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Step Eleven - "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Is This All There Is?

An AA checks his supply of spiritual oxygen

It was a weekday night early in my recovery. I had come home from a day at work without the large bottles of wine, the kind with caps and no cork, that I used to load up on at the liquor supermarket in order to drink myself into unconsciousness. My wife was home, and we had a quiet, modest dinner. If there was a question mark next to the marriage, at least I wasn't tearing the loft apart in the drunken rages that marked my active years. I was a year and a half into recovery and progressing nicely, I thought. In fact, I was more than halfway through the Ninth Step, as I understood the Ninth Step to be at the time.

But all was not right. A mood came over me, a feeling of doubt and despair. In sobriety, I had generally been full of hope. Now, however, things appeared darker. Suddenly I had reservations about the growth I could achieve in AA. It was as if I had come up against a ceiling in recovery when I had thought the sky and beyond were the limit. I have experienced fear, and even terror, in sobriety, but I don't know that anything has matched the concern and despair I experienced fearing that I had exhausted the supply of spiritual oxygen available to me. By definition, an alcoholic is a seeker, someone who cannot accept limits and is always striving to expand into new dimensions. And now it seemed I had reached the limits of those dimensions.

I had relied on alcohol to avoid facing doubts about my marriage and unpublished manuscripts and all the other problems in my life. And I had come to expect that AA would provide me with that same space. But instead of expanding, it seemed now that my life was contracting. Everything my eyes took in irritated me--the poorly furnished loft, the stack of manuscripts, my wife, my life.

I called my sponsor and gave him my complaint in a tone of reproach, as if both he and AA were guilty of having deceived me. "Is this all there is? I feel terrible," I said, not realizing that in articulating the problem, I was making myself ready for the answer, which he provided with a statement that was to transform my life. "It's time for the Eleventh Step," he said calmly but firmly. The only answers I had ever found for emotional pain and distress were the bottle and drugs, and here was this man pointing me to a Step I knew precious little about. "Here's what you do," he said. "Sit in a hard chair with your spine straight. Then close your eyes and focus on your breath. Just be aware of yourself breathing in and breathing out. Do this for five minutes."

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The Intergroup
Bookstore will be
closed on
November 11 in
observance of
VETERAN'S DAY



Concept XI

Every service
responsibility
should be matched
by an equal
service authority,
with the scope
of such authority
well defined.

Tradition Eleven - "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films."

Our Anonymity Is Both Inspiration And Safety

Before writing the Traditions articles eventually published in the "Twelve and Twelve," Bill W., AA's co-founder, penned more than fifteen essays on the subject in the Grapevine. Distilling the wide-ranging, and often contentious (or fractious) experience of AA's first groups, these articles show how Bill and the Fellowship's thinking about the Traditions evolved, as well as offer new insight into why they are important today. The three essays reprinted here, including the landmark "Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition," provide a glimpse of the Traditions in the making.

The rest of Bill's articles on the Traditions can be found in *Language of the Heart* or in the Digital Archive, along with a wealth of essays by other early members of the Fellowship.

Discussing the subject of anonymity in a previous Grapevine article, I tried to make the following points--that anonymity has, for us AAs, an immense spiritual significance; that the principle ought to be preserved as part of our vital tradition; that since we have as yet no sharply defined policy there is confusion in some quarters as to what anonymity ought to mean; that we need, therefore, a perfectly clear tradition which all AAs would feel bound to respect. I also offered some suggestions which I hoped might become, after further discussion, the basis of a national policy on anonymity. These suggestions were:

1. It should be the privilege of each AA to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires. His fellow AAs should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume.
2. Conversely, the individual AA ought to respect the feeling of his local group about anonymity. If his group wishes to be less conspicuous in their locality than he does, he ought to go along with them until they change their views.
3. With very rare exceptions, it ought to be a national policy that no member of Alcoholics Anonymous shall ever feel free to publish, in connection with any AA activity, his name or picture in mediums of public circulation. This would not, however, restrict the use of his name in other public activities provided, of course, he does not disclose his AA membership.
4. If, for some extraordinary reason, a member thinks it desirable to drop his anonymity locally he should do so only after consulting his own group. If, as an AA, he is to make a nationwide public appearance the matter ought to be referred to national headquarters.

