

In AA meetings all over the world, at any time of day, there is likely someone sharing about the spiritual concept of acceptance. This word, along with the Serenity Prayer, and dozens of other choice words and slogans make up a shared vocabulary of recovery that is easily recognizable to anyone who has spent a little time in 12-step recovery.

Some of our phrases and slogans come from the Big Book, others get created by some AA members shareS and passed on so many times it could even become a verse card—a printable reminder and memento of recovery truths to pocket and carry with you. Instead of providing a list of printable documents, we would like to provide you below with a printable PDF version of the “Acceptance” passage from page 417 of the fourth edition of the Big Book of Alcoholics anonymous. The first line of this passage—*Acceptance is the answer to ALL my problems today*—along with other phrases such as “life on life’s terms” have become their own slogans.

For a long time (and especially before the internet), repeatable passages like the ones above could only be passed on by recovery’s oral tradition at in-person meetings, or compiled in new editions of the Big Book. It’s amazing now that meeting information can be found online by meeting ID, or one can attend an online meeting to find peace of mind in the connection and identification of human beings in recovery simply sharing what arises for them as their words weave new tapestries of healing. Recovery is so much more accessible today—wheelchair access has increased at in-person meetings and different modes of access mean more can join our fellowships.

The “Acceptance” passage quoted below originally appeared in the third edition of the Big Book under the story header “Doctor, Alcoholic Addict.” When it was reprinted in the 4th Edition of the Big Book, perhaps because of how often it was quoted, the whole story was re-titled “Acceptance is the Answer.” The author of the story is Dr. Paul O—a doctor from California who wrote about what it was like being a doctor who was an alcoholic and also a pill addict. According to lore, Dr. Paul started Pills Anonymous and Chemical Dependency Anonymous, but did not attend them because he got all he needed from A.A. Ironically, he may have added fuel to some fire around the controversy of whether one be permitted to speak about other addictions in AA, but that was perhaps of a earlier version of his recovery, since it goes against the words of acceptance he is so known by.

This humanizing of the author of the passage is to us an indication not that his words are not just as wise but that wisdom comes through folks in recovery when there is an open channel between the Higher Power and those who need the message. Dr. Paul, even in his own lack of self acceptance, was still able to write for the Big Book one of the most quoted passages that has helped and continued to help hundreds of thousands of people find acceptance of the conditions of their

lives. This acceptance opens up a window into a spiritual pause through which the higher power can enter, communicate with us, and then communicate through us to the person who is still suffering (who may be, also, incidentally, our selves). This miracle happens at meetings in in writings of members as they dedicate themselves to putting their story on paper.

We celebrate the ease of access to recovery documents and accept that by providing help to those who need it we take care of ourselves and live the teaching found in the acceptance passage. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. So it is a good thing you found this article and passage below. We hope you keep it close to you as a digital or physical verse card, like the serenity prayer, so that your peace of mind can increase and grow the more you repeat it to yourself and share it with others. None of the problems today that you face need to be faced alone. You are always accompanied by AA members and members of recovery all around the world who are trying to live life on life's terms in a spirit and service and love. This is a vibration one can tune into at any time and anywhere. With this blessing, we present a printable PDF version of the Acceptance passage below.

*And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation – some face of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and my attitudes.*

*Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." He forgot to mention that I was the chief critic. I was always able to see the flaw in every person, every situation. And I was always glad to point it out, because I knew you wanted perfection, just as I did. A.A. and acceptance have taught me that there is a bit of good in the worst of us and a bit of bad in the best of us; that we are all children of God and we each have a right to be here. When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork. I am saying that I know better than God. For years I was sure the worst thing that could happen to a nice guy like me would be that I would turn out to be an alcoholic. Today I find it's the best thing that has ever happened to me. This proves I don't know what's good for me. And if I don't know what's good for me, then I don't know what's good or bad for you or for anyone. So I'm better off if I don't give advice, don't figure I know what's best, and just accept life on life's terms, as it is today – especially my own life, as it actually is. Before A.A. I judged myself by my intentions, while the world was judging me by my actions.*

