

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Desperate and Teachable

My sobriety

date is 1/8/1994, and today I live life without having the urge to drink or do drugs. I know a new freedom and a new happiness, and am no longer chasing the high.

I grew up in a family where drinking was the norm. My parents entertained a lot, and I thought all families did the same. I began romancing the drink early on; no one ever mentioned that drinking too much could cause a problem or not to drive drunk. I began drinking as a teen and never thought about any consequences. My daily goal was to get drunk, enjoy the high, and “party.”

I went away to school in a remote area where alcohol was hard to find, so we did drugs instead. I felt that I couldn't deal with reality or that somehow I had missed the rule book.

Alcohol began making my life choices. I just drank, and never had any goals or thoughts of settling down. Instead, I moved to San Francisco where my drinking and drugs took over. Now I was 3,000 miles away and could do anything! I was in my early 20s and enjoying my freedom. I put myself in dangerous situations and I spent a lot of time and money in bars. I was in an unhealthy relationship and we both worked in restaurants and partied a lot. Isn't that what every one did? I chose friends who drank like me, not caring what anyone thought.

By the time I was 30 things weren't going well. Although I made good money, I was always broke. All of my money went to drinking. It was when I began to use cocaine and pot daily that my life began to unravel. I was hitting bottom and returned to Vermont in a blackout, with no place to live and without a job. I quickly found a place and a job that was conveniently located next to a bar. I always worked so I could justify my drinking.

I ended up with a DWI in 1991 and was so drunk I didn't know where I lived. I spent a weekend in jail, plus court-ordered to alcohol counseling. A coworker brought me to my first AA meeting. *What was the strange lingo and people laughing; didn't they know that my life was over?*

The counseling was beginning to sink in, and soon I understood the disease of alcohol and knew I was powerless. I was desperate and teachable, although I didn't understand a thing. I got a sponsor right away and sat with her at meetings; she introduced me to people and gave me suggestions. I made a commitment to AA and to her and worked the steps. My life revolved around meetings and soon I started to enjoy not drinking and felt great. I could not ever remember going more than 3 days without a drink.

Today, I take my sobriety seriously. The Living Sober Book tells us this is a fatal disease. I began service work in AA and read everything to do with sobriety. I began doing things with sober people in my first year. I removed myself from my old drinking buddies and changed my thinking. The obsession was lifted (p. 2)

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right away and I began to help others in AA, setting up meetings and joining a group. I work the steps on a daily basis and depend on a Higher Power. I call another person in AA daily and still love going to meetings, and I have an overflowing toolbox of AA tools to help me.

~Jane S.

Brown Bag

Could Have Been Worse

It could have been worse for me. No, it SHOULD have been worse for me.

See, the things that were supposed to happen to alcoholics just were not happening to me. No DUI's, no lost jobs, no legal woes, nothing.

Sure, I had been pulled over a couple of times, and I had transferred job locations on multiple occasions, and maybe a couple of incidents with child support collections – not to mention missing work and getting behind on bills. But those things happened to everyone, right?

At least that is what I told myself. As long as I believed it, it didn't matter what it looked like to the rest of the world.

But life was getting more difficult as time went on and little things kept

happening. My hands began to shake in the morning. I had some issues remembering what had happened the night before. Friends were asking how I was doing – those that were still around. And the guy who filled the propane tank wanted cash before he would bring fuel.

Being on call for work presented challenges. I had to figure out how to time my drinking for when I might have to report for duty, and when I missed the mark just a little my co-workers on several occasions mentioned that perhaps a breath mint would be a good idea for me.

And relationships, well my track record there spoke for itself. Two failed marriages and a tumultuous current situation that was not getting better. My parents and my son were never sure when, or if, I would be in touch.

Still, it could have been worse. At least that's what I told myself.

Then one day it was.

Coming out of a blackout after being escorted out of a bar by a friend on a night no different than a hundred nights before, something snapped. A realization from seemingly nowhere hit me that I could not go on like this. I know now that that was one of several divine interventions that changed my life. I can't say why that particular night was any different or that my life

immediately improved, but I do know that the bottom I hit on that night was the entrance to a new dimension of existence of which I could not have dreamed existed.

And all I had to do was to ask for help, to quit trying to figure out everything myself, and to trust that there was a better life for me. That all presented a huge risk and re-arrangement of my thinking and attitudes toward life, people, and a power greater than myself. None of that was possible until I could let go of my self will, my need to feel I was in charge. That was not easy.

For me that began with a stay at an inpatient treatment center where I learned that what I had was a disease and that while there was no cure there was a solution that would allow me to live a sober, meaningful life. That was a start for me but it took more to reach a state where I was comfortable in my own skin, where I could live life on life's terms, and where I could be useful to myself and even to my fellows. From that beginning I found Alcoholics Anonymous and in doing so I found a solution.

