

# The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

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## Human Connection Saved My Life

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### Once upon a time... isn't that

how so many stories begin that also end with, "happily ever after?" In this case, it's actually trudging the road to a happy destiny, as they say. The middle of the story is a messy disaster I've lived to tell about. But I was lucky. In recovery, I've built a new foundation for my life based upon what I have learned through the steps and traditions and guidance from those I trust in the recovery community. They have become my chosen family.

Growing up I was attached to all sorts of misbeliefs. I felt misunderstood, and received misguidance. I developed patterns of behavior as survival tactics that at one point served me well, until, like many unhealthy behaviors, they didn't. I used to seek and find comfort in drugs and alcohol. It saved my life at one point in my journey, until it stopped working and began destroying my life, from the inside out. I didn't know it at the time, but the very thing that brought me ease was feeding my dis-ease. Drugs and alcohol brought me face to face with the court of law, multiple times. It brought me to my knees, typically face first on pavement. I damaged vehicles, relationships and self-esteem. I was reckless, believing that I was

here for a good time, not a long time . . . living wildly in the dash. Today, I still believe I'm here for a good time but navigate my days mindfully, consciously, and with purpose and meaning, sober.

I can still go into self-protection mode today but am more aware that I get to choose what path I want to take. Not the path my addiction would take me, which often led to sketchy places in unsafe spaces. Today, I'm learning and growing. I can recognize the path of discomfort as a path to healing and feeling as long as I don't pick up a mind or mood altering substance. I believe that if I give myself the opportunity to feel, I will heal.



When I first came into AA and heard all the "god" talk, I thought, "Oh no they can take this religious stuff and stuff it!" What I came to realize and believe is that AA is a spiritual program of suggestions. I could change the word "god" to whatever I wanted, cross out the pronouns, take what I needed and leave the rest. I lost my religion of childhood and found my faith to move forward. (p. 2)

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In sobriety I've learned to talk. That what I have to say has value and meaning. I've learned how to trust other human beings and develop strong, lasting relationships. Within those relationships I can be vulnerable; I can be honest and receive feedback without judgment. I can take suggestions from those I trust and who've experienced the life events I'm trying to navigate. I've learned that I don't need to do it alone. Once upon a time, being self-reliant, self-sufficient and self-contained kept me safe, or so I thought. Human connection has saved my life in sobriety.

Life is full of plot twists. I've learned that my higher power is the writer. When I let go of how I think life will unfold, I'm in the flow. That doesn't mean I don't hold onto hope of how things will go, only that I'm less likely to struggle with the outcome. I'm human after all. No one ever said it'd be easy, they just promised it would be worth it. This is not the end, it's just the beginning.

~Emily

Proud and Sober Group

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## I Guess I'll Keep Coming

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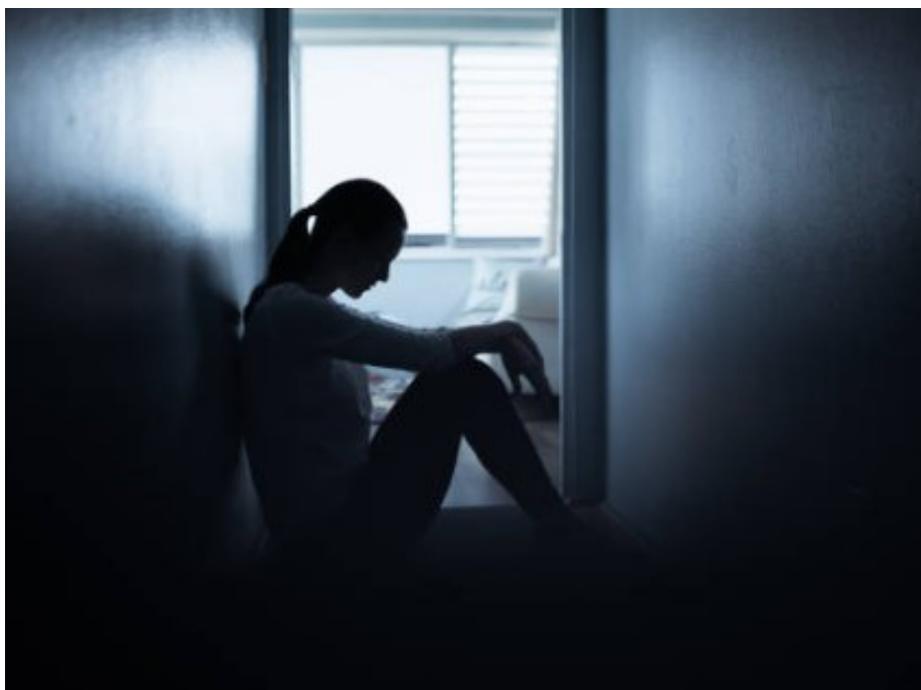
### Drinking was fun

