



PSYCHEDELICS in RECOVERY™

DE VINE



LETTING GO
NEWSLETTER -
JUNE 2026 EDITION



FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *De Vine* explores **Step Six** and the theme of **letting go** through several deeply personal lenses. Diana G.'s *Letting Go of the Grip* speaks to the exhaustion of living in constant vigilance and the slow process of loosening control. Christy B.'s *Letting Go* reflects on surrender, humility, and reconnecting with a Higher Power through recovery. In *Thoughts on Step Six*, I explore readiness itself — the difficult space between survival and transformation. Alan H.'s *Letting Go in Recovery* examines releasing old recovery identities and inherited beliefs in order to move toward a more authentic path. And Play Steinberg's *a growing cascade of letting go* traces an unfolding series of losses, risks, and awakenings that asks what freedom might look like on the other side of fear. Together, these pieces form a conversation about what it means to release not only what harms us, but sometimes what once helped us survive.

This will also be the final issue of *De Vine* for the foreseeable future.

When we reformed the newsletter committee earlier this year, one of the primary goals was to build a process that protected people from burnout and created enough structure that the work could be handed forward sustainably. Despite the care, effort, and creativity that went into this project, we were not able to build a broad enough base of ongoing support to make that possible.

At this point, the workload has effectively fallen onto too few people for too long.

I want to express gratitude to Play Steinberg for the artistry, service, and quick turnaround of laying out this edition. Also thanks to Vita Henderson-Chan, Christopher, and everyone else who contributed service during the run of the newsletter. And thank you to every contributor who trusted us with your stories, artwork, reflections, and vulnerability.

I'm proud that we were able to put these issues into the world with sincerity and integrity. My hope is that they served as a small place of connection and reflection within the fellowship.

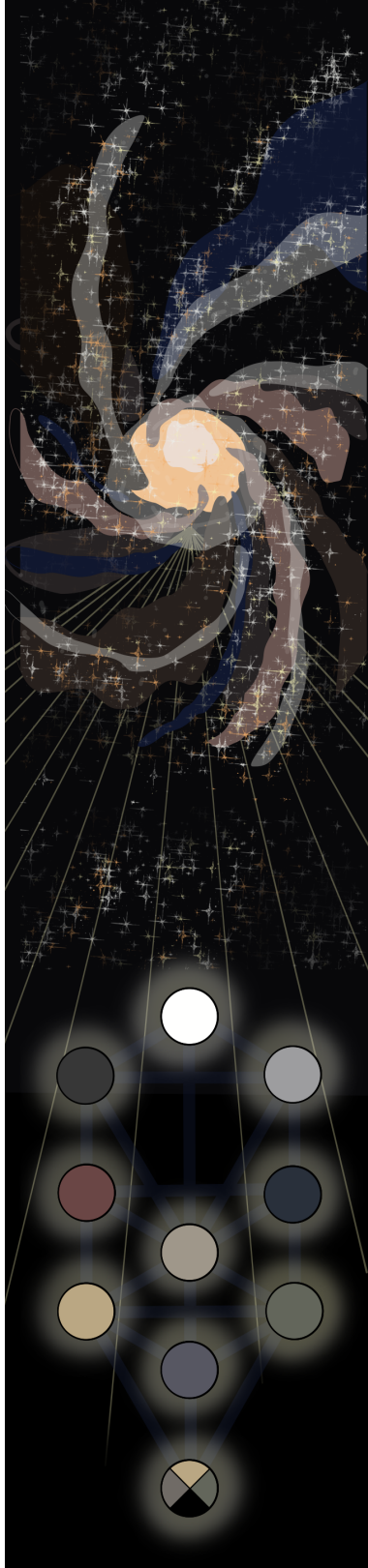
For now, we let this project rest.

— Douglas

Editor, *De Vine*

LETTING GO OF THE GRIP

BY DIANA G



I used to believe control was safety. If I could manage my reactions, the room, the energy—people's moods—then nothing could unsettle me. Nothing could hit me the way it used to. Control wasn't a personality trait. It was survival. My anger was my body saying, "No—this isn't happening to me again."

