

The Eye Opener



Vol 21 No. 2 — October 2021

Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

ADVENTURES IN SOBRIETY DURING THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE OF 2020

Like everyone else, 2020 was a hell of a year for me. But, I found renewed strength and a stronger connection to my higher power.

I joked about 2020 being “the year we will all see clearly.” (you know, 20/20 vision) back in January. But it got really strange and unnerving quickly. When the virus first showed up here, I didn’t take it seriously. I balked at the idea of not holding hands during the prayer at the end of the meeting, let alone not meeting face to face. My mind quickly changed as I learned more about it. I remember chairing a meeting and announced that it would be the last in-person meeting I would attend until further notice. Enter the world of Zoom.

My job shut down in March. My meeting attendance went up. I was attending about 3 meetings a day. I also started seeing a counselor about some emotional/interpersonal issues I was having. I consulted my sponsor and really worked on my spiritual situation. Prayer and meditation took on a much greater part of my life. Three months after I

was put on furlough, my job started back up. My meeting attendance went down to one or two per day.

One of the coolest things that occurred during all this chaos was I started working with a couple of new sponsees. One, unfortunately couldn’t be honest with himself or me and went back out and moved out of state. The other is still around and is really working hard at doing the steps and staying sober.

I continue doing service work throughout this whole thing. Chairing meetings, hosting, and my commitment at the district level.

AA is an incredible fellowship. The program (the steps), are an unbelievably effective guide for living a life on life’s terms. The fact that AA is as adaptable as it is a testament to the people in the rooms. Being able to almost seamlessly switch from in person to this virtual format on Zoom is inspiring.

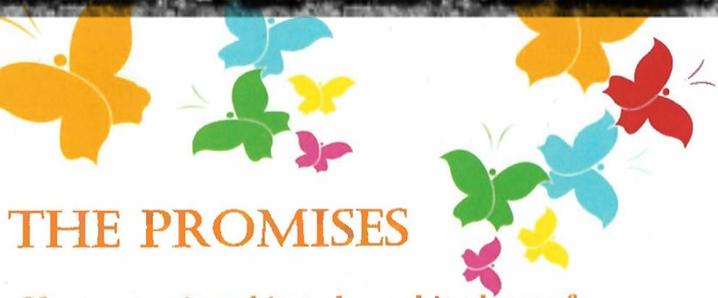
I owe my life and the good life I have to AA, my homegroup and all the people I have met and those who came before me.

One last thought. During this last year I have felt closer to people as well as more lonely than I ever have. I have made new friends, gotten closer to some friends that were previously acquaintances, lost a few and have come to appreciate what I have in my life more than I ever have. I feel closer to my kids. All of this is 100% due to my sobriety and the fellowship of AA.

~John Y
Early Risers

I TOOK THE
SUGGESTIONS OF
OTHERS

I **wasn't** exactly riding the crest of life when I moved to Burlington, Vermont. Two years later, I went back to AA on July 5 after another boozing night, leaving another relationship in near-ruin. I was there because deep down I knew I had the same issues I'd had when I was 18 and going to AA meetings in Olympia, WA. I could not stop drinking. Once I started, I never knew when I was going to start drinking again. I was out-of-control when I drank but when I was sober I always felt I was a great person. Other people seemed to think so too. After an intensely awkward in-person meeting consisting of only five people and concluded at nine o'clock on Friday night, I attempted going to a ten o'clock meeting also. The meeting turned out to be nonexistent, but I had a moment of clarity unlike anything I'd experienced before. Instead of walking one block over to the strip of bars, or a hundred feet over to the nearest gas station to buy some malt liquor, I walked an hour home, sober. I went to bed sober, then woke up sober, determined to see if I could stay sober just for the weekend. The next day was a blur of anxiety and fear, but an old friend of mine who had been sober



If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us- sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

The Big Book- Pages 83-84

for years connected me with someone he had worked with in recovery. I spent hours on the phone with him, not understanding what he was saying, but feeling something that I couldn't put into words. The fact that he took so much time out of his day to talk with a complete stranger was mind-blowing. I went to another meeting on that Sunday

night, where I heard the "Promises" recited. I wanted everything that was promised in those words, especially that "we will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace." I also saw a room full of young people like me, and the chairperson spoke of "hope." Finally, as I was leaving the meeting, ready to head home and avoid

people as usual, someone turned around, introduced himself to me, gave me his number, and talked with me after.

