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Hi, my name is Susan V. and I am an alcoholic. I am the current Southeast Regional Trustee, on the General Service Board and a Director on the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. board. I have been asked to write about Self-Support. In true AA fashion I am going to share a part my personal journey and hopefully my experience, strength and hope.

What comes to my mind when thinking about this topic is that when I was 18 years old and one week out of graduating high school, I had a huge fit and big fight with my father who was a single parent and told him "I am out of here – I don't need you. I am going to make it on my own!" Luckily, I had some friends that had a place where I could stay until I could find a job that would support me and allow me to live the life that I thought I should be living. What happened after that was that I got extremely lucky and found a job where I was able to support myself. I got my own apartment. I got my very first checking account and I started getting bills.

Sadly, I had no idea what to do with any of that. I did not know how to write a check. I did not know anything about a "budget"! I did not realize that bills had dates that they had to be paid by. I had no idea what being on my own was like in a practical sense. All I knew was that I needed to be free of all constraints. (HMMM) So much for that! Luckily, I did have some friends that tried to teach me about these things. I can tell you that it took me decades to learn how to take care of myself financially – even though I truly got lucky enough that I was able to get away with NOT being financially savvy.

The last story I will tell about this phase of my life is that at one point in time... even though I swore I would work for a living and not dabble in higher education – I did decide to take a college course or two. I **truly did not know** that it cost money to go to college. I was very surprised when after I signed up for a couple of classes, I was asked for money. I didn't have any. In a story for another day, somebody helped me out with that and I was able to begin a college career and learn about that part of my life.

You may be wondering why I'm telling you all of this. Firstly, I suspect I am not alone in this kind of ignorance/naïveté. Secondly, I am using it to illustrate what I thought self-support meant. I really thought it meant "I've got this – I don't need you". I thought that it meant whatever I earn I can spend however I want on whatever I want. Part of my exploration also had to do with if people gave me money, I would have to cut them out of my life so that they wouldn't see what I was doing with the funds and I wouldn't have to pay them back. Luckily, we have steps to repair this....

Imagine my surprise and the steepest of learning curves when learning about our Seventh Tradition. Here I learned a brand-new definition of Self-Support. I was blown away that as a group – using a group conscience-we spoke about and made decisions regarding the money that we all put in the basket. I don't know about any of you... But I found that rather challenging. The idea of talking about this and making decisions as a group did not seem very “SELF Support” to me.

As time has gone on, this principle of what our society of Alcoholics Anonymous does regarding our finances has been such a beautiful journey and to me the embodiment of a true collective conscience.

Though we have Literature that we sell and is part of our self-support package... The fact that we willingly place money in a basket to support what it is that we are doing is a very moving reality.

Our [Self-Support Card | Alcoholics Anonymous](#) talks about support through our own contributions. As we all know, the contributions do cover the group's expenses, but the Seventh Tradition is more than simply paying for rent and other group expenses. It is both a privilege and a responsibility of individual groups and members to ensure that our organization, at every level, remains forever self-supporting and free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose. The monetary amount of each contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that joins us in unity with groups around the world. (See also [Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix | Alcoholics Anonymous](#) and [Seventh Tradition Fact Sheet - Your Seventh Tradition Contributions | Alcoholics Anonymous](#))

If anybody ever talked to me about money as a privilege or having a responsibility/stewardship with it, I truly would not have known what they were talking about. I have come to learn what a privilege it is to put money in the basket of the fellowship that saved my life and my sanity. I also feel that it is an awesome responsibility to be mindful and careful with how that money is spent.

It has been such an honor to learn how that works at the Board level. To actually see the loving support of the fellowship be transferred into the services that we provide to them and to alcoholics that have not yet been made aware of this spiritual fellowship is such an act of love and service.

I am grateful.