

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

THE PROMISES BECOME TRUE

I love how the Promises become true and work in my life being sober. We are going to know a new freedom and new happiness. I thought I was happy drinking, but alcohol made me delusional. I got to have freedom from the physical addiction of craving a drink. The obsession to drink had been lifted and I didn't need to spend wasted energy on being consumed with when and where I was going to drink. Drinking kept me in a state of worry.

Then from a prayer which is in Step 7 and working the steps it allowed me to have freedom from my defects that ran my life and crazy behaviors. What a gift when we begin to trust ourselves to make appropriate decisions and learn to ask for help... I no longer have to live in fear and panic life becomes so much easier by not drinking and being sober. I still do the same things in my daily life, help others do service, set up meetings and chair. Stick with the winners. I stay teachable and know my Higher Power is with me through thick and thin.

I don't have to act on my feelings I can hit the pause button. I celebrated 26 years in January and have never had to pick up a drink. Drinking is not an option and there are many tools to cope without a drink.

~ Jane S
Brown Bag Group

FUEL ON THE FLAMES

The disease of alcoholism is cunning, baffling, and powerful. My disease is not doing push-ups in the parking lot; it does not have to: it does them in my head when and if I let it. Alcoholism has many allies: denial, complacency, and failure to take it seriously.

It thrives when many folks get things back, they have lost and after a brief "stay" in AA the disease uses three little words: "I got this". Or, worse yet, I don't have to do all those things other folks do: steps, sponsorship, prayer, and lest of all service. The excuses are legion: "I don't have the time", "I have better things to do", and, "I am not a joiner or a do-er". Or, other folks will do the work. The meeting will be set up

anyway; I'll get there when I get there. In other words, they don't need me becomes I don't need them. And basic elements of respect go out the window, replaced by the ill-mannered habit of lateness, a factor well-recognized in the medical, psychological, and business circles as conveying physically that the other folks are not that important; anything they say doesn't apply to me, and somehow an exception.

When I entered AA in 2002, I heard people begin shares with some shocking words: "I apologize for being late". Tardiness was an art form in many circles I travelled in around the world. And there were the folks who said "The only meeting you're late for is your first." I was decades late for my first meeting. However, I learned from the outside world that one should be on time. I learned about legendary coach Vince Lombardi's

concept of being on time. Lombardi Time it's called. Simply put, if you're on time, you're 15 minutes late. One should allow time to get organized, greet folks, and be ready when a meeting starts. Walking in late with a refreshment one had to stop for shows a minimal

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lack of respect --for one's self mainly, and for the proceedings of an AA meeting, a vital life-saving encounter.

Resentment is the #1 offender. A lack of attention to priorities and a smug self-satisfaction that the disease is in remission, indeed, perhaps cured, is not only a sure ticket to a barroom but in some cases a foreseen appointment with demise.

One should not take one's self too seriously (Rule 62), yes, but a failure to take the program seriously can be fatal. Nothing I say here is new: it is all in our literature. I love the Step Book where in many instances Bill Wilson will convey sweetness and life and then suddenly warn of the drastic consequences of lack of work, attention, and follow-through.

The essence of the Program is simplicity and it says that in many parts of our literature. It is a simple program for complicated people. And our slogans help deter the approach of complacency and sloth. The rewards are great- the satisfaction of helping a fellow alcoholic. Before the rewards though must come through work.

Among those rewards are the joy of sober living and the many instances exemplified by our literature that there is a great deal of fun in what we do to stay sober one day at a time.

As I write this so many quotes regarding the matters discussed come to mind. Perhaps I should quote them or work up a set of footnotes. No matter. Footnotes or

references are meaningless unless one can experience the joy of beginning to see the light. And that light grows brighter as I work the program.

Whether you have decades of sober time--or minutes--- stay the course, one day at a time.

God bless.

~ Dennis
Brown Bag Group

" I ' V E G O T T H I S "

I well remember one of my very first meetings, watching a man receive his 9-month chip. I couldn't imagine how anyone could stay sober for nine whole months "Wow" I thought to myself, "he must have this nailed".

Now, as I celebrate my 21-year anniversary, I feel more concerned than accomplished. In fact, I've seen more people with 20+ years of sobriety relapse than I have people with one or two years. And, I think I might know why this happens. For people in early sobriety, which I classify as the first two years of sobriety, the pain and suffering of the final days of drinking are still fresh in memory. Like a dog, nipping at our heel, the reality of our past pushes us forward

into sobriety.

But what happens after 10, 15 or 20 years of sobriety? By now we have most likely sponsored several people into sobriety, teaching the steps and problem solving their lives.

We have successfully navigated numerous holidays, parties and other events. Chances are, we have chaired many meetings, spoken many times, and feel comfortable sharing at will. It becomes easy to believe we have reached a level of security, that we "have it nailed". The idea that "I've got this" feels more and more like a truth.

But the reality is, even with over 20 years of sobriety, I am no more sober than a newcomer with 20 days. Sure, I've grown in sobriety, but so has my disease. Research shows that our disease progresses right along with our sobriety. In truth, I'm still only an arm's length away from my next drink.

"I've got this" may well be the most dangerous words for us drunks. It allows us to let down our guard, become less diligent, less focused. And slowly, we drift towards a drink. So, in celebrating 21 years of sobriety, I'm reminded to redouble my efforts, to focus on humility, and to remind myself of the 12 steps. For they are as important to me today, as they were 21 years ago.

~ Bill N.
Brown Bag Group



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