If these suggestions, or variations of them, are to be adopted as a national policy, every AA will want to know more about our experience so far. He will surely wish to know how most of our older members are thinking on the subject of anonymity at the present time. It will be the purpose of this piece to bring everybody up to date on our collective experience.

Firstly, I believe most of us would agree that the general idea of anonymity is sound, because it encourages alcoholics and the families of alcoholics to approach us for help. Still fearful of being stigmatized, they regard our anonymity an assurance their problems will be kept confidential; that the alcoholic skeleton in the family closet will not wander in the streets.

Secondly, the policy of anonymity is a protection to our cause. It prevents our founders or leaders, so called, from becoming household names who might at any time get drunk and give AA a black eye. No one need say that couldn't happen here. It could.

Thirdly, almost every newspaper reporter who covers us complains, at first, of the difficulty of writing his story without names. But he quickly forgets this difficulty when he realizes that here is a group of people who care nothing for personal gain. Probably it is the first time in his life he has ever reported an organization which wants no personal publicity. Cynic though he may be, this obvious sincerity instantly transforms him into a friend of AA. Therefore his piece is a friendly piece, never a routine job. It is enthusiastic writing because the reporter feels that way himself. People often ask how Alcoholics Anonymous has been able to secure such an incredible amount of excellent publicity. The answer seems to be that practically everyone who writes about us becomes an AA convert, sometimes a zealot. Is not our policy of anonymity mainly responsible for this phenomenon?

Fourthly, why does the general public regard us so favorably? Is it simply because we are bringing recovery to lots of alcoholics? No, this can hardly be the whole story. However impressed he may be by our recoveries, John Q. Public is even more interested in our way of life. Weary of pressure selling, spectacular promotion and shouting public characters, he is refreshed by our quietness, modesty and anonymity. It may well be that he feels a great spiritual power is being generated on this account--that something new has come into his own life.

If anonymity has already done these things for us, we surely ought to continue it as a national policy. So very valuable to us now, it may become an incalculable asset for the future. In a spiritual sense, anonymity amounts to the renunciation of personal prestige as an instrument of national policy. I am confident that we shall do well to preserve this powerful principle; that we should resolve never to let go of it.

Recovery Word Puzzle

LISTURPAI
HURTYAOTI
MASTROFRN
SOMESIDNIN
NEARSTVE
LAIDTIG



Unscramble
the letters.
Answers to
puzzle can be
found on
page 7.

SNEERLYCOV
NOSETLEK
CUTLIPBYI
TIRENYTE
BASSPILEDNINE
VETSMARCNOSI



*Have a blessed, sober and happy
Thanksgiving!*

Intergroup wishes to express our sincere gratitude for the many
amazing volunteers who helped make our
Annual Picnic another successful fundraiser filled with
fun, food and fellowship!
Thank you, too, to all those that bought tickets and came out to eat and play.
We couldn't do it without each and every one of you!!

Volunteer Opportunities

9th Annual AA's Got Talent show will have the next planning meeting on
Saturday, November 9th at 1:30 PM
at the 441 Group, 1452 N State Road 7, Margate

Winterfest and Ice Cream Social planning meeting will be held on
Wednesday, November 20th at 7 PM
at Denny's Restaurant, 3151 NW 9th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale

Pick up a commitment today!!

SERVICE KEEPS YOU SOBER



(continued from page 1)

I did exactly as he had suggested. In fact, I sat at the very table where I had drunk myself into oblivion most nights in the last phase of my drinking life. It's not that bells and whistles went off in that five-minute period, or that I saw bright lights or envisioned eternity. And yet something profound did happen. In the course of those five minutes, my sense of discomfort, of irritability--of disease--fell away. I recognized the efficacy of the answer he had provided me. More than that, I intuitively understood that this was where the journey was to be found. It was as if I had been delivered to a path of freedom and of unending growth. And I can say something else--to this day, that horrible doubt about AA that had entered my mind that night has never returned. In fact, my relationship to AA has only grown stronger.

