

I Don't Know

How many times did I stumble unwillingly to the barroom or the liquor store? How often did I feel that desperate plea to stop within? How many times did I drink to try to prove I could? My memories are flooded with examples of times when alcohol had me in its grips.

I proved to myself that I was an alcoholic by drinking two beers in one night. Stubbornly, I went home to show everyone that I could handle it, but I spent that night enraged and consumed with a desire to drink that was so overwhelming that I could no longer deny that I had a problem. And then I continued drinking.

Finally, sitting on a jail bunk eight months later, with my head screaming like a committee of squirrels, I had a moment of clarity. Either all those voices united, or one voice simply overrode all the rest with a simply stated, but profound: "It's over."

It was the first time in years, and perhaps my entire



life, that there was silence in my head. In that silence two insights were made clear: I could no longer drink alcohol, and my lifestyle had to change.

I didn't know what to do anymore. I came face to face with the terrifying, yet freeing experience of not having a plan, not being able to produce one, and no longer believing that I could produce one. In short: I don't know.

I didn't realize how impactful that simple sentence would be to me for the rest of my life. Not knowing is what drove me into AA. Not knowing made me listen to what people were saying about not drinking. It made me reach out for guidance through sponsorship. It made me call in moments of uncertainty. Not having a plan made it easy for me to adopt AA's twelve steps, and experience the changes through them.

Today, not knowing is no longer the terrifying moment it once was. Quite the opposite - it's quite comforting. It made me realize that assumption of knowledge very often leads to childish behavior, because knowing often means I have some point of view to defend, or that I now have the responsibility to correct another person, as if that were ever my job.

The very simple practice of stopping when I am upset, praying for clarity, and discussing reality as I see it with someone I respect wedges a little time (*p. 2*)

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between my perceived problem and all the beautiful reactive solutions to that explode in my head during a moment of crisis. It's amazing how much righteousness, anger, fear, resentment, greed, jealousy, malice, etc. can be seen inside when we're not trying to bring any one of those spirits to bear upon reality.

This tenth step allows a reaction to dissolve into a more responsive solution, should one be needed. It is a ritual which changes my spirit. And it is the relief from these momentary shifts in perspective which make an alcoholic solution unnecessary.

~Anonymous
Off the Wall

I Dove Into AA

I took my first drink sometime before the age of 10. My family drank weekly at religious gatherings, and I wanted to feel like I was a part of the family. This was a common experience for me growing up. I never felt like I fit in, and I was constantly making efforts to change that.

When I reached middle school, I began cutting and engaging in eating disorder behaviors. One of my old sponsors called these "just another -ism." In 7th grade I had my first drunk. It wasn't anything special, and I didn't drink again until high school. Once high school started, the pressures of life hit me. I

started to drink and use drugs to cope, to fill a hole inside of me. From the day that I started drinking until the end, I didn't spend a single day sober aside from being in institutions. I did things I told myself I would never do. I became someone I didn't know.

I started getting involved in things that were way above my head. I put myself in dangerous situations and had experiences that no one should have to go through, let alone a 17 year old. For a couple of years, I was in and out of various types of treatment programs. They had all been for my mental health, as that is what I assumed the problem was, not my drinking.

One day, I was sitting in my room drunk and I heard a voice in my head that wasn't my own. It told me that I needed help, right now. Today I know that voice to be my higher power. I immediately (p. 3)



Please visit the AA Vermont Districts 2 & 11 [News & Events](#) page for more information.

told my mom that I needed help with my drinking. She responded kindly, and started looking for a treatment center.

While on the waiting list for a rehab, I kept on drinking like everything was “normal.” Eventually, I got into a treatment center. I ended up being there for about 5 months – the hardest and most beneficial few months of my life.

After leaving treatment, I dove into AA. A part of me wanted nothing more than to keep on drinking, but I was tired of wanting to die. I was tired of hurting others and myself. I finally had the gift of desperation. I got a sponsor, worked the steps, and my life began to change.

Slowly, I started to gain a sense of peace with myself and the world. I learned how to live life on life’s terms instead of constantly

fighting. I began to be grateful for even the hard parts of the human experience.

Today I am a freshman in college. I’ve had more fun in sobriety than I ever did drinking. I have a God of my understanding, who loves me no matter what. I also have all of you, a beautiful community of alcoholics, a community I call home.

~Ami F.

Off the Wall

Making Amends

My sponsor sat me down and looked at my amends list. The financial amends would be easier to do; we looked at those first. I

hadn’t stolen much and almost none of it was local. There was one item that fit. I’d taken something from GameStop. There was one right across the street. We walked over and, thankfully, it was closed. He looked at me and told me to meet him there tomorrow. I did. I didn’t want to, but I was willing to.

The GameStop was in a mall complex down some stairs in a basement level. My sponsor trailed me by about twenty feet, with a half-smile, aware of the implications of the process. I walked until I saw the store. It was the size of a shoebox and packed. My heart thudded loud. I stood in line, barely able to think beyond reciting the lines mantra-like my sponsor and I discussed. I got to the front of the line, I felt the gaze of everyone in the store, a gaze that probably didn’t exist in reality. (p.4)

Off the Wall (Open, In Person)

Tuesdays | 8:00 p.m.

First United Methodist Church | 21 Buell St., Burlington

Discussion

Off The Other Wall (Open, Zoom)

Thursdays | 8:00 p.m.

Meeting ID: 862 5685 9799 Passcode: 814 332

Step Meeting | Discussion

There was a teenager before me. I looked around him and said, in a voice verging on falsetto, "Hi, I'm here because I'm in a spiritual program of recovery and part of that program is making amends," He said, "do you want me to get the manager?" I said, "oh, ha ha, yeah." He got the manager, another floppy haired teenager, this time in pajama pants. I began my recitation again, adding that I'd stolen something from the store. He gave me a look. I told him what I'd taken. An empty game case. He looked at me. I expected a police report, the kind of grinding feeling of societal machinations of punishment shifting into place. My fate was in his hands. He went, pulled a game case from the wall, flapped it in my direction and said "you took one of these?" "Yes" I said. He said it was okay, and we shook hands.

I felt a certain sort of warmth that coincides with a gentle experience of humility. The thunderous disas-

ter song that accompanied my general state of being was tuned down. There was a quiet that came. I could see this person cared. A brief lived moment to contradict the unrealness I carried with me. Why drink if there was a direction of growth that could undo this song?

He said, "Man you must really care about this if you're doing this over a game case." To which I added, in the same breathy quasi-falsetto, "Well, yeah, you know they say we go to any lengths imaginable to recover." More congenial talking. I left the store. I told my sponsor what happened. He smiled.

You can keep having these kinds of experiences that once may have seemed incidental, but were now spiritual. Things I felt and saw began to shift. All I had to do was show up and take the Steps. God was in them and beyond them.

~John M.

Off the Wall

Thanksgiving Alcothon 2023

When: Thanksgiving Day, Thursday November 23rd 2023

Where: Holy Family Annex 28 Lincoln Street, Essex Jct, VT

8am -Set up **Volunteers needed**

9am - First meeting Sober Cinema

10:30 - Williston Work It Group

12 Noon - Brown Bag Group

1pm -- **Thanksgiving Dinner**

2:30 - Clean Up **Volunteers needed**

3pm - Young People Meeting

4:30pm - Keep It Simple Group

6pm -Serenity Group ... **LAST MEETING!!!!**

7pm Clean up**Volunteers Needed**



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