

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Only Sober for Today

I have always felt different for as long as I can remember. Different from everyone else. Inferior on the inside. But alcohol changed that. I suffered through middle school with all of my internal thoughts about myself. High school was different. I discovered alcohol around 9th grade and was instantly hooked. I thought it gave me everything I was missing. I was suddenly the "life of the party," the "center of attention," everything I hated when I was sober.

This continued through my life. It became how I handled every emotion I had. It was the only coping skill I learned since age 16. I started a family and it continued every day until I realized how it was affecting them. Deciding to get sober was initially about them, and now it's about all of us including myself.

I lost my mother about one year into sobriety from alcoholism. If it wasn't for the hand of AA and my sponsor, I most definitely would have drunk through the pain of losing her. I am coming up on two years and still have so much work to do. I am learning to listen to my spiritual self when I am off center. An action must happen. I pretend I have an imaginary tool box. I go to meetings, call my sponsor, read, etc. I am only sober for today. I need to remember to live one day at a time, something I often forget. I am grateful to be an alcoholic because I would never have learned what is truly important in life!

~Amy

Give It a Go



THE ARTICLES CONTAINED HEREIN ARE PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCES.

THEY DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OR POSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EYE OPENER COMMITTEE OR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

Eventually, I Got Sober

I've always

felt things intensely, sometimes so intensely that my body actually hurt. From a very early age, I got the message that this wasn't normal and I wasn't okay, which solidified as the core belief that I was different, wrong, broken, and unfixable. As I've heard so many times in the rooms of AA, I felt like everyone else got an instruction manual that I didn't receive.

By the time I took a drink at 12 years old, I'd already been diagnosed with major depression and anxiety, and I'd had suicidal ideation for a few years. I didn't know when I took that first drink that alcohol had the power to quiet the voice in my head and blunt the intensity of the feelings that made me want to die. Like I've heard so many times in meetings, it was like magic, and I was sure I'd found the solution.

Unfortunately, that magic solution came at a high cost, and the cost kept getting higher the longer I drank. Coworkers began to make little comments about my drinking and the fact that I appeared to be hungover at work (I was). Fights with my friends and whatever sig-

nificant other I was with at the time became more frequent. I started blacking out, waking up in places I shouldn't be, with people I shouldn't be with, and doing all sorts of other things that filled me with shame. I never got a DUI. I never got arrested. I never crashed a car. I never lost a job. So, my external consequences were few and far between.

But my internal consequences were crushing me.

The things I did while I was drinking,

and even the ways I behaved when I wasn't drinking, made me feel like I was the worst person in the world. And alcohol, which I could always rely on to turn off my feelings and the voice in my head, wasn't working anymore. When I drank, my brain got louder and meaner, my feelings got more intense instead of duller. Drinking made me more miserable instead of less miserable, and I didn't know what to do. Every day, I was mad that I woke up. Every day I wished that I was dead.

Nothing big happened the last day I took a drink. But it was the first

time I was aware that I was drinking against my will. I swore that I wouldn't drink that day, which I'd done countless times before successfully, but I drank anyway, even though I knew I really didn't want to. That night I told my roommate that I thought I was an alcoholic and I needed to quit.

I didn't want to go to AA. To be



honest, I really wanted to go to rehab. I thought it would be dramatic and kind of tragically glamorous. But I was too proud to take a leave of absence from work to go to rehab.

So, I tried to quit on my own. That only lasted five days, and ended with me getting into a physical fight with my much larger and stronger roommate because he wouldn't let me have my keys to go to the bar. I told him I was so miserable sober that I needed to drink. He told me to go to AA. (p. 3)

I'd love to be able to tell you that I got to AA, felt like I was at home, found a sponsor, followed directions, did the steps, and got happy. But that's definitely not my story. I didn't want to be in AA. I didn't want to listen to anyone, take direction, or do anything. And I was suicidal every day for at least the first six months of my sobriety. People who met me when I first came in have described me as "belligerent" and they're not wrong.

