

Concepts

Fall of 2017

Spirit of Rotation

Concept IX states in part that, "Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them are at all levels indispensable for our future function and safety." My first service position was a Group Service Representative (GSR). In most groups the GSR doesn't rotate every two years, not because it isn't suggested, it is because no one else wants the job. There are many members that are a GSR for more than one group which does not allow both groups to have a vote at the district or area. Each voting member gets only one vote. I was one of those members that did not rotate out of being a GSR when I became the district Grapevine Chair. The District Committee Chair, (DCM) is the only committee chair from the district that gets a vote at the area, but because of Concept IV they do have the opportunity and right to participate in discussion at the Area.

After the two year term as the district Grapevine Chair I stood for and became the district secretary. When that two-year term was up, I did not know what to do next because I never really paid attention to the other committees; I was focused on the committee I was on. So, I became Grapevine Chair again. It is a good idea to become an alternate of a service position so as to learn what is expected of that position when you step in as the GSR or chair of that position. It is said that a service chair is supposed to start

training the alternate to be able to step in at from the start, not wait until the term is all most over.

I have had the misfortune of watching members at the district hold service positions anywhere from four to seven years. Warranty One in Concept Twelve talks about "perilous wealth and power". As far as the conference goes there can be little risk because we are protected from the calamities of too much authority by rotation. When this happens at the group or district level it is not good for the member or the group. The members sometimes feel they have to do it because no one has stood for the position and sometimes they feel they own the position. It is not good for the group because other members do not get the opportunity to experience those positions. After the usual two year term, if no member stands for a position, it should be left open. That group or district will not fall apart due to a shortage of one or two members. I have also seen when a position is left open especially a chair position, that it does get filled fairly quickly.

When area elections came up I once again did not know what to stand for. The member who was the Grapevine Chair was doing such a great job that I thought it would be too hard to meet those expectations. I found out later that everyone does the best they know and that there shouldn't be any expectations of "being better." I thought I should stand for Alternate Treatment Chair, but my alcoholic

Concepts is published quarterly by the Northern Illinois Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a service letter to keep Northern IL Area, districts, and GSRs informed of service opportunities, events, and experience relevant to carrying the AA message.

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Comments, suggestions and subscription requests plus shares of experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:

Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see Concepts on-line at:
<http://www.aa-nia.org>

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CONCEPTS is a confidential document. It contains names and phone numbers.

Editor's corner

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

So some issues go together more smoothly than others. The more submissions I have the easier it is to put Concepts together. Usually some kind of theme becomes apparent so that I have direction on what I should get from the Grapevine archives.

With elections coming up for some districts (not mine), and the contribution by a DCM, putting something in there about what a DCM does seemed appropriate.

I can't do anything with pdf. Please send me Word compatible (and I used to be a wordperfect girl, who would have thought!?). I couldn't use the Big Book Conference flyer. In the past I have put parts of flyers in the announcements. I would have liked to have done that, but I couldn't. I had trouble with another text submission sent in pdf.

Sometimes I can copy easily from pdf. But it appears to be getting harder. So please send all submissions, especially and including flyers, in a word compatible format. If you are using a fancy graphics program to make a totally awesome flyer please don't expect any part of it in Concepts. Perhaps your future editor will be more technologically advanced than this old lady.

There didn't end up being a lot of room for humor. So there is no 'Rule 62' in this issue. But never fear, those of you who don't take yourself too seriously, there is humor. Just not a dedicated column or page. Enjoy.

Heather S. Concepts editor

Due date for next Concepts is
November 11, the beginning of Bill's last
debauch

thinking said that to show everyone that I really wanted to be the Alternate Treatment Chair that I should go for the chair position, then hopefully I would be elected the Alternate, I got the Treatment Chair position.

What I had learned while serving as Area Treatment Chair was that there were always members who had done it before me and others who know a lot about treatment, and that I only had to ask. Since I was already at the area level I figured I would try to work my way down the service triangle. I watched and listened very closely to the members who had service positions that I wanted to stand for. I asked questions prior to and after holding those positions. One of my favorite sayings is, "the only dumb question is the one not asked."