Living with Complex PTSD means my nervous system doesn't always get the memo that I'm safe now. One tone, one look, one unanswered text—and I'm already ten steps ahead. Bracing. Protecting. Preparing. So I learned to read people, manage outcomes, and keep everything just right so I wouldn't feel out of control.

My therapist said something simple that cut right through me: It's exhausting. I was tired of always being on. Never actually resting, because I'm busy making sure nothing goes wrong. The anger that once protected me started spilling into places it didn't belong—into my closest relationships, into moments that deserved tenderness and love. When I react, it can be ugly and loud... and the shame follows. But the shame doesn't last forever anymore.

I'm learning to go back and forgive the version of me who thought this was the only way to survive. She was trying to stay safe in a home that wasn't designed for her safety. And through plant medicine and integration work, I'm learning how to protect her differently now—how to hold her steady, give her rest, and show her she can be held without fear.

So what's asking to be released?

The grip. The constant need to control everything so I can feel okay. The belief that if I don't stay ahead of it all, I'll get hurt again.

What stands in the way?

Fear. Fear that if I let go, everything will fall apart. Fear that if I soften, I'll be taken advantage of. Fear that if I'm not in control, I'm not safe.

What might become possible if I let it go anyway?

I'm starting to realize that holding on tight doesn't keep me safe. Real safety comes from trusting myself to handle whatever comes, even if it's messy or uncomfortable. Letting go doesn't mean I stop caring or pretend everything's okay. It means I try to pause, breathe, and choose a different way to respond—sometimes, even if I don't get it right every time.

It's not neat or easy. It asks me to sit with feelings I'd rather run from. But when I loosen my grip, I open up space—space for things I didn't expect: relief, growth, maybe even peace. Little by little, I'm learning that letting go doesn't mean losing control, it means making room for something new to happen.

LETTING GO

BY CHRISTY B

In step six of Psychedelics in Recovery, learning to let go is key. It states: “Were entirely ready to have our Higher Power remove any characteristics that cause suffering.” When I connect with my Higher Power, I seek guidance, wisdom, and clarity in learning to let go of patterns that once served a purpose in coping, but are no longer needed. But I still maintain my free will. I think realizing that made step six seem a little less intimidating than I had initially feared.

There really is not a dramatic moment when everything suddenly changes in step six – it is more of a gradual, mindful shift. Letting go of the thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, patterns, and previous ideas of self takes time and practice. Realizing that the past does not define the person I am today required a time of healing and self-compassion. Since shame was a component of my addiction, it was an uncomfortable truth to face. Healing was possible only with the humility to recognize that I needed my Higher Power to help me on my path to recovery and the willingness to be open to new ways.

Step 6 taught me that making decisions based on fear led to maladaptive coping strategies. I realized people pleasing to avoid conflict meant stifling my own wants, thoughts, and needs, and compromised personal alignment. Feeling defensive about



not wanting to be wrong and afraid of disappointing others led to an abandonment of autonomy and diminishing feelings self worth.

These thoughts and beliefs did not serve me well. They were actually keeping me from achieving my true self. I recognized that seeking to maintain control kept me addicted, and that being closed minded allowed me to remain in denial about my problematic relationship with alcohol. Both behaviors hindered my progress toward knowing my Higher Power. Being able to let go of some of these traits opens myself up to healthier ways to live and interact with the world around me.

Knowing this about myself became important as I was working the steps. By striving to let go of some of these traits and instead replace fear with courage, ego with humility, and avoidance with confidence to face the unknown, I am slowly returning to my higher self and reclaiming the trajectory of my life path, step by step. I am learning to set more well defined boundaries, have the humility – much more so than when in active addiction - to admit when I am wrong and strive to and courage make changes to return to integrity. It is a constant, slowly evolving effort.

When unexpected challenges occur (and they do!), I try to utilize prayer, meditation, and expressive art to get clarity on the next mindful thing to do. Letting go of self-reliance and learning to connect with my Higher Power has helped silence the power that alcohol had to numb what I didn't want to feel, and escape what I didn't want to face. Connecting with my Higher Power has given me access to new and healthier ways to cope. Alcohol has outlasted its purpose.

