

Area 68, AA-SWTA District 2 Newsletter

February 2023

Hello A A's. It looks like February is getting kicked off with a bang. I recently received a note from our delegate, Barbara, that the chair of the General Service Board in New York has resigned. Her name is Linda Chezem, and she is a class A trustee [nonalcoholic], and at this time there is no news as to the why of her resignation but as with all servants of this great spiritual movement called AA, she deserves our heartfelt prayers. If and when there is any news on this situation, like the ineffective reporter that I am, I will probably forget to tell you and shift responsibility on to others who pay attention and take better notes than I. In the interim the GSB chair position will be filled by our regional trustee Jimmy Dean as per his position as First Vice Chair of the GSB and a special meeting of the board held last week. Jimmy's service position is up in April of this year so he will not continue as Chairman of the General Service Board. That last thought and the new year recalls the Spirit of Rotation in our service structure. I believe the calling to serve in governing or political bodies comes from a place of humility in the beginning.

Unfortunately, it is common for one to begin to think that "if I don't do it, no one else will" or "no one else can do this job correctly, so I need to stay in the position." Both statements can appear to come from a place of genuine concern for the overall good. As with any position of responsibility it is our duty to incur the challenge of grooming the next generation. It has been a little over a year, but I still remember the feeling of elation at being elected DCM and thinking what a big deal it was [I was]. I was not groomed for this nor prepared for what was to come but thank God that I have been surrounded by wonderful, service minded people that are always thinking ahead and doing what is best for District 2 and AA at large. It is the ultimate responsibility of one in a service position to allow and encourage those about him to be fully engaged in the service process. Sponsorship has taught me much about service and vice versa. As a sponsor, my wish is to see others grow into their full potential as a sponsor and a mentor to others. Maybe there should be term limits on sponsorship. I can hear the collective "moan" from here! I am joking, of course! That decision is for each individual to decide for themselves but in service/governing positions it is just as important vacate the position, when our term is up as it is to serve that position with humble diligence, lest we become tyrants or politicians, only serving our own ends.

History books are filled with stories of people that abused their service positions. I believe that most of them initially stood for the position out of a sense of civic duty and eventually became corrupted. I work in the technical and engineering trades and know without doubt that everything must be maintained to some extent lest it become corrupted. With us AA's it is a matter of the constant thought of God and others and how we might be of service to them that keeps the corruption at bay. We understand this dilemma better than most since we are constantly aware of a bigger and badder wolf at our doors. There is a time for everything in life, to plant and sow, sing, laugh, cry, and a time to move on. There are plenty of service positions to be explored at group, district, and area level. Letting go does not mean stepping out of the game, only stepping through our fears, and learning something new.

Speaking of letting go, as we let 2022 go and embrace 23 the Area 68 calendar is taking shape. We just completed a CFC conference in San Antonio hosted by District 16 and upcoming in April is the Area assembly in Marble Falls and following soon after that will be the District 2 picnic. In August, also here in District 2 will be the PI/CPC workshop and there will be plenty of service opportunities for interested parties. I do not know about you, but I am excited about this new year and am looking forward to serving. I looked at the Area 68 website to get a fresh look at this year's events and it did not show anything prior to the summer workshop in Brownwood. It could just be my navigation skills, or lack of. The point is that there is plenty to do this year, and new and challenging obstacles to face. I will not go into the details in this note but we, as a team, will be facing these obstacles together this year. So, keep your boots on Buckaroos, there is still plenty of work yet to do.

Humbly Yours in Love and Service
George Thomas

Area 68 District 2 DCM

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THIS ISSUE WILL FOCUS ON ALCOHOL AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Which Mental Disorder Is Most Commonly Comorbid With Alcoholism?

People with substance abuse disorders often become addicted when they attempt to self-medicate. Some get addicted to drugs or alcohol after suffering a severe physical injury. Others are prescribed anti-anxiety medications, become addicted and turn to street drugs when their doctor stops writing prescriptions. Unfortunately, since alcohol is the easiest drug to obtain, it is the most abused substance used by individuals seeking relief from mental health problems.

According to the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#), three mental disorders most commonly comorbid with alcoholism are major depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety disorder. Less frequently co-diagnosed with alcoholism is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dependent personality disorder and conduct disorder.