As I recall, the experience of meditation in the early stages was extremely joyful. A rush of happiness, even ecstasy, would overcome me, surpassing anything I had ever felt while drinking or using drugs. And the effect was not short-lived. In one instance, a brief period of meditation resulted in a sensation of spiritual intoxication that lasted for most of the day. Because I was a complete novice--and in a technical sense probably still remain so--my sponsor suggested that I purchase a book on meditation, *Journey of Awakening*, by Ram Dass, and visit a meditation center. The book offered useful tips on how to meditate, a variety of ways to approach it, and other practical information. At the center, I took part in group meditations and even was assigned a meditation instructor, who was quite helpful in regard to technique. But I suspect I was a poor student, because twenty-one years later, I still do what I did that first night: sit in a chair with my eyes closed and focus on my breath.

In this period, I established a routine of forty-five-minute meditation periods on Saturdays and Sundays. (It did not occur to me that I could get up early and do the same during the work week as well.) Like many who are trying to dig out from under the rubble of active alcoholism, I had my list of things that needed to get done, and one Saturday morning I rushed out the door with list in hand, having decided that I could do without meditation that morning. Outside I found a bright and clear day, but for some reason, my insides did not match it. A mood of irritability had come over me and stayed with me through the day. Although I pushed on and did my chores, I sensed that I was not relaxed and happy in the way that I might have been had I given myself my forty-five minutes of meditation. I resolved not to make that mistake again.

I believe the Big Book speaks to what had happened in the line that reads, "We have a daily reprieve from alcohol contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." The fact was simply that while I had conditioned myself for the day physically by showering and shaving, I had not conditioned myself spiritually, and as a consequence, I felt irritable and the world looked ugly.

A life doesn't change simply on the basis of a few periods of meditation, but now, at least, I had discovered where the journey was to be found, and it was not in the bottle or the drug or the relationship or in any of the externals that most of us want and in some degree need. The journey was an internal one, an "inside job," as we say in the Fellowship. And having found some of it, I now wanted and needed more. Spiritual hunger is as insatiable as the thirst for the next drink, with the difference, of course, that while alcohol contracts us, a life in God offers unlimited expansion. The goal was only to have a changed mind, a changed consciousness, a new way of seeing life. As the Big Book says, "The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body."

I had also learned another simple thing: prayer was not enough. It may be for some, but that was not the case with me.

When the Eleventh Step says "Sought through prayer and meditation," to me it means that what I need to develop is a daily practice. It is not something for me to do on a hit-or-miss basis or if my schedule permits or on those occasions when I am feeling bad or stressed out. It is for good weather and bad weather and just your average cloudy day. So in the years that have passed, I have tried to develop a daily practice, and clarity, focus, and awareness have entered my life in a way and to a degree that would not have been possible without it. The strongest, most consistent message I receive from the Higher Power is love yourself, respect yourself. Love is the absolutely crucial, indispensable ingredient in recovery. We get that love from the AA group when we are new, and then, through the first Nine Steps, we uncover and discover that which has been there within us all along, a loving God. AA didn't install that God in me; AA didn't provide me with a God bearing its own trademark. The first Nine Steps allowed me to tune in, to access, what had been there all along. Love is the thing that heals us, and only when we feel loved can

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Treasurer, PO Box 1784
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District 9 General Service

P.O. Box 100126
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33310

AA BIRTHDAY'S

November Celebrants

Broward Men's

Jack P. ~ 49 yrs.
John M. ~ 10 yrs.
Bill ~ 3 yrs.

