

How Much Does AA Mean to Me, and What Do I Give It in Return?

I can't remember exactly when I first started "doubling my dollar" at my AA home group. I know I wasn't the first in my meeting to do it. That honor, I think, went to the woman who could least afford it, a woman still deeply in debt but grateful for the profound emotional, spiritual, and financial progress she has been making in AA week after week and year after year. At some point I noticed that she was dropping two \$1 bills into the basket each week. I felt a little sheepish and ashamed that I, with more years and more financial resources, wasn't doing the same. Gradually, one or two other people started dropping an extra buck in from time to time, and then regularly. I began noticing this more, and becoming a little more uncomfortable. Week after week, I was forced to ask myself, "Why aren't I doing that, too?" The trend to contributions above the traditional dollar amount was helped by our frequent discussions at group conscience meetings. After years of being flush, inflation was taking its toll, and we did not have the money to easily put on some of the events we'd put on in the past. And our fund to send our GSR to the Area 54 Mini-Conference was accumulating much too slowly (a previous GSR had paid for his own way, but a group should not expect everyone to do this). And so, little by little, it became clear that all of us who could afford it, needed to do a little more. And that included me. By tradition, my home group does not have a lot of gimmicks. We don't hold raffles, 50-50s, we don't pass the basket two or three or more times, and we don't even charge for literature (it has long been our policy to give literature away as part of our 12th-Step work). We have long felt that AA members in recovery need to squarely face the fact that we are responsible for our own recovery, and that includes paying for it. We pass the basket once, and trust that members with real recovery will meet the need. Many AA service bodies have been beating the drums for a more realistic level of self-support for years. In fact, "double your dollar" and "thrive with five" came from one of those awareness-raising campaigns. But, fearful alcoholic that I am, I am a cheapskate, a skinflint--tighter than the bark on a tree. Doubling my dollar might be logical, affordable, and spiritually responsible; there might be no reason in the world NOT to do it; but my fear of financial insecurity kept me from actually taking the action for a long, long time. I think I gasped the first week I threw those two singles in the basket. It really was traumatic. But after a few weeks, it began to seem normal, reasonable. Within a month or so, I had become comfortable with this new level of power and responsibility in my life. I had faced the fears of "not enough" and moved forward. I realized that even if I put \$3, \$5, or \$10 a week into my home group's basket it wouldn't even come close to paying for what Alcoholics Anonymous has done for me, and for the wonderful abundance of recovery I enjoy today.

—Anonymous