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7-15-51, 1950

THE H.F.D. (Habit Forming Drugs) GROUP.

In the latter part of 1950. After having over a year of sobriety on A.A. My problem being two-fold, alcoholism and drug addiction, with Muscatel wine and Benzedrone thrown in. I had found a way of life to live without alcohol and drugs.

Through my understanding of both problems, feeling that I should try to help my fellow sufferers. I became interested in finding out if A.A. would help others addicted to drugs, as it had helped me.

Through working on AA Institutional and Jail Committee's, seeing many addicted to barbiturates and other substitutes, sober from alcohol, but still just as confused and miserable I did some research on the subject, wrote to the proper sources of information, U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Ky and contacted the New York Foundation, General Service Headquarters. When I had compiled the information necessary, the understanding of those that would help, and my own experiences, I decided to start a small group to try and help others with this addiction problem.

The type of Group I started in 1950, was unknown at that time, but in 1952. The Works Publishing Inc., published a pamphlet "Sedatives and The Alcoholic", suggested on page 23, to quote "Thirdly, occasional closed meetings devoted exclusively to the problem of sedatives and alcoholism can prove practical devices for the exchange of helpful knowledge and experience, if these closed meetings can be programmed informally and led by some one who has special knowledge of sedatives, their potential usefulness can be greatly enhanced."

After gaining valuable information, also referring to the long form of the AA Traditions, page 11, I started working with narcotic addicts finding these prospective members in the County and City jails, and others addicted to barbiturates. On February 11, 1951 the first meeting of the small H.F.D. Group was held.

We consider this group, to be a school to help the newcomer who has a drug problem, find a way to work the AA program for his problem. Doing this I found it helpful that the newcomer understand both the problem of alcoholism and addiction to drugs. Mainly, in my personal opinion that they are both powerless over alcohol and drugs. To personally apply the AA principles to his own case. Without Reservations!

In my own opinion we cannot change one word of our book, Alcoholics Anonymous, not can we change any of the 12 AA Traditions, My suggestions to the newcomer, who may feel that his or her problem is "different" is to keep an open mind, be willing to attend AA meetings, I do make one serious suggestion, that the addict that is not convinced that he may be an alcoholic, is to listen to the speakers, telling their story, in many cases the same pattern of escape, the same result of their drinking, jail, institution and horror, the sickness of both soul, and body, the totally undesirable way of life, we are just alike.

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Too, I suggest to the addict, that when he reads the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, and attends open AA meetings, that when he sees or hears the words; Alcoholic, Alcoholism, Alcohol. that he MENTALLY link the words: Addict, Addiction, Drugs. I do this myself, it works for me! Due to custom in AA and for those that would not understand I do not suggest that the addict use these words ORALLY! it should be kept in mind and when this is carried out, and deeply implanted in the mind, it becomes automatic.

Both the alcoholic and the drug addict, has the same basic personality and character defects, the same shortcomings, same escape mechanism, the same frustrations, all the things that make our lives un-managable. If the symbol of our deeper emotional trouble is either alcohol or drugs, is eliminated from our lives, 24 hours at a time, and on that basis we follow the principles suggested in the AA Program, we should learn to live a life free from alcohol or drugs.

On fact that I did discover, the newcomer should not become dependant on the informal drug group! It is suggested that he attend many open AA meetings, following what he may find in the groups. During the first year of the HFD Group, we found that many of the drug addicts would not attend other AA meetings. They became dependant on the drug group. This is not good in my opinion. I stopped having a weekly meeting, they could not become dependant on this one group.

The following years, have been more successful, one meeting a month, or for anyone needing, perhaps, personal help about some problem concerning thier addiction, talking it over with someone that had the same problem, we would get together and try to help them. It seemed to be of value. As the months and years have passed I find most of the original members of the HFD group, busy in other AA groups, active and sober, seldom needing the personal help of our group. They are fully indoctrinated with AA and need no special problem group.

When we find a newcomer seeking help with a drug problem, we get a few of our older members to join in a small informal meeting to help the newcomer get acquainted, so he may feel more at ease, and be willing to keep an open mind, through the help of those that had his problem too.

The group is conducted as any other AA group, reading from our Book, we have group participation, usually taking one of the 12 Steps as the subject of discussion, each member speaking for himself, as to how he works the Step, Questions arise, they are answered by other members, We find the "round-table" discussion very helpful to each of us. Our group as all AA groups, makes a donation, when possible to our General Service Headquarters, in New York. We try to the best of our ability to live by the 12 AA Traditions.

As an active and sober member of AA, and secretary and founder of the HFD group. I take the 12th Step calls, try to help the newcomers, speak at other AA groups, correspond with Prison and Institutional groups, keep in touch with members that have had "trouble" and are incarcerated to keep them informed and encouraged by writing them letters of encouragement, and to come back to AA when they are free.

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The results are very gratifying, many have been ehlped back to a normal life, free of alcohol and drugs, Our 3rd Anniversary meeting of the group was indeed wonderful. To see some of the members that attended, that had no hope a few short months or years ago, active members of AA living normal, happy lives. Back in their place in society, completely rehabilitated.

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This is my small contribution toward AA and all the people that accepted me when I first came to AA over 4 years ago, beaten, without hope, and alcoholic and narcotic addict. I thank God for A.A. and the people that gave me hope and did not turn me away from the Door to Sobriety and a happy contented way of life of service to others.

Betty.T.  
HFD GROUP  
Santa Monica, Calif  
March 1954.