The area and most of the districts will be having elections or rotating out of their current positions before the end of this year. I am hoping that alternates will be willing to stand as chairs, and that others will step out of their comfort zones and stand for a service position, whether it be an alternate GSR, GSR, Alternate District Chair, Alternate Area chair or Chair. Just remember that most of us didn't know what to expect or do when we first walked through the doors of an A.A. meeting, and there is no need to try and re-invent the wheel. Good luck to all those who standing for a service position.

Delegate

Kelly L.

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Hello NIA 20

A while back I was at the Spring committee meeting when there was a lively conversation about the Spring conference and what we, area 20, would like to see it turn into.

I was speaking to my sponsor(no my service sponsor but my step sponsor)and I was telling her that she could do the Assembly on June 10th. She didn't know she COULD go. She is not a GSR so she didn't think that it would be okay for her to go. All AA's are welcome to attend Assemblies! There are four Assemblies a year.

Assemblies are not like a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I don't go to the Assemblies to find out how to work the Steps. That is what my AA meetings are for.

At one point in my sobriety I felt that something was missing. I pretty much understood the Steps and Traditions and had been working and using them in my everyday life. But I wanted more. I remember hearing about the Three Legged Stool. Unity, Recover, and Service is the three legged stool. I had done service work in the groups I attended; making coffee, sponsoring, greeting, etc. And those things are very important for us to do. It gets us out of ourselves.

Just the way life can happen, someone asked me to be a secretary for and Ad Hoc Committee at the Area level. Since I know how to type, I figured that I could do that. I had absolutely no idea what the people were talking about but I took notes and types them at home. Pretty easy. That was Service Work at the Area level. I didn't know that at the time. I just thought I was helping a friend.

Soon after that I was asked if I wanted to be Alternate Secretary for the Area. I was not sure what that would be like but because I still felt that something was missing in my recovery I decided to stand for the Alternate Secretary position. I was elected. (no one else stood for the position. ☺) The Secretary guided me on what I was to do. Easy. I like it. I was part of something more than just me. I'm shy, quiet, very comfortable just sitting in my living room, however, by joining in with other fellow alcoholics who like to do service work, I got hooked.

I love the energy at the Committee Meetings and Assemblies. Sometimes it seems confusing, but I think we shake up the information that is talked about and determine what is a good idea, and what isn't a good idea. The meetings are like brainstorming. At first I was very intimidated because the attendees talked fast and used lot of letter. As Area Chair, I try to explain what is happening and no use too many letters (CPC, PI, GSO, GSB, TF) so that the newcomer can understand.

At the Committee Meetings and Assemblies our Area talks about the BUSINESS of the Area. For example: how many Big Books were delivered to how many prisons. That is about helping the people who are guests in the prisons. So we may not be talking about recovery at our Assemblies, but we are doing the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. I hope to see you at the next Assembly. Nia-aa.org is our website.

Who knows but you might like service work if you tried it.

I am very grateful.

Marilyn F., Area Chair Panel 66.

Who me, DCM?

Hello, my name is Susan H. and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is 11/16/11, I have a sponsor and sponsor other women. My position as DCM of District 41 ends this year and I would like to share about my experience, strength and hope while in that position.

My experience with district activity began at the end of my first sober year, when I began inquiring about the Grapevine. Someone, not too enthusiastically, referred me to the current Grapevine District chair. Then it all started when I learned there was an open alternate chair position for the Grapevine for something referred to as the "district". That led to the first invitation to a district meeting, most inconveniently held on Sunday afternoons monthly. I was shocked how easily I was elected alternate grapevine chair by a roomful of enthusiastic 'ayes', these people knew nothing about me, not even my last name! I was a newcomer interested in working with others, that's all that mattered.

I had just been to my first Big Book Conference in Mundelin and was ready for action! I wasn't disappointed. I was voted as Grapevine Chair and started to understand the purpose of the GSR and the various committees. I may have been to one area assembly/committee meeting at that time. Definitely still getting the lay of the land. Time was marching on, I was staying sober

one day at a time and I was curious about the upside down triangle of the service structure. I was asked to be a committee Chair for the Accessibilities committee for a Big Book Conference which I did.

A funny thing happened on the way to the district meeting. I heard the alternate DCM was stepping down due to work schedule changes. Other committee members were talking about the need for a replacement. A few AA's suggested I think about it and I know what that means. I had quietly been thinking about becoming more active in general service work. I was aware enough to realize I would go on to DCM pending my staying sober one day at a time. So once again, all I heard was 'ayes' with the assurance that I would learn with everyone's help.

