

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

A Journey to Healing

When I first came into AA, I felt like a traumatized child. Countless attempts to moderate my drinking was my greatest obsession. Each time I woke up in my own urine for the umpteenth time that week, walking on eggshells wondering what I had done while blacked out, was not enough to deter me from trying again and again and again. I felt incredibly defeated and powerless. In my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, another member said, “if you don’t take the first drink, you won’t get drunk.” It was a gut punch, one of many to come, but it helped me to recognize that for me the game of moderation was a rigged one; I was never going to win and needed to surrender.

I had been assaulted several times while blacked out and consequently attributed all my problems to those men who had sent me into a spiral of trauma, self-loathing, and isolation. I was afraid of the world, of being attacked again, and lived in a perpetual state of fear, panic attacks and nightmares. It was not until I completed a fourth step that I began to gain clarity. The fourth step felt like my gut was getting pummeled with ugly truths about myself. I began to see that my alcoholism was there prior to the violence. I

could no longer place all the blame on others. This realization single-handedly took away the power I thought they had stolen from me. I had been telling myself a story that I was a powerless victim, doomed to victimhood forever. But this was just a story. A story that was enabling me to think that the way I was drinking was justified. To live emotionally sober, I had to let go of the person I thought I was. Because of Alcoholics Anonymous, I am now armed with a shield of truth about myself. It has been a raw and painful process to come to acceptance, but I now have the power to rewrite my story.



Today, panic attacks are few and far between. I have realized that much of my anxiety and fear of the world was due to knowing that if I started drinking, I would black out, and then I wouldn’t know where I was, who I was with, or whether they would hurt me or not. The longer I stayed away from a drink, the more confidence I built within myself. What had once been a life of isolation and hiding, began to feel more and more full of joy and peace. I started to prove to myself that I could be trusted. And more (p. 2)

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importantly that I could feel safe again.

This journey has been one of healing. Healing my physical, mental, and spiritual existence. I still live with PTSD, and I am still an alcoholic. But I no longer feel the need to drink about these things. I know I am more than the labels I have put on myself. I am a person, first and foremost. I feel happiness and joy. Today, I can live sober inside my skin, inside my body, inside my memories, and truly know peace.

~Ali B.

Off the Wall

Wanting Humility

The only guy I knew who was sober was quick to meet up with me when I called desperate and asking for help. He did exactly what our literature suggests we should all do when that call comes. He asked me where I was, and an hour or so later, he arrived.

Another guy was with him. (He never said anything about that guy being in recovery, but I know now that we should always go on twelfth step calls with another sober alcoholic.) My friend did almost all the

talking, answered some questions, and mostly just told me what his experience had been, both as a drinker and in recovery. I still felt completely desperate and miserable when it was over, but at least I had an idea about what to do next, and most importantly, I felt a tiny shred of hope where there had been none before.



And so my journey in recovery began. It's had plenty of ups and downs, sometimes extreme ones, and included relapse and a return to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. But about a year or two after meeting with my friend, he told me something else that's stayed with me for years. He told me that, like all of us, when that time of desperation had come and he'd finally asked for help, deciding to do that was, in his words, the first adult decision he'd ever made.

At the time I just thought to myself

“huh....that's an interesting thing to say,” and wondered if that applied to me, too. I thought it might, then didn't give it much more thought for a while. But over time, and many AA meetings later, many times through the Big Book and the 12 & 12, and step work with my sponsor, I gradually came to another understanding of what my friend said.

There's a line in the 12 & 12, in Step Seven, that says, “A great turning point in our lives came when we sought for humility as something we really wanted, rather than as something we must have.” When I picked up the phone that day many years ago, I was motivated by a desperate need. I was definitely trying to get something, but at the same time, it was probably the first time I recognized that I was failing miserably at solving my own problems, that I just couldn't keep up the act any more, (p. 3)



and that I had to stop pretending (badly, I'm sure) that things were okay and I had a handle on life. So I turned to someone else, and said "I need help."

What a wall that was to finally tear down. With that simple act, I was no longer "the boy whistling in the dark." I really, really, wanted something else, and without knowing what to call it then, I knew that humbling myself enough to admit I couldn't do it on my own was necessary.

Today, I know enough to put a different spin on it. Now I recognize that not only can I not do it all on my own, but....I don't HAVE to do everything on my own! That teenage need to look good, fit in,

and be cool can be set aside. It doesn't work in the real world anyway. It doesn't work in the adult world. I am who I am, and life is so much easier when I let others see me that way, and not as I think I want to be seen. I still fight that all the time, and still haven't figured out how to grow up, but at any time I can make an actual adult decision and just ask for help.

~Scudder K.
Off the Wall

Grateful and Free

It never occurred to me that not everyone drank like I did. I didn't think twice about waking up in strangers' beds, or being covered in blood and bruises, or showing up late for work, or blacking out regularly. Since everyone drank like me, wouldn't it make sense that everyone also suffered the same hangovers and humiliation as me too? Obviously I didn't have a problem with alcohol. I just needed to drink it the *right* way. My parents divorced when I was eighteen months old and I quickly (p.4)

learned how to blend into each household. My chameleon skills served me well, as my father was often drunk and angry, and my mother was usually needing emotional support. I learned to avoid and people-please with my dad, and be a child-therapist for my mom. Needless to say, I lost myself along the way.

I discovered the radical effects of alcohol in my mid-teens. My dad let me have a few sips from his drinks, but it wasn't until a friend's Halloween party that I got really loaded. Already stumbling drunk, wearing vampire fangs and a suffocating corset, I decided to take tequila shots. Ten minutes later I was throwing up, barely able to breathe in my ridiculous costume, with some poor soul holding back my hair. I couldn't wait to do it again. Next time though, no tequila and obviously no corset.

Fast forward ten years - I simply could not stop drinking. I tried everything to curb my cravings, my alcoholic progression had crossed the point of no return. I was exactly like our textbook describes, 'seldom mildly intoxicated ... more or less always insanely drunk.'

Insane. Could that word possibly apply to me? It took a geographic cure to the West coast and back, selling my car for cash, moving in with my mother, drinking around the clock and having hallucinations to notice that I might have a problem with my sanity, and with alcoholism. The real kicker? *Alcohol stopped working.* I couldn't black out anymore. I couldn't feel the release, the rush, the obliteration that alcohol provided. What a terrifying fact to face.

My last attempt at blacking out was a long and degrading night in January of 2013. It was the following morning that I awoke to the solemn yet irrefutable truth that I needed help. I went to a meeting of Alco-

holics Anonymous, and have not taken a drink or a drug since.

Free from the bondage of booze, I began to see the world with new eyes. The seasons changed in what looked like technicolor. I laughed until I cried and I cried until I laughed. I was raw and new, and life took on purpose and meaning. I was encouraged to get a sponsor and work the steps, and I am sincerely glad I did. I would be either dead or living a half-life had I white-knuckled it. Through the 12 steps, I have accessed a limitless source of Love and Power. I do not understand my Higher Power, but I love and listen to Her to the best of my small human ability. She forgives me.

These 9+ years of sobriety have been colored with so many events: the birth of my nephew, the death of a best friend, moving, jobs, loves, losses, celebrations and hardships. The one constant is that I have stayed sober and connected to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous and my Higher Power. By coming home to AA, working the steps and connecting to God, I have come home to myself. I am grateful, and I am free.

~Allison B.

Off the Wall

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