THOUGHTS ON STEP SIX

BY DOUGLAS NELSON

Step Six. Were entirely ready to have our Higher Power remove any characteristics that cause suffering.

Step Six may be simpler than we make it. We have seen our patterns. We have named the damage. Now we are asked to become ready—not to fix ourselves, not to remove anything by force, but to be entirely ready to let something go that has been costing us peace.

We may misunderstand this step. We might think readiness means enthusiasm. Or certainty. Or that we have finally conquered the thing.

But eagerness is not readiness. And exhaustion is not the same as surrender.

We may be tired of anger and still cherish the power it gives us. We may resent perfectionism and still depend on the praise it brings. We may condemn our control while quietly trusting it more than grace.

So perhaps Step Six is not about becoming better. Perhaps it is about telling the truth about the benefits we still receive from what hurts us. We may ask:

What do I still get from this pattern?

Protection? Attention? Distance? Superiority? Certainty?

These characteristics once helped us survive. They may have guarded old wounds when no one else did. If we are honest, we may find loyalty there. Letting go can feel like betrayal—of the self who endured, of the armor that worked.

So readiness may not roar. It may whisper: *“I think I am done living this way.”*

Counting the Cost

Step Six confronts a quiet fear: *Who will I be without this?*

If we are not the responsible one, the agreeable one, the sharp one, the needed one—who are we?

We may fear losing identity. We may fear losing relationships that depend on our old role. We may fear losing control. The illusion that if we grip tightly enough we can keep pain away. Step Six does not mock that fear. It may simply ask us to weigh the cost.

What will it cost if I let this go?

What will it cost if I don't?

Letting go may cost us familiar relief. The rush of righteousness. The comfort of being right. The predictability of our defenses. It may cost us certainty. New ways require not knowing. They require standing without armor long enough for something truer to form.

But not letting go has its own quiet price. We may keep rehearsing the same conflict. Making the same apology. Revising the same promise. We may continue getting what we want while slowly losing who we want to be.

This is not a threat. It is a mirror. Step Six may expose where fear still drives control. Where we prefer management to transformation.

Some versions of recovery settle for stability. Enough change to avoid collapse. But perhaps this step invites something deeper. Not behavior modification, alignment. Alignment of thought, word, and deed. A quiet coherence. A life not organized around avoiding pain but around living in truth.

What If...

The fear beneath this step may be the fear of becoming undefended. We may ask:

If I stop grasping, will I disappear?

If I stop rejecting, will I be overwhelmed?

If I stop numbing, will I drown?

These are not foolish questions. They are honest ones. And perhaps readiness begins when we admit we are already tired of drowning differently every day. We do not have to be certain. We may only need to be willing to be willing.

That small shift—from clinging to openness—can be the hinge of the door. We do not remove the characteristics. We do not perfect ourselves. We become ready. Ready to

release the demand that life meet our terms. Ready to loosen the grip on identities that keep us divided. Ready to imagine that we are more than our coping.

Transformation may not come by force.

It might come by space.

When we stop negotiating with what we know is costing us peace and whisper, “I am ready to live differently,” something subtle may begin. Some burdens we may drop like hot coals. Some we may set down slowly, like old friends who kept us alive long enough to choose again.

Step Six does not guarantee change. It orients us toward it. From survival to surrender. From control to coherence. From managing symptoms to becoming undivided.

We may not yet know who we are without the armor. But perhaps that is the point. We do not have to know. We may only have to say—with honesty, with humility, with trembling hands if necessary—we are ready to be changed in ways we do not yet understand.



LETTING GO IN RECOVERY

BY ALAN H

PIR has given me the opportunity to let go of quite a bit of what I would call ‘conditioning’ that has resulted from several decades of 12 Step recovery in AA. This has been a difficult and sometimes awkward and uncomfortable process.



The decision to work with psychedelics required me to question and release my ideas of sobriety. Although psychedelics are ‘an outside issue’, the idea of total abstinence from any mind-altering substances was strongly imprinted from the AA meetings that I had been attending for many years. Undergoing training to become a Peer Recovery Coach was my first exposure to the concept of harm reduction and self-directed recovery. I struggled with this and resisted the notion that anyone could determine the course of their own recovery, since I believed that the program of the Big Book and abstinence to be end-all-be-all way to attain sobriety- one of several old ideas that I have let go of.