And I did learn, slowly but surely from my DCM and previous DCMs and other experienced AA's on the district committee. As Alternate DCM, our district proceeded to prepare the bid for the Big Book Conference. The bid was accepted and our hope was the BB committee chairs would be filled and we could host this Big Book Conference for about 350 people. And we did with AA's coming together from within and outside our district to volunteer. We had a fun, learning experience preparing to share the message in this fashion.

Overall as DCM, I learned if you ask, AA's will volunteer. They will volunteer before you ask. And that is the difference between a District or area meeting and the non AA world of meetings. Keeping our primary purpose ever in focus, the traditions and concepts guide us through the personalities and opinions in our meetings. My role as DCM was to encourage the fostering of good will and harmony amongst district committee meetings, GSR's and visitors during our meetings. Sticking to an agenda helped. I aimed to guide from the framework that we are all adults and choose to be on the team, and each committee member knows their role and performs it to the best of their ability. Our committee has learned as a team, what works and what doesn't. Each committee chair brings their own brilliance to that role. I am thankful for the wonderful group of AA's who chose to spend their time with the district to carry the message to those in our path.

What is a DCM

DCM stands for District Committee Member. Generally the DCM is chair of the District GSR meetings. The DCM is part of the Area committee and has a right and responsibility to voice the conscience of his/her District. Many Districts choose to support the DCM financially, thereby increasing activity, interest, and participation. The qualifications outlined in the service manual for DCM are: served as a GSR, has 4-5 years sobriety, has the time and energy. The 4-5 years sobriety requirement is because a DCM should be eligible to serve as delegate.

The responsibilities of a DCM listed in the handbook look daunting, but have a common thread: communications. The DCM need to attend district and Area meetings. The DCM receives reports from the GSR. So the DCM knows generally what is going on in his/her district. The DCM holds regular meetings of all GSRs in his/her district. So chairing that meeting is the responsibility of a DCM. There is little communication in a chaotic meeting. So again the responsibility of the DCM is to facilitate communication.

The DCM helps the delegate cover the Area. This doesn't mean the DCM is responsible for the Area, just his/her little part of heaven. ☺ The DCM assists the delegate in obtaining group information. Without the right contact information the delegate cannot communicate with the groups. The DCM keeps the groups informed about the Conference activities. Now the DCM is facilitating communication the other way: group to delegate.

The next responsibility is to be familiar with the General Service Handbook. This again is about communication. If the GSR is not familiar with the language of General Service how can he/she communicate the group conscience? The DCM helps GSRs communicate with the GSR's group. Here is the sharing of experience in how to communicate with an individual group. So still all about communication.

The DCM may organize workshops and sharing sessions; both of which communicate information to the attendees. The DCM is supposed to keep groups informed about Conference approved literature. The DCM keeps in contact with the alternate DCM, the delegate, and the alternate delegate. The DCM is supposed to make sure the delegate receives the district meeting minutes. Again the DCM is facilitating communication between the district and the delegate.

The DCM may also refer Tradition problems to the delegate. Finally the DCM talks to groups about the responsibilities of general service.

So a DCM's responsibility is all about communication. If you can talk and listen, if you can receive and give information, if you can inform and update, you can probably be a DCM. This information is from p S31-32 of the General Service Handbook.

CONFESSIONS OF A GENERAL SERVICE
GEEK

DON'T BE AFRAID. YOU CAN LOVE
GENERAL SERVICE TOO. "DON'T BE
ASHAMED OF YOUR GEEKITUDE, EMBRACE
IT! BE IT!"

I AM THAT STRANGE BREED OF AA
ANIMAL CALLED A GENERAL SERVICE
GEEK. I ACTUALLY CAN PINPOINT THE
EXACT MOMENT WHEN MY GEEKINESS
WAS BIRTHED. I HAD BEEN SOBER FOR A
YEAR AND A HALF AND THOUGHT I
KNEW EVERYTHING THERE WAS TO
KNOW ABOUT AA, THE TWELVE STEPS,
AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, YADA YADA
YADA. THEN I GOT A SPONSOR WHO
STARTED TO TALK ABOUT THE TWELVE
CONCEPTS AND WARRANTIES AND
CHARTERS AND ALL THOSE STRANGE
ACRONYMS I HAD NEVER COME ACROSS
BEFORE. I WAS INTRIGUED THAT THERE
WAS A HUGE PART OF AA THAT I HAD
SOMEHOW BEEN COMPLETELY IGNORANT
ABOUT.

