

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

FEAR AND A PHYSICAL ALLERGY

Many of my earliest memories in life are fear based, one being the build up to the first day of kindergarten. I asked my older siblings if school was hard, if there was a lot of homework, were the teachers mean? They confirmed my fears with “yes” as any good siblings would. On that first day, I walked into a classroom full of other kids and immediately felt alone. I felt they all knew each other, were friends with each other and that I was the only outsider. Fear of not fitting in or looking stupid in front of the whole class overwhelmed me. Everything went well that first day so the worrying and the fear in my head was worse than the event. And that’s how I lived a good part of my life, driven by fear.

I started drinking when I was 12 years old and once I had that first drink my fear and insecurity went away. It wasn’t long after that, my first drunk was a blackout from gin. The next morning, I was hungover and felt shame, after finding out I had thrown up all over the bathroom

and someone else had to clean it up. Within a short amount of time, I was ready to do it again. That pattern would continue in my life.

After 36 years of drinking I made it into AA. I went to meetings, got a sponsor and started working the steps. I learned that my life had been driven by fear. That I drank to fit in and overcome that fear and forget the guilt and resentments from my actions, which were not aligned with my principles. I learned that I have a physical reaction to alcohol and once I had one drink, I could not stop, I craved more and never knew how much more.

Thanks to the program of AA and my Higher Power, my obsession to have that first drink has been removed. I still have fear today but it no longer drives my life like it did before. Today I have the tools to deal with life one day at a time. When I have fear, I can turn it over to my Higher Power, take the next right action and share that fear with other alcoholics. When I do, I realize I’m not alone and this too shall pass.

~ *Tim F.*

Milton Back to Basics

THE FIRST TIME'S A CHARM

They say the first time's a charm, and getting sober at 26 was the best thing that has happened in my life. I had been drinking since I was 16, and between 21 and 26 things had escalated, and the 3 years before I got sober for the first time in 1990 I had been drinking every day.

I was a sick guy, shaking and sweating every day. When I stopped I had hallucinations. Fortunately I didn’t have a seizure. I went to an AA meeting and right away I started getting what people have gotten from AA during the earliest days of our disorganized organization. I got people who understood what I was going through and had been through it themselves in one version or another.

Over the next few months I had some professional help, did not pick up a drink, and with a very good sponsor began to learn about a new and wonderful way to be and live. Slowly my self-respect, confidence, and the hope that I could actually live a life started to come back. No longer was I a slave to the drink.

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Promises came true in my life. I was happy, I felt that I had a purpose, many purposes, but the primary one was to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. Other worries began to fade. I developed a faith that works, didn't worry about details I could not control, believed things would work out better for me than my limited self could imagine.

Sadly, when I moved, I did not take my program with me. I did not drink for another 7 years. My life was pretty good. Eventually a resentment came into play, I didn't have the defense against the first drink that an active program and fellowship provides, and I drank.

That was 20 years ago. I have been in and out since then with a year here, 2 years there, even 4 years. There has been lots of pain and suffering for both myself and those who love me. I am sober today, and this is the only day I can worry about. I do not regret the past and I know that I must keep the door open so as not to relive it.

My experience is that it was very hard, but easier the first time. Sobriety is a wonderful blessing and I urge anyone who has it to cherish it like the precious gift it is. The first time's a charm, and there is no good reason under the sun or stars to have a second time.

~ Anonymous
Milton Back to Basics

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPONSORSHIP

In the beginning I never thought I needed a sponsor but people wouldn't stop asking me, who's your sponsor, so I got one. She had a lot of rules which I followed at first, and then I didn't, and I lied when we did talk, so she fired me. At first I was happy; I could do what I wanted. Then life from the past came around. I thought I could handle everything since I wasn't drinking. That didn't turn out very well and I went running to an AA meeting hoping for answers. At that meeting I sat next to a woman I had seen around, poured my heart out to her and asked her to be my sponsor.

The main thing she impressed upon me was, *I should build my day around a meeting*, so I did it. She also said, *you must take part in your own sobriety*. To accomplish that, I joined a home group, attended Group Conscience, set up, picked up and volunteered for group positions.

Another slogan was *In order to keep it you must give it away*. I found it difficult to raise my hand and share. I needed a way to give it away. She dragged me into Service Work, at District as well as Group. In the beginning I hated it but it didn't take long for me to realize that Service Work

was a great tool for my sobriety. I went from cursing my sponsor for dragging me to Service work, to being ever so grateful to her for giving me the ability to give back to AA what was so freely given to me.

I have had many sponsees in my time in AA. Not all of the women who are still sober are still my sponsees but they are still friends. I was told that having a sponsee helps the sponsor and I love how that keeps coming true for me.

Maureen, my sponsor for more than 30 years passed away a while ago and finding a new sponsor was difficult. And yet I knew that would be exactly what Maureen would want for me. So I found a new sponsor and we've made a great connection.

If the fit with your sponsor isn't right, you can always try another. Just keep coming to meetings, and turn your will and your life over to a Higher Power.

~ Kookie
Milton Back to Basics



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