

The Meaning of “I Am Responsible.”

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Aloha Kakou. My name is Cheryl and I am an alcoholic. I am truly honored to be serving as the Panel 65 Delegate for Area 17, Hawaii. I serve on the Corrections committee and the committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums at the General Service Conference. My topic is ‘The Meaning of “I am Responsible.”’ I started with a little research on the origin of the phrase. I ‘googled it’ and I’m happy to say the AA website, www.aa.org, was the first site listed. The history of the Responsibility Statement is one of many questions addressed in ‘Frequently Asked Questions about AA History’ found under the Archives and History tab. The Responsibility Statement – “I am responsible – when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that: I am responsible,” was first introduced to the Fellowship of A.A. in July 1965 to a crowd of 10,000 gathered at the 30th Anniversary Convention in Toronto. It was written by a former A.A. trustee, Al S.

In the souvenir book for the 1965 Convention, Dr. Jack Norris writes:

“...We must remember that A.A. will continue strong only so long as each of us freely and happily gives it away to another person, only as each of us takes our fair share of responsibility for sponsorship of those who still suffer, for the growth and integrity of our Group, for our Intergroup activities, and for A.A. as a whole. It is in taking responsibility that real freedom and the enduring satisfactions of life are found. AA has given us the power to choose – to drink or not to drink – and in doing so has given us the freedom to be responsible for ourselves. As we become responsible for ourselves, we are free to be responsible for our share in A.A., and unless we happily accept this responsibility we lose A.A. Strange, isn’t it?”

I am reminded of an area assembly where a long timer reminded us the statement is “**I** am responsible, not **you** are responsible. He was concerned that most of the discussion that weekend was about what ‘you’ and ‘they’ were going to do for ‘me’ and ‘us’. Let’s keep in mind that **I** am **you** and **we** are **they**. So, with the ‘we’ version, “we are responsible when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, we want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that, we are responsible.” We are **all** responsible for:

- Reaching out to the newcomer and welcoming them, offering phone numbers and inviting them to the ‘meeting after the meeting.’
 - Participating in our home group and volunteering for service positions that need filling.
 - Sponsoring other A.A. members and sharing the importance of our twelfth step work and unity.
 - ‘Walking the talk’ and ‘living’ our primary purpose.
 - Supporting our Intergroups or Central Offices – often the first contact a potential member, a suffering alcoholic, has with A.A.
 - Generously contributing to the Seventh Tradition and ensuring our home group contributes to all portions of the pie chart – Intergroup, District, Area and GSO.
- Without our support:

- Phones would go unanswered at Intergroup/Central Offices.
- The vital connection between AA members, home groups, districts, area and the General Service Office would be lost.
- AA as a whole would suffer. Without the General Service Office, we wouldn't have our literature or the translations of the Big Book into 68 languages (with more on the way) and other literature in about 90 languages. The work of GSO reaches out our collective hands to suffering alcoholics all over the world.
- Those of us in general service are responsible for sharing our experiences with enthusiasm to help spark interest in those who have not yet discovered the magical feeling of unity that comes from working with others for a common purpose.

During the mid '60's there was an emphasis put on the responsibility of the fellowship as a whole to work together. This followed articles in *Harper's* and *Atlantic* magazines which were critical of AA. Bill W. urged unity and said, in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* 'The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our Society has.' 'The Declaration of Unity' was written for the A.A.'s 35th Anniversary International Convention in 1970. It reads 'This we owe to A.A.'s future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.'

Alcoholics Anonymous has literally saved my life. And, even better, you have shown me how to live. I will never forget my first area assembly when we joined hands to pray before lunch. I looked around and though we looked different – tall, short, men, women, yellow, blue and green in color, I could feel the magic of the unity and love in that circle and I got 'chicken skin.' I have a life today that is filled with love, light and laughter and I will be forever grateful. In closing, I want to say A.A. has saved my life – how could I not give back? How about you?