IN HINDSIGHT THERE WERE TELLTALE
SIGNS THAT I DESTINED FOR GENERAL
SERVICE. ONE WAS THAT I ACTUALLY
ENJOYED BUSINESS MEETINGS. THE FIRST
HOME GROUP I BELONGED TO HAD A
SIMPLY PHENOMENAL BUSINESS MEETING.
I CAME TO MY FIRST ONE WITH A
WRITTEN LIST (!) OF THINGS I THOUGHT
THE GROUP SHOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE
WAY THEY RAN THEIR MEETING. INSTEAD
OF DISMISSING ME AS A CONFUSED AND
ARROGANT NEWBIE, THEY LISTENED TO
EACH AND EVERY ONE OF MY CONCERNS
AND DISCUSSED THEM THOROUGHLY
(BEFORE VOTING THEM ALL DOWN!). I
WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY HOW THE
GROUP ACTUALLY DID PLACE PRINCIPLES

BEFORE PERSONALITIES. I GOT TO SEE
HOW THE TRADITIONS REALLY CAN AND
DO WORK IN A GROUP. ONE OF THE MOST
REMARKABLE THINGS I EXPERIENCED WAS
WHEN I WAS ARGUING HEATEDLY WITH A
MEMBER OF THE GROUP ABOUT SOME
MATTER OF EARTH-SHATTERING
IMPORTANCE (LIKE HOW MUCH COFFEE WE
SHOULD MAKE) AND HE ALL OF A SUDDEN
HEARD SOMETHING THAT CLICKED AND
IMMEDIATELY CHANGED HIS MIND AND HIS
VOTE. I WAS FLOORED. I WOULD NEVER
DO THAT. I WOULD BE IN AN ARGUMENT,
KNOWING I WAS WRONG, AND YET STILL
KEEP PLEADING MY CASE. TO REALLY
LISTEN TO OTHER VIEWPOINTS AND
HONESTLY ASSESS THEM ALONGSIDE MY
OWN WAS A SKILL I LEARNED IN AA
BUSINESS MEETINGS.

I WENT TO MY FIRST ASSEMBLY AND WAS
SO IMPRESSED BY THE BUSINESS MEETINGS
THERE. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE—SOBER
DRUNKS MIND YOU!—WERE SHARING IN AN
ORDERLY AND WELL-INFORMED MANNER.
THE COOLEST THING HAPPENED THERE
ALSO: THE ASSEMBLY VOTED ON A
PARTICULAR MOTION, LISTENED TO THE
MINORITY OPINION, HAD A RE-VOTE, AND
THEN IT WENT THE OTHER WAY! THE
GREATEST THING TO ME WAS HOW THE
REASON FOR EVERYTHING THEY DID CAME
DOWN TO THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF
STAYING SOBER AND HELPING OTHER
ALCOHOLICS ACHIEVE SOBRIETY.

MY HOME GROUP HAD A GSR, AND I WAS
THRILLED WHEN THE AGENDA TOPICS CAME
OUT AND AS A GROUP WE DISCUSSED
THEM. I FELT BOTH PRIVILEGED TO BE
ASKED FOR MY OPINION ON THE TOPICS IN
THE CONTEXT OF MY GROUP AND ALSO
FELT A TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY TO

PARTICIPATE TO HELP KEEP THIS
WONDERFUL FELLOWSHIP AFLOAT FOR
FUTURE VOYAGERS.

SO IF YOU ACTUALLY ENJOY READING THE
SERVICE MANUAL INSTEAD OF DREADING
IT, CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF SHARING
SESSIONS, WORKSHOPS, UNITY DAYS,
DISTRICT AND AREA MEETINGS, ARCHIVES
AND ASSEMBLIES, YOU TOO MAY BE A
GENERAL SERVICE GEEK. NOW, DON'T GET
IT TWISTED. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A
POCKET-PROTECTOR WEARIN'—DEVO
LISTENIN'—BUDDY HOLLY LOOK-ALIKE TO
BE A GENERAL SERVICE GEEK. YOU JUST
HAVE TO HAVE FIGURED OUT THAT
GENERAL SERVICE ROCKS! DON'T BE
ASHAMED OF YOUR GEEKITUDE, EMBRACE
IT! BE IT! JOIN THE CLUB, WE'RE HAVING
T-SHIRTS MADE!