A dear friend who had left AA and become an Ayahuascero convinced me to attend my first ceremony about 8 years ago. I was somewhat skeptical and spent about 6 months doing research and educating myself before diving in. This experience was a turning point for me and opened my mind in ways that only psychedelics can do.

Following two more ceremonies I stumbled into PIR. By this time, I was more involved with ACA than AA, and the experiences with plant medicine had been beneficial in showing

me how deeply I had been affected by my family of origin and what needed to be healed and released.

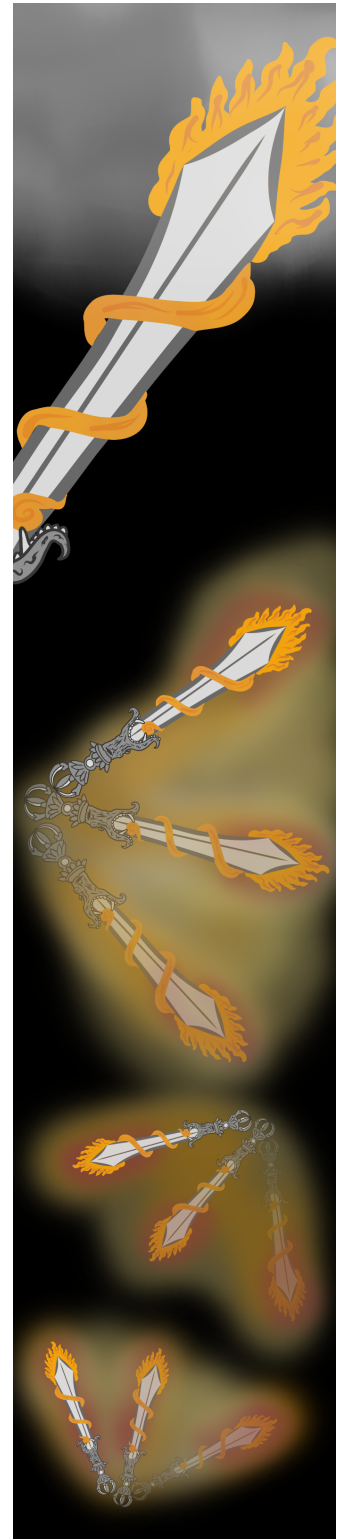
Letting go of some of the imbedded messaging of AA has been a process. I will always feel deep gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous and the sponsors who have helped me in that program. I'm fairly certain that AA saved my life. I find the principles of the 12 Steps and the design for living that is presented in the Big Book to be a practical and beneficial path for a good life- yet there were some aspects of the program that were beginning to feel too constraining and inauthentic to me. Some of the ideas that I was hearing in meetings began to feel harmful and no longer aligned with what I felt to be the truth of my being.

There were friends that I had been sitting in meetings with for more than a decade. I had sponsored several of these men, I had been best man at some of their weddings and watched their families grow, yet I felt less and less aligned with many of the ideas in AA. I looked at the back of my 30-year sobriety medallion and read the well-known phrase 'To Thy Own Self Be True'. I knew in my heart that I no longer fit in AA and it was time to let go of my relationship to that program.

The most difficult part was leaving the folks in the home group and letting go of those relationships. I still miss the camaraderie of those guys, and a few of them have remained friends even though I don't go to the meetings, but most have fallen away. I am so grateful that PIR has given me a new support group. I know that deep connection with others is an essential aspect of recovery.

I've let go of the idea that I am inherently flawed and need salvation. This message came through in the AA meetings that I was attending. I now see my character defects mostly as survival strategies that have become liabilities. I recognize that the human ego has an agenda that is often harmful to myself and others, but this is a universal phenomenon and does not make me a bad person- misguided perhaps, but not bad. While the shaming messages that I picked up in AA were perhaps unintended, for someone like me that already brings a deep core of shame to recovery, it was not helpful to continue in that program.