I would love to say that all I needed to do was to walk in the doors of that first AA meeting and all was immediately good. That is what I expected, but it turned out that there was more effort required on my part. (p. 3)

After attending meetings for a while and getting involved with a home group, I began to see improvements in my life. I no longer felt like the other shoe was about to drop or that I would never be able to get along in the world. The people I met were genuine folks, willing to share how they were able to apply, in their everyday lives, the steps and principles that are the tenets of the AA way of life. That was helpful, but I still needed to make the effort to follow through with their suggestions. This was aided by my desire to have what they had, and by my desire not to return to my previous way of living. It was through working with a sponsor that these things came about for me.

My life today is one I could never have even dreamed of having. The promises of AA are coming true for me – as long as I continue to apply the steps and principles in my everyday life. It is a life second to none and I would, as I often hear in the rooms, not wish for the best day I had while drinking to replace the worst day I have now. Life still happens, the challenges and tragedies that befall the rest of the world are not spared me, but I now have a way to deal with whatever is put in front of me.

For that I am grateful.

~Howard H.
Keep It Simple

Lighter Today

I've been sober since

December 29, 2018. I was living in Boston back then, and I started attending the Saturday night meeting called "Sober is Better" in Roslindale.

Meetings in Boston often raffle off books - Big Books, Living Sober, and other AA literature. At my first meeting, I didn't know why there were raffle tickets on each metal folding chair. I thought there must be some kind of fundraiser. I listened to a few speakers' stories - I wasn't sure why these people were the ones to speak. One of them made me emotional when he talked about how he didn't cry when his mom died but he wept and wept when his dog passed away. He was the kind of guy that didn't look like he cried - not in front of anyone.

At the end of the meeting, someone my age - late 20s - went up and started calling out the raffle ticket numbers. There was silence after the first few. After three blanks, he looked me straight in the eye and said "You're new?" (How did he know?) I nodded, and he handed me a Big Book and said "Congratulations." After the meeting, I thanked him and he said, "Read it."

Shortly after that, I joined the group. One of the older guys with 30+ years told me to because, "Even if I couldn't walk, the meeting was downhill from my place so I could slide on my ass to a meeting."

I learned where the speakers came from. In Boston, speaker groups will trade commitments. They send a handful of group members to speak at our meeting, and we send a handful to speak at theirs. As one of the group members with a car and a license, I started driving some other group members around and joining for these commitments. I didn't have 90 days yet, so I couldn't speak. Besides, I had the fear of God in me getting up to speak in front of everyone.

One evening, the AA guy of the "slide on my ass" wisdom was car-pooling with me to a commitment. We'd planned to meet as a group at Dunkin' Donuts, but everyone else bailed. After our commitment, where I heard him tell his story, we were driving home and he said "So you got a sponsor yet, kid?" and I said "No." He said, "Pull over," and I kind of got a rush of adrenaline as I pulled over the car.

He said "You know I've got things I always thought I'd take to the grave. You don't have to tell anyone anything, not yet." (p.4)

I was tearing up just having him call me out about how afraid and bottled up I felt. The alcohol had been like a plug behind my eyes.

"I can tell you're afraid," he said. "I know a thing or two about fear." At this point I was staring out the driver door window so he couldn't see me tearing up. He didn't care. He just said what he had to say:

"My wife killed herself and left me alone with the kids. I don't share this sh*t up there," he said, thumbing out the window like the meeting was right outside the car. "I wake up afraid every day, thinking about tomorrow and every damn day after that. But I learned that when I'm afraid, I'm thinking about myself. And when I'm thinking about myself, I can't be a good dad today. So listen, you've just gotta get started and think about today. You don't have to tell anyone anything. When you do have to, you'll already be ready. And the best part is you won't even know how you got there! Alright, keep driving."

I drove us home basically crying, but it was okay. I heard what I needed to hear.

And then pretty quickly, I got it in my head that what I needed was to move to Vermont.

When I got to Vermont, I asked another old-timer how to get a sponsor, which was on its own a big step for me. He said, "You just kinda ask someone. It's not a big deal."

And that's what I did. When I started working with a sponsor, we took it a day at a time. I didn't have to spill my guts. A few months later, after writing my inventory and kneeling on the sidewalk in the snow praying together, we sat down to do my fifth step.

The first thing he said was, "Before we begin, is there anything you left out or were planning on leaving out?" And there was. And I told him about it, crying.

When I left his apartment that day, I felt 10 pounds lighter. Two years after that day, I still feel like I coughed up a piece of lead I used to carry around.

Every once in a while, something I did when I was drinking or when I was trying to substitute my drinking makes me feel an incredible sense of shame. It's like I wake up and my heart has turned back to lead. But pretty soon - usually after praying, after a meeting, after speaking to someone from the program - I feel it gradually melt away.

If that doesn't work, I can always think of one of two things: sitting in that car that day on the way home from our commitment, or doing my fifth step with a sponsor I trusted.

Those two things always remind me that whatever I did was yesterday, whatever I'm afraid of is tomorrow, and as long as I'm active in my sobriety, today is as fine a place as I can be.

~Anonymous

Keep It Simple



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