— TONY W.

FAIRFIELD, CALIFORNIA

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"I've never had a problem with drugs.
I've had problems with the police." -
Keith Richards

Was it a bad day? Or was it a bad five
minutes you milked all day?

The Line

*There was a line that had been crossed,
Some where along the way...
I cannot say upon what occasion,
I can't pinpoint the day.
No way to know just where or how,
I lurched this loathsome line...
I did not heed the hazard,
I shunned the warning sign.
I had passed into a region,
of which there's no return
...wandering and wasted,
not knowing where to turn.
I've veered into a vortex,
of sorrow and regret...
a place I can't forego,
a place I won't forget.
Lured by obsession,
as a moth to a flame...
fettered by fear,
shackled by shame,
broken in spirit,
of body and mind.
I'll take with me my flesh and blood,
...and leave my soul behind.
In my wake I strew the wreckage,
of the bridges that I burned,
is this line a blessing,
or a lesson to be learned?
Be forewarned my fellow friends,
for you too know this line.
This subtle foe we've come to know,
...was once a friend of mine.*

*Gordon R.
6/17/2017*

AA- The extra strength long lasting allergy relief medication

Important information pertaining to the use of AA:

- AA is an allergy relief program commonly used to treat and inhibit the use of alcohol and the common defects caused by alcoholism.
 - AA is designed to reduce the symptoms commonly associated with alcoholism.
 - When taken as directed AA is known to substantially reduce the negative side effects associated with alcoholism

such as : misery, depression, despair, remorse, guilt, shame, physical, mental, and spiritual maladies, a mental obsession and a physical allergy commonly known as alcoholism.

- We do not recommend that you use AA unless you are capable of being honest and completely willing to give yourself to this simple program. AA is available for use by those who have a sincere desire to stop drinking.

• **CAUTION:** *AA will impair your ability to consume alcohol. If you are on any other medications such as alcohol or any other mind altering substance we suggest that you discontinue use immediately as this will cause a substantial reduction in the effect caused by AA.*

- Some of the most common side effects associated with AA are: Honesty, Hope, Faith, Courage, Integrity, Willingness, Humility, Brotherly love, Justice, Perseverance, Spirituality, and Service. A spiritual awakening and a psychic change have been reported in most cases.

- AA has no negative side effects on pregnant women or women who are nursing.

- To reduce your risk of chronic relapse, a lifestyle change maybe recommended. In 9 out of 10 cases practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.

- An increased risk of recovery and long term spiritual affects have been associated with AA. Consult your sponsor immediately when changes do occur.

- AA should be taken with plenty of open-mindedness and willingness. Do not take AA alone. Independent studies have shown that AA is most effective when working with others.

- Always remember it is important that you use AA only as prescribed:

1. Trust in God
2. Clean House
3. Help others

- **WARNING:** Do not skip doses or discontinue use as severe reoccurrence of fatal allergy symptoms may occur.

- AA is recommended for long term daily use. Prodigious results have been found in those who continue long term use of AA. As with all allergy relief medications some results may vary, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly.

- For more information and to learn more about the AA 12 step program of recovery and alcoholism we suggest you contact your local AA community directly, retain a sponsor, and read the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

By Gordon R. 5/24/2017

A.A. Regional and Local Forums

Started in 1975, these weekend A.A. Forums are held four times a year—each in a region of the U.S. or Canada that has extended an invitation.

Representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and GV staffs participate in each Forum with A.A. members living or visiting in the region.

The purpose of the meetings is to provide better communication among all levels of service for the region concerned. Planning and coordination, in conjunction with regional trustees and delegates, are handled at G.S.O.