With the help of my old sober friend, his connection, these new AA people, and my partner at the time, I set out to not drink, one day at a time. I took the suggestions of others without fully understanding what I was doing or what it meant. This included getting a sponsor and working the steps while also taking a service position at a home group. I became the “greeter,” and I stayed after to set up and clean up, feeling like I was a part of something greater than me. When I began working the steps with my sponsor, I couldn’t understand the difference of having an unmanageable life while both drunk and sober, nor could I understand what it meant to turn my will over to the care of God. I was so desperate to feel better and to change my life that I didn’t question it. I had spent my whole life thinking I had the answers to everything and it simply didn’t work and I had drank every time I tried to take on the drink on my own. My old friend says, “The Fellowship saved my life, and the Steps changed the life that the Fellowship saved.” The “Promises” I heard at that Sunday night meeting over two and a half years ago continue to come true for me as I continue to grow spiritually

through the steps. I’ve regained choice in my life, and my head has cleared to where I experience a peace of mind and a serenity unlike anything I’ve ever known. This journey wasn’t easy, nor was it comfortable. I still have days where things don’t seem to go my way, but I step back and realize that “my way” probably isn’t the best way in the first place. I can continue to demand that life and other people give me what I want, or I can get out of the way and let God take care of me as one of his children. The latter has always guided me toward a new happiness and purpose, as long as I continue to work and to practice what I’ve been shown.

~ *Anonymous*
Burlington, VT

**CAME TO SCOFF,
REMAINED FOR
THE RAFFLE**

So. I don’t have any tattoos. Funny way to start a story about alcoholism. We’ll come back to that. First things first.

I’m going to talk about how I came to find a sponsor. And then about having a sponsor. And then about sponsoring.

Things were really bad in the last handful of years I was drinking. So bad that I decided to come to AA.

The first meeting I went to, I probably left before we were done saying the closing prayer. Maybe earlier. I didn’t want to stick around for fear of what might happen.

The second meeting I went to, I was almost having fun. There was something in the vulnerability and sincerity of the speakers that I’d never seen anywhere else in my life. I was enamored with whatever it was that these people had. Before I knew it, there was a raffle. Each seat had a ticket on it. I had to stick around for the raffle. They had me.

The first ticket was called. Crickets. The second ticket was called. Nothing. After three blanks, the meeting chair looked straight at me and said, “You’re new. Take it.” How did he know I was new? Suddenly I had a big blue book in my possession. And suddenly everybody knew I was there, and I was new. That was how the meeting ended.

A sweet older lady was suddenly holding my hand.

“What’s your name? I’ve got to introduce you to Rob.”

And there was Rob.

The punch line here is that Rob was never my sponsor. I never gave him the chance to be. He gave himself plenty of chances to be; but I wasn’t ready.

We carpooled endlessly to meetings - to “commitments” as they have in the Boston area, visiting other groups to speak and welcoming them in return. We did

get coffee. We did all kinds of things that people in AA do; but we never picked up the Big Book or worked through the program.

One day when Rob and I were driving home from a commitment, he told me to pull the car over. I got scared, and rightly so. He was about to say things I didn't feel ready to hear.

"You don't have a sponsor yet," he said, and I looked as far out the window as I could to try to be somewhere else.

"I care about you. I can tell you're holding onto something you want to take to the grave. I had things I couldn't tell anyone, ever. That's okay. You don't have to yet, alone."

My gaze out the window now was blurry, through tears.

Then Rob said, "My wife killed herself a couple years ago and left me with four kids. I know a thing or two about fear. One thing I know about it is that it doesn't have to run your life. Come on, take me home; I have to make sure the kids aren't killing each other."

And that was the beginning. I never asked Rob to sponsor me. In fact, a couple months later, I invoked a geographic cure and landed myself in Burlington, VT.

What Rob did, though, was soften my grip. I was holding something, something I didn't even know I was holding. My fingers were tired, and tight, and I was scared. Rob took the nails out of

the shutters and gave me the chance to let the light in.

Now I was new again, not in AA, but in Burlington. There was one guy I saw every Sunday night at a meeting that seemed okay. Outside the meeting one night, I asked him "How do you find a sponsor?"

"It's not hard. You just ask someone."

Oh. Is that how you do it?

A week later, that's what I did. And suddenly, for the first time in six years, I had homework. And for the first time in many more years than that, I did my homework. It worked wonders. For months we were busy reading the book, writing prayers, writing inventory, practicing the tools, working on amends. Things got a lot better. Until they didn't any more.

I hit periods where I knew what he would tell me. I would call with a situation that was bothering me, and he would say "Have you prayed today?" or "Have you written out the inventory?" and I would mumble and gripe and say well, not really. And so I stopped calling. And things stopped going so well.

I was taught early on by my sponsor not to be afraid to raise my hand to sponsor other people. In fact, I got an elbow to the ribs one meeting because I didn't put up my hand. So at the end of every meeting, I started raising my hand and putting my number in the

Zoom chat. And then, after weeks of this, someone actually reached out.

And once again I was new. Not in AA. Not in the area. But everything around me felt green and fresh. The experience that came next was at least as significant as the one I had my first time through the steps. And I was able to say to someone else, "You don't have to be afraid. You're worth it."

So. I don't have any tattoos. I never knew what I would get, because I've never had much to say. Never had a voice. Not one that I thought had any worth. But I've had experience that can be invaluable to someone else trying to get sober. So when I see an opportunity to write something for the Eye Opener, I think, "This will be hard. I should say yes."

And what do I say? Something that can be helpful to someone, I hope.

~ Trevor
Burlington, VT

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