive phenomena in his life. Moving towards that Higher Power then leads to positive changes. However, even many people in recovery in Twelve Step programs confuse the spirituality of these programs with

austinm62: This started a new phase in my recovery where I attempted to identify and re-negotiate my personality to fit with the conception of god

austinm62: It was a struggle from day one and i never really became comfortable being a "believer".

austinm62: I always felt more or less alienated by the spiritual aspects of the program austinm62: I eventually started to realize that no matter how hard I tried to believe, or even forced myself to believe, that I was just trying to shove a square peg in a round hole

austinm62: I am and probably will always be an atheist

austinm62: This realization really put my program into serious doubt

austinm62: "How can I remain a member of a 12-step group and be an atheist?"

austinm62: "How can I talk to my sponsor about this without him trying to convert me again?"

austinm62: I eventually stopped going to the meetings I had been because I felt too much spiritual and religious pressure to believe as they did.

austinm62: I left AA and started going to a local NA meeting

austinm62: there I met a sponsor who also identified as an atheist

austinm62: This actually had nothing to do with NA in general, just a coincidence

austinm62: Anyways, he helped me to redefine what a higher power can be

austinm62: and made me feel as though it is ok to be an atheist and be in a 12-step program

austinm62: I started at that point to identify principles and ultimately the power of the group as my higher power

austinm62: This is where I more or less stand on my

higher power beliefs today

austinm62: An additional note on step 2...

austinm62: Restore to sanity is a crucial portion of step 2

a religion which demands belief in a specific God.

The process of "carrying the message of recovery" (see the Step Twelve meeting later in this book) is also frequently confused with religious evangelism or conversion. In fact, many alcoholics and addicts in recovery do not believe in a traditional god, and have established meetings for atheists and agnostics (AAAA-Atheists and Agnostics in AA).

Actually, the oral tradition in Twelve Step programs states that "my higher power may get you drunk."

Here Austin describes a common path to defining a higher power as the support of a loving group.

Interesting slip, "not" for "note"

Coming to believe in a higher power may facilitate the admission that one's addictive behavior is a form of insanity,

austinm62: If we use the 12-step pop-definition, insanity is trying the same thing over and over again, expecting different results

austinm62: That definitely categorized my life, in fact it still does from time to time today.

austinm62: I don't know if I give this definition the ultimate definition of insanity but the idea behind the label is fitting

austinm62: When I work on my recovery, I am making conscious efforts to break negative cycles of behavior, both substance related behaviors and many other lifestyle behaviors that leave me in a negative place.

austinm62: Well, I've been sharing too long, so thanks.

Andrew: Thanks Austin

s.k.011: thanks austin

Andrew: !

austinm62: Hi Andrew

s.k.011: Hi Andrew

Andrew: I can definitely relate to feeling some kind of pressure to get a higher power during treatment

Andrew: I was raised Catholic, and in fact I went to Easter mass today with my family, but I think that hindered my belief in a higher power

Andrew: I went to a Catholic high school and resented the strict religious point of view

Andrew: so when I started treatment and meetings, these steps were a little unnerving to see

Andrew: (2 and 3 and 11)

Andrew: but one of the huge reliefs I found was that not only can it be a higher power of my understanding, but I don't even have to put a definition or label on it

Andrew: I still held, and still hold, some beliefs from my Christian upbringing, but it has evolved so much

Andrew: And since I was definitely living an insane life and I saw so many people in the meetings were doing much better thanks to a higher power, I started praying and believing in some higher power, which I still can't and don't define or label

and that being restored to sanity is a process, not an event.

Ironically, after sharing these important thoughts on the second step, Austin reveals some possible shame about the length of his comments. He then recognizes Andrew, who volunteers to share next.

Andrew continues the theme of confusing the spiritual concept of a higher power with the religious concept of God, in his case, his understanding of a Catholic God.

Sometimes, the process of

Andrew: And one final point, "came to believe" is definitely true for me, it was certainly a process rather than a sudden experience or decision, and it's something I still have occasional doubts about, but my reliance on my higher power keeps growing

Andrew: Thanks for listening, I'll pass

austinm62: thanks andrew

s.k.011: thanks andrew

s.k.011: !

Andrew: Hi Stef

austinm62: hi stef s.k.011: My name is stef i am an alcoholic an addict

s.k.011: I was raised believing in the christian god and going to a non denominational church

s.k.011: as i started to use drugs and alcohol i didn't really care about "god" I blamed a lot of my problems s.k.011: on god

s.k.011: Once I came into the program and saw the steps that had god in them, I also saw as we understood

s.k.011: I had mentioned in meetings that I was unsure of what god was, some people kind of pressured the religious god and others shared that it was as you understand and came to believe

s.k.011: I do not have a label on my god either. I do believe in god. And since I have been praying it has made a difference in my life

s.k.011: Though as andrew mentioned my understanding of god is always growing. I do not put a label cause I am always open to other peoples beliefs and opinions

s.k.011: I do not know exactly who my god or higher power is but i know that there is something out there and when i pray it helps

s.k.011: and like you said andrew "came to" it is a process for me not a instant decision

s.k.011: but the other part of step 2 "restore us to sanity" I am definitely alot more sane then i was when i was using and even more then when i was first getting sober

s.k.011: I do not think i will ever be completely sane but i do know that the program and god has helped restore me to some sanity.

recovery results in a changed attitude about religion. Prayer comes to mean a process of asking for help rather than complying with a formula.

Here we find an illustration of group conscience at work. No one member of the group makes a decision on behalf of the group to end the discussion. Austin notes that the group has the option of continuing discussion on Step Twelve or ending. Another group conscience is sought and accomplished. Further decisions are discussed and negotiated about contacting other members and setting up leadership and schedule for the next meeting.

s.k.011: Though I can still have many insane moments in my life
s.k.011: well thank you for listening and sharing. I will pass with that
Andrew: Thanks Stef
austinm62: thanks stef
austinm62: Does anyone want to add anything else on step 2? I personally am done with this topic
s.k.011: nope i am done thanks
Andrew: No, I'm done too, thanks
austinm62: Well, we only have 15 mins left for step 12 if we're going to talk about that topic. Do you think we should end now or have a very short discussion of step 12?
s.k.011: doesn't matter to me whatever you guys think
Andrew: I think we should wait because we might be able to get a better turnout, what do you think?
austinm62: Yeah that sounds good
s.k.011: yeah i agree
austinm62: Stef you want to email everyone this week?
austinm62: Maybe chair next time?
s.k.011: sure but i do not have anyones email adress
s.k.011: would you want to email them to me by any chance?
austinm62: Did you save any of the emails?
Andrew: I can email them to you
s.k.011: um possibly
Andrew: I have one more to add anyway
s.k.011: ok that would be really cool if you could andrew?
austinm62: ok cool
s.k.011: so next sunday this time good??
austinm62: Next sunday same time
Andrew: sounds good
austinm62: good for me
s.k.011: alright then i will start emailing once i get the list of adresses =)
austinm62: Ok, well thanks for coming andrew and stef, see you both next week
s.k.011: So see you guys next week then?
Andrew: You too, good night all.
austinm62: good night\
s.k.011: thanks! good night and have a good week
austinm62 has left the room (logged out)
s.k.011: see ya on sunday
Andrew has left the room (logged out)
s.k.011: how do you log out
s.k.011: nevermind stupid question
s.k.011 has left the room (logged out)

Recovering addicts often use other people to speak on behalf of a power greater than themselves, usually being careful not to make one person into a Higher Power, but relying on a group conscience.

Copyright of *Journal of Groups in Addiction & Recovery* is the property of Haworth Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.