In retrospect, I can see how some of my ACA traits worked to my benefit in early recovery. My people pleasing and sense of inferiority caused me to work hard to win my



sponsor's approval, so I followed all the suggestions. One of the ACA Laundry List Traits says that it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves- this manifested as a strong service ethic in AA. Now, at this stage of my recovery, I am attempting to let go of these traits (integrate them) and find intentionality and balance. I still do service in recovery and have a fellow traveler that I speak with regularly to maintain transparency, however the dynamics in that relationship are not at all like those I had with my AA sponsor.

One of the 3 essentials of recovery, according to the appendix (Spiritual Experience) in the Big Book of AA is open-mindedness. An open mind is like an open door- it allows ideas and concepts that no longer serve me to pass through and new ones to come in. I am grateful for PIR. It is a wonderful forum- a place for me to let go of obsolete messages in recovery and to consider new, more aligned ones to enter.

A GROWING CASCADE OF LETTING GO

BY PLAY STEINBERG



Since October I've been letting go of psychiatric drugs. Slowly and carefully titrating off of three different substances - an antidepressant, a mood stabilizer, and an antipsychotic - that I'd been relying on for the better part of four years, ever since my mother took her life in the summer of 2022.

I was eight months sober in AA when that happened. I'd never wanted to be on those drugs (*ever? again? both?*) but in the moment, they were literally lifesaving. I'd been battling suicidal ideation even before mom's death, just as I had after my dad

made his exit by suicide six years prior, in 2016, so I know where that path can lead. You could say I've become something of an expert at letting go.

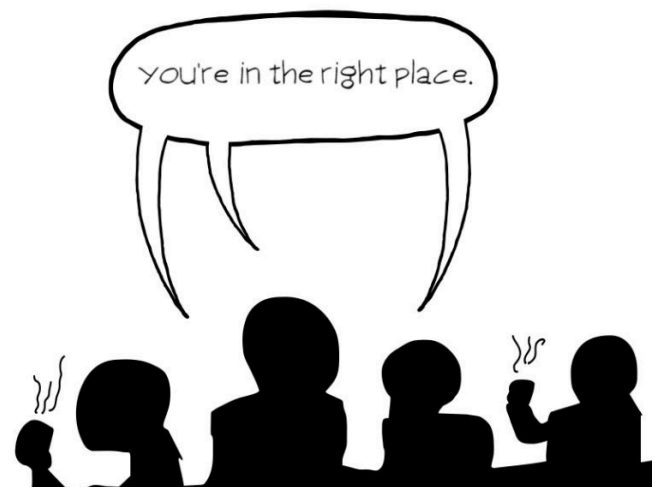
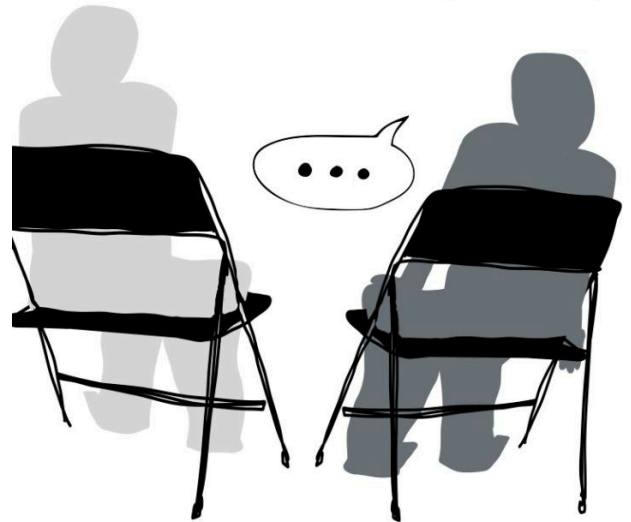
But what is lifesaving in a moment can grow to be confining. On these drugs, after a while, I felt stable, but stagnant. I was missing the mark. Watching my life from the sidelines, my true nature and purpose going unrealized. I had routine and safety, of a sort, but very little traction. No momentum or sense of possibility. It felt like I was coasting, and in AA I've heard it said, if you're coasting, you're going downhill. I knew there was deeper healing for me to do, but on the drugs, I just couldn't do it. I couldn't access the parts that needed attention. In essence, I felt spiritually castrated. Cut off from my Higher Power and my true potential. And so I took a risk. Letting go of the medications - their authoritative guarantees of support and consistency - to try re-

centering the Sacred in my life. To lean into somatic and sacred modalities. To walk a wholly spiritual, and not a pathological, path.