Alcohol and Depression

It seems counterintuitive to abuse alcohol when you feel depressed. A nervous system depressant that is rapidly absorbed by the body, alcohol reaches the brain within minutes of taking one drink. As soon as [alcohol interacts with certain brain receptors](#), a neurotransmitter called dopamine starts flooding the brain.

Dopamine is linked to feelings of euphoria, pleasure and improved mood. When a depressed person drinks alcohol, they feel temporary relief from depression and sadness. However, after intoxication wanes,

their depression comes roaring back. In addition, alcoholism develops rapidly as the brain demands regular surges of dopamine and euphoria. When this demand is not met, the person experiences withdrawal symptoms, such as worsening depression, anxiety and flu-like body pain.

Alcohol and Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder makes people cycle through “down” moods and “up” moods. Bipolar depression and bipolar mania are much more severe than depression or anxiety when they are presented as standalone mental illnesses.

Researchers haven’t pinpointed the exact reason behind the association between bipolar disorder and alcoholism but hypothesize it may involve [existing risk factors](#) for addiction like genetics and environmental factors. Since ongoing studies indicate bipolar disorder symptoms can emerge during alcohol withdrawal, it may happen that alcoholism triggers bipolar disorder in some predisposed individuals.

The manic phase of bipolar disorder makes people feel incredibly anxious and agitated. They can’t slow down racing thoughts or control impulsive behavior that often creates relationship and financial difficulties. Individuals may not even remember what they said or did during a particularly severe manic episode. Consequently, alcohol abuse is commonly seen in people with bipolar disorder who have to deal with the fallout due to poor behavior.

Alcohol and Anxiety

In addition to increasing dopamine in the brain, alcohol also fuels endorphin release.

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Endorphins are polypeptides that target opioid receptors in the brain. Like dopamine, they boost feelings of pleasure and well-being. Endorphins also help reduce pain caused by physical injuries. People with generalized anxiety disorders or panic disorder often self-medicate with alcohol to suppress symptoms and temporarily feel like they are in control of their anxiety. In many cases, individuals taking prescription anti-anxiety medications use alcohol to increase the side effects of anxiolytics like Valium or Xanax. This increases the risk of accidental overdose as well as an addiction to pills and alcohol.

<https://www.americasrehabcampuses.com/blog/which-mental-disorder-is-most-commonly-comorbid-with-alcoholism>

Can Alcohol Abuse Cause Bipolar Disorder?

Both alcohol addiction and bipolar disorder can worsen the severity of the other, decreasing your quality of life.

One week you feel on top of the world, socializing with everyone you meet and bouncing from one activity to the next. You overindulge in alcohol use, since it makes you feel good and keeps you in a good mood. The next week, though, you feel as if you've hit rock bottom. You feel sad, irritable and lonely, so you drink to try to cope.

These episodes of mania and depression are common with bipolar disorder. But are they triggered by your alcohol use or is your bipolar disorder making you drink more than you should?

The Comorbidity of Alcohol Use and Bipolar Disorder

Substance use and alcohol addiction can unfortunately occur together with co-occurring mental illnesses. In fact, it is estimated by the National Institute on Drug Abuse that nearly 8 million Americans who struggle with a substance use disorder also have a co-occurring mental illness such as bipolar disorder.

The co-occurrence of bipolar disorder and alcohol abuse is more common than originally thought. In an epidemiological study of psychiatric disorders by the National Institute of Mental Health's Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA), researchers sought to determine just how common this comorbidity is.

Ultimately, the researchers found that more than 60 percent of people with bipolar I disorder and nearly 50 percent of people with bipolar II disorder also struggle with addiction.

At this point, research only has theories as to why alcohol abuse and bipolar disorder are often diagnosed together. For example, behavioral health experts believe genetics and family history play a role in a person's likelihood of suffering from both disorders. It may also be possible that one disorder triggers or worsens the other.

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental disorder characterized by bouts of extremely elevated mood, euphoria, sleeplessness, and even psychosis or mania. These periods of mania combine with periods of serious depression.

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The multiple types of bipolar disorder can be affected by alcohol use in which those suffering from the mental disorder try to balance their ever-changing moods with alcohol.

Does Alcohol Use Trigger Bipolar Disorder?

There is currently no evidence that alcohol use actually causes bipolar disorder.

However, a 1998 study found that alcohol can have the [same effects on the brain](#) that bipolar disorder does, prompting manic and depressive symptoms.