But I stayed because you all got better, and you told me that I could get better too, and for some reason I still don't understand, I believed you. Eventually, I did start to follow directions and do my step work. Eventually, I did start being honest, like really honest, with my sponsor. Eventually, I started making friends in the program. And about six months in, sometime after I read my fifth step, I didn't want to die anymore. So, I kept doing my step work until

I was done. I kept connecting with people in the program and forming deep, honest relationships. And eventually, my life wasn't about avoiding a drink or suicide; it was about living sober, no matter what life throws my way.



The past 12 years haven't been easy. I've dealt with harder things sober than I did when I was drinking. I got into recovery from an eating disorder. I lost a dear friend in a tragic accident. I had a miscarriage. I struggled with mental illness. I've had two surgeries be-

cause of chronic illnesses and I'm about to have my third.

But I've also done amazing, joy-filled things. I got married. I attended the weddings of sober friends. I've traveled with my family and my sober family. I had a baby with a sober woman right by my side coaching me through my delivery. I helped two of my closest sober friends deliver their baby. I came out as trans. I've rebuilt broken relationships. And I've laughed a lot. Seriously, so much laughter.

I used to hate the people who said that if they got the life they'd imagined when they first got sober they would have sold themselves short. But now I'm one of those people. Hard things still happen, but I learned how to do them without drinking, self-harming, overeating or starving, or even smoking a cigarette from all of you. Thank you for my life.

~Robin

Give It a Go

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Saturdays, 8:00 a.m. at Holy Family Church Hall, 28 Lincoln St., Essex JCT.
Open | Living Sober | wheelchair accessible | in person and Zoom hybrid

Sober Is . . .

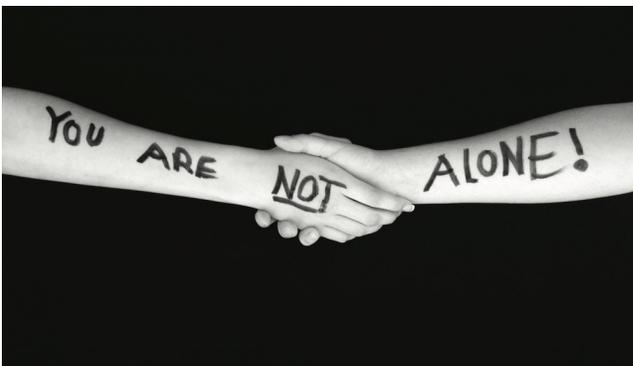
I stopped drinking in 2011.

For six years I white knuckled it alone. I didn't change my routines, I didn't change my friends, I didn't change my activities. I went to bars with my friends and drove them home after they cocktailed it up - and pretended that it didn't bother me.

I went to ladies' nights and told myself after leaving all by myself that I was still just as fun as I was before. I felt like I was dancing as fast as I could, proving to everyone that I was fine and nothing had to change. This worked until I slowly realized that everything felt wrong. My friends felt wrong. My outings felt wrong. My inner peace was non-existent. And I was exhausted from pretending.

A friend from Zumba said to me one day, "You know, I'm in AA and if you ever wanted to try a meeting I'd love to take you. You don't have to do this alone." I was so scared to go. But as much as it scared me, I felt I had nothing to lose.

She took me to my first meeting where I cried as I said for the first time out loud, "I'm Lauren and I'm an alcoholic." *I'm an alcoholic.* I couldn't believe it took me so long to finally admit that to myself.



Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more local stories and meeting information.

Since that day, I have learned that I am not alone. I have learned that during those six years when I thought I was sober, I was merely dry. Sober is something totally different from what I had been doing. Sober is finding peace as I said "I'm an alcoholic" over and over again, crying every time I said it, for about 3 years. Until one day when I just didn't cry anymore, I actually smiled. I felt no shame.

Sober is hearing so many stories from so many others, and realizing that there is safety and camaraderie in our numbers. My isolation was so damaging and keeping me from becoming my whole true self.

Sober is learning how to live sober, not just get through the day sober. Being true to myself, and not putting my needs last. No more bars, no more driving my drunk friends around. No more putting myself in situations that made me hate myself.

Sober is facing some ugly realities of how I grew up. Addressing issues I had suppressed for my entire life. Honestly looking at my good and bad attributes, and learning how to incorporate new lessons from sober people who knew more than I did about how to live a truly happy life. Sober is peace. Inner and outer peace. Every day.

~Lauren

Give It a Go

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