Letting go of those drugs woke me up to all the ways that compromise and self-abandonment had become as familiar to me as swallowing my daily pills. It was letting go of chemistry's guard rails. Taking the training wheels off. Being flooded by feelings and sensations and over-reactions and over-corrections that, at least in the beginning, could take all day to re-regulate from. It was letting go of the illusion of control, predictability and routine. But also, letting go of settling for "this is as good as it gets." Letting go of any pretense that I even knew my true capacity. Letting go of all the limiting stories I told myself.

And in letting go of all that, well, it wasn't planned, but that led me to let go of an entire relationship of nearly three years, too. I was faced with the startling discovery that despite all my recovery in SLAA, I hadn't negotiated or upheld agreements and boundaries that supported me nearly enough. And the short version is, we just weren't able to re-negotiate them. My partner felt like she lost me when I came off the meds. She compared the change in me to someone entering active addiction. On the other hand, after the tumult of the first few months, I feel like I'm getting sober in a whole new way. Increasingly clear. Increasingly more alive. So all of this spelled a bigger letting go - letting go of us.

Which meant letting go of a house and a home, physical objects and daily routines, the gym, the lake, my community, our two cats, and on and on. And that's not to even begin to mention letting go of that human - whom I still love and was, until two months ago, sharing my daily life with. As of now, we are no contact. The change is still sinking in. The letting go is still, well, letting going.



But I am five months out from any of those psychiatric drugs, and I am letting go of the idea that I will ever need them again. I am letting go of the fear of a life without them. And I think, my friends, you could call that the beginning of freedom.

In 2024 I wrote a comic called **Father. Mother. God.**

(note: all artwork in this issue of De Vine is from the comic).

In 12 episodes, it's a spiritual autobiography about mental illness and addiction, recovery, my relationship with the Divine, and surviving the suicides of both my parents. In other words, it's a lot about letting go. May it bring you comfort and benefit, in your own letting go.



READ FATHER. MOTHER. GOD.

PSYCHEDELICS IN RECOVERY (PIR)

GSR Subcommittee Report

April & May 2026

Prepared by: Karyn S., GSR Subcommittee Chair

The GSR Subcommittee met in April and May 2026 with solid participation from GSRs across the fellowship. April featured a discussion on Tradition 4 and the passage of the Traveling GSR Proposal, which is now in the early stages of implementation. May opened with a reflection on Tradition 5 and our primary purpose as a fellowship. Over both months, the subcommittee welcomed a new meeting to the fellowship (Monday Breathe, started March 30), addressed open service positions across several groups, and supported the convention fundraising campaign launched by the board. The safety subcommittee transitioned to an on-demand model with Erin B. serving as the point of contact for GSRs who need support.

APRIL 2026 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Tradition 4 -- Group Autonomy discussed.
- 12-Step Book Committee completed its two-year project and handed the manuscript off to the board for editing, layout, and publishing.
- Traveling GSR Proposal passed. Implementation underway.

MAY 2026 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Tradition 5 -- PIR's Primary Purpose discussed.
- Safety subcommittee transitioned to an on-demand model. Erin B. available for support -- contact via GSR WhatsApp.
- Monday Breathe Meeting introduced by Hugh -- Mondays at 11:00 AM Pacific / 2:00 PM Eastern. Approaching 3-month calendar eligibility.
- Open service positions across the fellowship: Wednesday Step Study (GSR needed), Monday Womxn's Meeting (GSR needed), Sunday Integration (Chair/Co-Chair as of July 1), Thursday Love Sex & Relationships (Chair needed).

LOOKING AHEAD -- JUNE 2026

- Next GSR Subcommittee Meeting: Saturday, June 20, 2026 -- 12:00 PM EST via Zoom.
- Erin B. to report back on AA safety workshop findings.
- Continued implementation of the Traveling GSR Proposal.

GSR Subcommittee meets the third Saturday of each month at 12:00 PM EST via Zoom.

Questions? Contact Karyn S., GSR Subcommittee Chair