Express Group

Larry C. ~ 38 yrs.
D.J. ~ 8 yrs.
James ~ 8 yrs.
Joe T. ~ 8 yrs.
Mike ~ 5 yrs.
J.T. ~ 26 yrs.

Joy of Sobriety

Donnie W. ~ 11 yrs.
Bill P. ~ 17 yrs.
Frank B. ~ 4 yrs.
Mark H. ~ 13 yrs.

Serenity Altogether

Bill N. ~ 45 yrs.

Y.A.N.A.

Marie H. ~ 4 yrs.

Sunshine Group

Mikey M. ~ 5 yrs.

Davie Women's

Jewel P. ~ 5 yrs.

Sober Sisters

Trish F. ~ 35 yrs.
Terri ~ 10 yrs.
Rachel ~ 17 yrs.
Lori P. ~ 3 yrs.
Alexis ~ 6 yrs.

Oakland Park Group

Joel C. ~ 38 yrs.
Damien S. ~ 14 yrs.
Dan I. ~ 32 yrs.

Ft. Lauderdale

Women's

Susan ~ 14 yrs.

True Self Group

Larry M. ~ 16 yrs.
Bonnie B. ~ 38 yrs.
Bernie B. ~ 38 yrs.

Eleventh Step Group

Maurice C. ~ 20 yrs.

Spiritual Principles

Melani S. ~ 26 yrs.

Westside Men's

Armen Z. ~ 26 yrs.
Sean M. ~ 12 yrs.
Tim A. ~ 10 yrs.

Bayview Beginners

Natalia S. ~ 4 yrs.

TGIF

Jay G. ~ 23 yrs.

Focus on Sobriety

Barbara B. ~ 23 yrs.

Happy Destiny

Sue ~ 28 yrs.

Men in Recovery

Bill W. ~ 38 yrs.
Bob G. ~ 37 yrs.
Will S. ~ 10 yrs.

Stepping Out

John P. ~ 35 yrs.
Joe F. ~ 35 yrs.
Chrissy ~ 25 yrs.
Bob R. ~ 29 yrs.

Lunch Bunch

Jimmy Z. ~ 15 yrs.
Cliff ~ 26 yrs.
Jennifer ~ 8 yrs.

JOIN THE BIRTHDAY CLUB!

Celebrate your sobriety by sending \$1 per every year sober to your local Intergroup office to show your gratitude and give back once a year.

(Birthday listings are not contingent upon contributions...we just like to celebrate sobriety.)

BRIDGING THE GAP

has a new number

724-680-0430

**BCIC - Broward County
Institutions Committee**

**Next Meeting:
November 9 - 10:00 a.m.**

**Twelve Step House
205 SW 23rd St.,
Ft. Lauderdale**

**Next
Intergroup Meeting**

**Twelve Step House
205 S.W. 23rd St., Ft. Lauderdale**

**SUNDAY, November 17
at 1:00 p.m.**



October Celebrants not previously mentioned

Meeting in Print

June C. ~ 47 yrs.

Focus on Sobriety

Ginger ~ 9 yrs.

Oakland Park Group

DJ ~ 8 yrs.
Drew B. ~ 13 yrs.
Mark B. ~ 29 yrs.

Sober Sisters

Adina ~ 3 yrs.
Tara ~ 7 yrs.

One Day at a Time

Barbara L. ~ 27 yrs.

Y.A.N.A.

Yolanda ~ 22 yrs.

Men in Recovery

Jack C. ~ 26 yrs.



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we give the love that makes the Twelfth Step possible.

At some point in early recovery, I began praying that the Higher Power would teach me to love. That has remained a daily prayer. Without the Higher Power, I know how to fear you, hate you, envy you, compete with you, seek to control you. Alcoholics Anonymous has taught me that there is no love of God without love of people. It is a lesson I have a lifetime, one day at a time, to assimilate.

—David S., New York, NY

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Now what about its application? Since we advertise anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved. Because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If he wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other AA members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling.