Behavioral health experts have also found that alcohol addiction and bipolar disorder can aggravate symptoms caused by the other, enforcing a vicious cycle of bipolar symptoms and alcohol abuse.

This is especially the case during alcohol withdrawal since alcohol withdrawal and bipolar disorder affect the same brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters.

If you've been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, you're already familiar with manic symptoms like euphoria, rapid thoughts and speech, irritability and impulsivity. Alcohol consumption can trigger similar symptoms by flooding your brain with dopamine and lowering your inhibitions.

So, if you're in the middle of a manic episode, [alcohol abuse](#) will make your symptoms of mania much more severe.

The same is true of your depressive episodes caused by bipolar disorder. These episodes may include feelings of worthlessness and extreme sadness. You may even struggle with thoughts of suicide. Alcohol is a depressant, so instead of making you feel

better; it'll ultimately worsen your depression symptoms and may even elevate your suicidal thoughts to life-threatening behaviors.

While it's unclear if alcohol abuse actually causes bipolar disorder, alcohol and bipolar disorder can worsen one another's symptoms until your quality of life is diminished.

<https://www.theraleighhouse.com/addiction-blog/alcohol-bipolar-disorder>

EVENTS:

"Freedom From Bondage" SWTA 68 Annual CFC Conference February 25 - 27, 2023

Wingate by Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, 1209 N Interstate 35, Round Rock, TX 7864 See www.aa-swta.org/events for more information on registration.

SAVE THE DATE: Spring Assembly 2023
Spring Assembly Marble Falls March 31 - April 2 Details Coming Soon!

Join us for the 76th **Annual Texas State AA Convention** San Antonio, Texas June 9 – 11, 2023

We have amazing speakers. Enjoy a weekend of incredible speakers panel, meetings and fellowship as we celebrate recovery Texas-style. Don't miss this opportunity to mix and mingle with friends in recovery.

<https://txaaconvention.org/>

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SAVE THE DATE: 2025 International Convention in Vancouver **July 3, 2025 - July 6, 2025**

The 90th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous will be celebrated at the **2025 International Convention** in Vancouver, BC, Canada, July 3 – 6, 2025. The theme of the 2025 International Convention is “90 Years – Language of the Heart.”

General registration and housing information will be available on the International Convention webpage in early 2024. Actual registration site links, forms, and hotel booking links will be communicated to the Fellowship in August/September 2024.

<https://www.aa.org/international-convention> Please see our page for news releases: <https://www.aa-swta.org/2025intconvention>

SAVE THE DATE: July 21 - July 23,
[Area Assembly in Brownwood](#). Details
Coming Soon!

LOCAL INFORMATION:

If you have any information about local groups, please let me know by texting to Judy H at 830-388-1652

Birthday Night

Is the first Saturday of every month for the previous month. Please put your name on the whiteboard if you have a birthday this month so you can be recognized.

The River Group San Marcos

New Address: 501 Broadway. The door for the meeting is around the corner, on the side facing the chicken restaurant; the doors facing the parking lots are for the other business in the building.

The new phone number is 737-357-2020

The Saturday Women's Meeting

Has moved to Thursday at 8:30 pm
(replacing the 8pm candlelight meeting)

New Braunfels' Group Conscience Meets At 12:15pm Every 3rd Sunday of the month.

All members of New Braunfels Group AA are encouraged to attend...after all, we can't have a conscience without a group! ;-)

(Attendance is mandatory for service members.)

New Women's Meeting at the 24 Club

Starting Saturday February 18th, 8am.
Children are welcome

Online 12 Step Meetings

Go to <https://12steppers.org/online-virtual-12-step-meetings-for-each-12-step-program/> for a list of meetings.

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Zoom Meetings

New Braunfels Group Zoom meeting is at noon every day except Saturday.

ID: 86494683219

Passcode: 24Eikel (case sensitive)

**“The Age of
Miracles is still
with us. Our own
recovery proves
that!”**

*“It may seem incredible
that these men are to
become happy, respected,
and useful once more. How
can they rise out of such
misery, bad repute and
hopelessness?*

*The practical answer is
that since these things have
happened among us, they
can happen with you.
Should you wish them
above all else, and be
willing to make use of our
experience, we are sure
they will come. The age of
miracles is still with us.
Our own recovery proves
that!”*

– Alcoholics Anonymous
pg. 153

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