Local Forums, a scaled down version of Regional Forums, organized on the local level with help from G.S.O., have been instituted to provide a Forum experience on a timely basis to meet cultural, accessibility and population needs in A.A. communities who for any reason are unable to attend regular Regional Forums. From ‘Your AA General Service Office’

So what are regional forums and why are they so awesome? Some years ago the Area provided financial support for those who wanted to attend a regional forum. I took advantage of that. At the forum I asked general service board trustees questions directly. And got full honest answers. I found GSO doesn't operate in a vacuum. I learned what other members of AA were concerned about and participated in discussions on these issues. I contributed to the group conscience of AA as a whole in my own small way. I found the energy at the forum to be unlike any I have found with the possible exception of this last international conference in Atlanta. At the forum I felt a part of with an intensity I don't feel in my regular meetings. Forums feel more interactive than any conference I have attended.

The Area is again helping financially with attending the Regional Forum. My experience is take advantage of it. It will impact your recovery positively.

2017 EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL FORUM

November 17-19

SCHEDULE of Events Tentative

PRE-REGISTRATION ALSO AVAILABLE
ONLINE AT: WWW.AA.ORG

FRIDAY 2pm—TILL CLOSING Registration

*6:30—6:45pm- First Timer Orientation

*7pm—8:30pm- Opening Session: Board Presentations

*8:30—8:45pm- Break

*8:45—9:30pm- Video PSA: General Sharing Session

SAT. 9am—TILL CLOSING Registration

*9—9:45am-Delegate Presentations

*9:45—10am-Break

*10—11:15am-Full Forum Workshop

*11:20—12noon-Grapevine Presentations *12—1:30pm-Lunch

* 1:30—2pm-Trustee-at-Large Presentation

*2—2:30pm-General Sharing Session

*2:30—2:45pm-Break

*2:45—4:15pm-G.S.O. Presentations

*4:15—5pm-General Sharing Session

*5—7pm-Dinner

* 7—7:55pm-Workshops

*7:55—8:05pm-Break

*8:05—9pm-Workshops

SUNDAY 9am—10:30am Registration

*9—9:45am-First Timer Sharing Session

*9:45—10:30am-Ask-It Basket/General Sharing Session

*10:30—10:45am-Break

*10:45—11:30am-Past Trustees' Sharing

*11:30—12noon-Closing Remarks

Go tell the trustees what you think!!

Announcements

Fall Assembly **Sep 16** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord Of Life Lutheran Church 40w605 II
Route 38, La Fox, IL 60119

Fall Committee Meeting **Oct 14** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord Of Life Lutheran Church
40w605 II Route 38, La Fox, IL 60119

34th Midwest Woman To Woman Seminar **Fri, Oct 06 - Sun, Oct 08**

www.midwest-wtw.org Columbus, Ohio

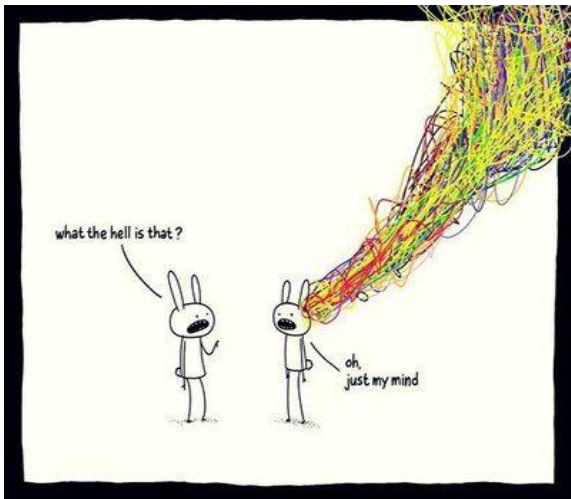
NIA Big Book Conference **Nov 4** @ First United Methodist Church 801 N Sycamore St
Hinckley, IL 60520

National Corrections Conference **Nov 10 – Nov 12** @ Doubletree Hotel 1973 Craigshire
St. Louis MO 63146 314-434-0100 Contact John S. 314-413-5939

2017 East Central Regional Forum **Nov 17 – Nov 19** @ Wyndham Springfield 700 E.
Adams Street Springfield, IL 62701 (217) 789-1530 For reservations call: (217) 789-
1530. Group Rate Cutoff date: October 26, 2017 Group Code 11167027EC.

Preregistration for event is available at aa.org.

Winter Assembly **Dec 9** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church 40w605 II
Route 38, La Fox, IL 60119



"I destroyed my body for peace
of mind I never got"