Then comes the problem of the newcomer who wishes to drop his anonymity too fast. He rushes to all his friends with the glad news of AA. If this group does not caution him he may rush to a newspaper office or a microphone to tell the wide world all about himself. He is also likely to tell everyone the innermost details of his personal life, soon to find that, in this respect, he has altogether too much publicity! We ought to suggest to him that he take things easy; that he first get on his own feet before talking about AA to all and sundry; that no one thinks of publicizing AA without being sure of the approval of his own group.

Then there is the problem of group anonymity. Like the individual, it is probable that the group ought to feel its way along cautiously until it gains strength and experience. There should not be too much haste to bring in outsiders or to set up public meetings. Yet this early conservatism can be overdone. Some groups go on, year after year, shunning all publicity or any meetings except those for alcoholics only. Such groups are apt to grow slowly. They become stale because they are not taking in fresh blood fast enough. In their anxiety to maintain secrecy they forget their obligation to other alcoholics in their communities who have not heard that AA has come to town. But this unreasonable caution eventually breaks down. Little by little some meetings are opened to families and close friends. Clergymen and doctors may now and then be invited. Finally the group enlists the aid of the local newspaper.

In most places, but not all, it is customary for AAs to use their own names when speaking before public or semi-public gatherings. This is done to impress audiences that we no longer fear the stigma of alcoholism. If, however, newspaper reporters were present they are earnestly requested not to use the names of any of the alcoholic speakers on the program. This preserves the principle of anonymity so far as the general public is concerned and at the same time represents us as a group of alcoholics who no longer fear to let our friends know that we have been very sick people.

In practice then, the principle of anonymity seems to come down to this: With one very important exception, the question of how far each individual or group shall go in dropping anonymity is left strictly to the individual or group concerned. The exception is: That all groups or individuals, when writing or speaking for publication as members of Alcoholics Anonymous, feel bound never to disclose their true names. Except for very rare cases, it is at this point of publication that nearly all of us feel we should draw the anonymity line. We ought not disclose ourselves to the general public.

In our whole history not more than a handful of AAs have ever dropped their anonymity so far as the general public is concerned. Some of these instances have been accidental, a few have been quite unnecessary and one or two are apparently justified. Of course there must be few policies which cannot sometimes, in the general interest, be suspended. Yet any who would drop their anonymity must reflect that they may set a precedent which could eventually destroy a valuable principle. The exceptions will have to be few, far between, and most carefully considered. We must never let any immediate advantage shake us in our determination to hang on to such a really vital tradition.

Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to AA as a whole. This principle of anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.

—Bill W.

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Definition of Broward County Intergroup, Inc.

Your Intergroup office services all groups in the Broward County area. It is not a governing body and does not attempt to, nor can it, rule any AA Group. Its sole purpose is to act as a clearinghouse for the convenience of members and groups desiring assistance, and to extend the Twelve Step Work "carrying the message" to the sick alcoholic. The Intergroup office is supported entirely by contributions from groups, usually a specified amount each month or at intervals throughout the year.

Faithful Fivers are A.A. members who donate five dollars (\$5) a month to Intergroup as an act of gratitude. Their generosity helps us to carry the message of A.A. to the still sick and suffering alcoholic throughout the year.

Thank you to our Faithful Fivers. Your contributions are so appreciated!

Tom & Liz J., Gregory C., Suzanne J., Bob H., Anonymous I, Elizabeth B., Ron J., Tim S., Lois O., Richard H., Jennifer S., Pat R., Beth D., Craig G., Sandy P., Leo H., Vickie T., Howie K., Kerry W., Lewis G., James H., Joanne D., Gerry B., Don W., Eric P., Tara D., Denise J., Howard S., Bob D., Robert H., Sally S., Anonymous II, Jane T., Fran C., Peter S., Deborah C., Women's Step by Step and Rachel L.