for me, at least initially. I was a social drinker and I found people who partied like I did. I moved around a lot for seasonal jobs, so I would drink the way I wanted to, burn bridges, then leave. There were low moments, embarrassing moments, scary moments, but drinking was how I knew how to socialize, how to cope with being in my own skin, and how to get through a day. I didn't realize I was constantly running away from myself until I got sober.

My disease was progressing and I started to notice; I would move somewhere and things would go off the rails faster each time. When I

moved to Vermont, it was about three months, and it was happening faster than ever. I had a good job, a group of friends, a nice apartment, and absolutely no control over my drinking or what happened when I started to drink. After another night out that turned particularly dark and unsafe, I had a moment of clarity. I needed to keep running, or I needed to stop drinking. In that moment, I was tired of running.

I found an AA meeting and snuck in the back. The speaker was a paradox to me – she shared anecdotes that I couldn't imagine, but at the same time she had bright eyes and the air of someone who had her life together. I went back the next week. I wanted the camaraderie, the laughter, the apparent ease of being that I saw. As a militant atheist, I was sure that I could (p. 3)



# KEEP COMING BACK

do it without God, and as a scared, barely dry alcoholic I wanted to do it without talking to any of you. I had dammed up years of emotions behind the effort to make everything look fine, so when I opened my mouth to speak, I could only cry, and I couldn't imagine crying in front of you. I got a Big Book and read it cover to cover by myself, only to find that I didn't relate to any of the chapters or stories. I wasn't sure I belonged here, but I didn't know where else to go.

I'm so grateful I kept being desperate. I stayed dry for a few more weeks, going to a few meetings and "white knuckling" it. I wanted what I saw around me, but more than that I didn't want to go back

to the overwhelming fear and mess that I felt I was barely holding at bay. I sobbed when I asked a woman to be my sponsor, but I finally asked for help. She asked if I would go to any lengths to get sober, and I said yes and meant it.

She worked the steps with me. When I worked Step 2, I found a crack in my armor to let a higher power into my life in a way that works for me. She had me call her every day, even though I didn't have anything to talk about. She took me through the Big Book, and it made more sense that time. She told me to go to a meeting every day and to thank the chairperson at the end. I started sharing at meetings, talking through the

tears, and discovered that no one else was horrified by my feelings. I kept coming back.

I resonated with the idea that anything alcohol gave me it also could take away. My confidence and self-worth, my friends, a respite from the loneliness and self-loathing, easy laughter, dance skills. For me, AA has given me everything that alcohol promised, and in a way that feels true and real. I never want to take this for granted and I never want to go back to the way it was – I guess I'll keep coming.

~Emma  
Proud and Sober Group

I always felt different  
 Apart from, even my family  
 As a child I longed to fit  
 Somewhere. Anywhere.  
 When I found alcohol, I  
 Discovered my right skin  
 I simply slid in  
 I felt courage, strength and happy  
 I felt all the ways of content  
 Like a river I let it flow  
 through me, again and again  
 I drank, snorted and smoked myself  
 To blissful oblivion  
 I couldn't have enough  
 I wanted more  
 In time, my wants became needs  
 Then needs became impulse  
 Impulse to obligatory ingestion  
 I couldn't get out of bed  
 Without a substance  
 I couldn't work, I couldn't be  
 I had to have more  
 I'm not sure who or how  
 It happened

But it did happen one day I stopped  
 I craved a simpler life but I didn't get here alone  
 I knew where to go  
 The path was clearly tread by others  
 In my family  
 I didn't expect to fit  
 I didn't think aa was for me  
 But slowly, in time  
 I made it mine  
 Slowly, in time  
 I got sober  
 I found my right skin again  
 My heart is whole and my legs are strong  
 I didn't think it was for me  
 And yet here I am  
 On the other side of oblivion  
 Learning to love and  
 Living in laughter

~Ellen, Addict and Alcoholic

Proud and Sober Group



Please visit us at [www.burlingtonaa.org](http://www.burlingtonaa.org) for more  
 local stories and meeting information.

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