Please consider becoming a "Faithful Fiver." Your commitment of \$5.00 a month to your Intergroup Office will go a long way toward helping carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic who reaches out. Fill out this form and mail it in with your contribution today!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Sobriety Date and Home Group _____

Make checks payable to:

Broward County Intergroup, Inc., 3317 NW 10th Terrace, Suite 404, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309

ANSWERS TO PUZZLE: spiritual, authority, transform, dimensions, veterans, digital, conversely, skeleton, publicity, eternity, Indispensable, conservatism

I AM RESPONSIBLE....

WHEN ANYONE, ANYWHERE, REACHES OUT FOR HELP,
I WANT THE HAND OF A.A. ALWAYS TO BE THERE. AND FOR THAT: I AM RESPONSIBLE.

NAME: _____ GENDER: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

PREFER: VOICE: _____ TEXT: _____ EMAIL: _____ CITY OF RESIDENCE: _____

WILL CALL BACK: _____ AND/OR PAY A VISIT: _____

AVAILABILITY: MONDAY to FRIDAY: _____ WEEKENDS: _____

8:00am-12:00pm _____ 12:00pm-5:00pm _____ 5:00pm-9:00pm _____ 9:00pm-8:00am _____

TO COMPLETE A 12-STEP CALL, you only need to be sober one day, but you NEVER GO ALONE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE! SEND COMPLETED FORM TO: help@aabroward.org



MEETING CHANGES

Monday

The Bottom Line Group meeting at 7 PM on Monday in Deerfield is now a Men's meeting.

10 & 11 Step Winner's Circle at the Sober Today Club in Hollywood is a meditation meeting.

NEW MEETING Big Book Meditation Group meets at Parish of Sts. Francis and Clare, 2300 NW 9th Avenue, Wilton Manors at 7 PM. Omg.

Tuesday

Women's Step by Step which meets on Tuesday has moved to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, 2500 NE 14th Street Causeway, Pompano. Format and time remain the same.

Wednesday

Lambda Rising Meeting which met at Lambda Clubhouse in Ft. Lauderdale at 6 AM NO LONGER MEETS on Wednesdays.

Thursday

NEW MEETING Nuevo Porvenir has added a meeting on Thursday from 8-10 PM. Same location, Spanish. 1486 S. Palm Avenue, Pembroke Pines.

Coconut Creek Group which met at Calvary Presbyterian NO LONGER MEETS on Thursdays.

Friday

The Eye Opener which meets in Hollywood NO LONGER MEETS on Friday.

Sunday

The Bottom Line Group meeting at 8:30 PM on Sunday in Deerfield is no longer a Men's meeting.

Things we cannot change.....



John M., Jim E., Joe K.

They will be missed. May they Rest in Peace.

Recently scientists have begun finding that people who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits:

- Stronger immune systems and lower blood pressure;
- Higher levels of positive emotions;
- More joy, optimism, and happiness;
- Acting with more generosity and compassion;
- Feeling less lonely and isolated.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Upcoming Events

- Nov. 9** **Annual Intergroup CUSTOMER APPRECIATION DAY!!** Pre-holiday sales event, door prizes and refreshments. Intergroup opened 9-5 that day.
- Nov. 23** **Traditions 4-6 Workshop**, presented by Broward County Intergroup, 3317 NW 10th Terrace, Suite 404, Oakland Park. Contact office to reserve your seat. 7-9:00 PM. Refreshments served.
- Dec. 7** **District 9 Winterfest and Ice Cream Social** at NSU Terry Bldg. cafeteria, 3200 S University Drive, Davie. Ugly Sweater Contest, and Feature Movie. 5:30 PM dinner, 7:45 PM Speaker. \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door
- Feb. 1** **9th Annual AA's Got Talent**, Coral Springs Charter School, 3205 N. University Drive, Coral Springs. 7-10 PM. Adult event ONLY. Tickets \$10, desserts and coffee
- Apr. 25** **57th Annual Intergroup Banquet** Tropical Acres Steakhouse, Griffin Road, Ft. Lauderdale, \$45 Advance purchase only. 6-10 PM, dinner, 2 speakers, raffles.