

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Growing Towards H.P.

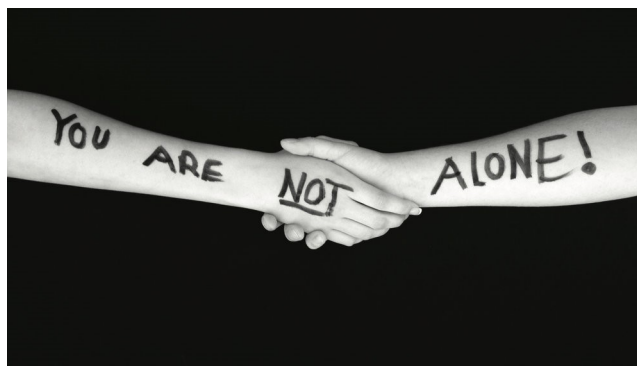
I first got sober in Burlington back in 2012. I felt terribly alone, and AA provided a ready-made social network of people who (for the most part) were trying to live authentic, good lives. I did all the things even though I didn't feel that I qualified as a true alcoholic. I also generally misunderstood a lot of the AA sayings. Chief among those was the call to "fake it till I make it." I applied that maxim to my relationship with a Higher Power, learning to characterize my daily experiences with AA jargon. Even though I felt no connection to some spiritual power, I still talked about "God moments" and how H.P. worked in my life, framing things in a way that made it clear that I was "in."

Over the next 7 years, I worked a decent program, and my life improved dramatically. In 2019, COVID took away the key element of this way of life for me – the fellowship. Alcohol never felt like the main offender for me, so drinking to alleviate the stress of COVID life just made sense. Lacking a real, personal

connection with an H.P. made it that much easier to justify using booze to manage stress.

I started drinking a couple of drinks in the evenings, when I had checked all of the necessary boxes. The fruits of my labor, if you will. I kept this up on a daily basis for 5 years, pausing occasionally to demonstrate that it was going OK. Meanwhile, I was writing off some pretty gnarly incidents. I convinced myself that I was just having 4 drinks, though on one notable occasion, I poured my drink into a marked mason jar and realized that I was calling 8oz of hard alcohol a single drink. The end came when I got sick of chasing that evening release. I had no meaningful consequences, though my general wellbeing was pretty poor.

I chose to end my relationship with alcohol because it started to feel like a trade-off I couldn't keep making. Sure, I would get some downtime with a buzzy head. However, I knew that drinking upwards of 12 drinks a night (what I was actually consuming at the end) had well documented and foreseeable health consequences. I could also see that escalation was (p. 2)



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the foreseeable future.

Even though my experience is nothing like Bill W.'s, I know that AA has a place for me. I can't enjoy just a beer with dinner. I have to get enough under my belt in quick order to feel comfortable. Sure, I can quit for a couple of weeks at a time but am crawling out of my skin till I can get to that next oasis. As a result, I've ceded to my innermost self that I cannot safely drink and that I qualify as an alcoholic.

I am just passing 60 days sober and am committed to engaging authentically this time around. That means speaking my truth in circumstances where I might not feel like I fit. It also means that the main priority is my connection with an H.P. of my understanding, with the fellowship being a secondary support. Having those priorities lined up just feels right and I hope to carry this way of life forward.

~Matt R.

There is A Solution



Immersing Myself in AA

Growing up as a kid, back and forth between NYC and Burlington, I was witness to a lot of partying. I grew up above a bar in a rough neighborhood. Card games, gambling, and partying were nightly occurrences until 4:00 a.m. I was the little boy sneaking out of his room and on my uncles' laps thinking it was the

coolest thing in the world to see.

I don't think it affected too much, as I rose above that, excelled in High School academically and athletically. I had lots of friends, was popular, and had a girlfriend who was in college... and I ultimately followed her there, and ended up engaged to her, buying a home, and starting a family together. I began working at the hospital, and life was great.

I still drank, probably much more than most people, but I still was keeping everything in line. My ego kept me too proud of all my accomplishments to see any problems. Anytime a I loved one would bring up my drinking, I always chalked it up to being "good at it" and "liking the feeling of a cool buzz."

Everything changed when the scariest event in my life happened in February 2013. My second child was born three months early and was not alive when first delivered. (p.3)

Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more

local stories and meeting information.

My fiancée and I spent the two months by his incubator in the ICU. We seemingly had no answers. Only daily progress, little by little, followed by setbacks. This is where the bottle took over completely.

I had a 32-oz. bottle half mixed with vodka that never left my side. A few gulps in the morning, more during the my shift, drinking on the job. Even at my son's bedside in the ICU. It was the only thing that could wipe my mind of any fear. I dreaded that I was not in control. What is to become of my baby boy? The stress caused me to separate from my fiancée. I could now drink however I wanted to. I was alone; the bottle was my company and my accomplice.

I immediately looked for a new "girlfriend" to give me

some self-confidence. I saw my daughter less and less, and I was about to have my prayers answered – my son was miraculously healthy, and set to come home. That didn't change my ways. Their mom wasn't ready to have me move back home, as she noticed how heavily I was into the bottle. This devastated me even more! "Look what we prevailed through. We deserve to make this work!" She, however, knew I wasn't healthy. This put me in more of a spiral. I was determined to drink through it all - make her see "I should be back in the house, raising our children --that will make me stop drinking and end this relationship" I told her. No avail.

I continued a 10-year off-and-on struggle. Three DUI's, six rehabs, three lost jobs, another

failed relationship, sober living failures, legal trouble... just to name a few. Just recently, my girlfriend of three years cut everything off with me. I cannot contact her, and she was my biggest supporter, my soulmate, my best friend. I detoxed severely in jail and attempted suicide. I'm facing three felonies and haven't seen my children in over four years. However, I just completed a 21-day rehab and am back in sober living. I'm immersing myself in AA, and looking forward to starting work again next week. I continue to fight. I aim for nothing less than restoring the life I once had... only sober.

~Justin B.

There is A Solution

There is a Solution Men's Meeting

Closed ~ only for those with a desire to stop drinking.

Thursday | 6:30 p.m. | Step Meeting

In-Person: First United Methodist Church, 21 Buell St., Burlington

Wheelchair Accessible

**Download or print the AA Vermont Districts
2 & 11 [meeting list](#).**

One of the Lucky Ones

It could have been worse, I guess, but not by too much. The years leading up to the pandemic were pretty rough. Then everything began to completely fall apart. I was then an early forties alcoholic without a job, and the best way to describe my emotional state at that time is “hopeless.” Friends and family were growing concerned about this “tear towel” I was carrying around. It was a sad man’s handkerchief used to soak up inevitable eyeball leaks throughout the days. I became a weeper and used to try to convince myself, and others, “It’s okay to be sad sometimes.” For me, it was chronic. Something was very wrong, and what to do about it was lost on me. The collection of empty rum handles grew greater still. Several attempts to detox myself at home resulted in a number of near death experiences, along with a serious heart condition now cured.

I had only heard about AA from my father’s concern for my now departed brother. He had “it” also, maybe worse? He had no control of his drinking in life and had been bribed by our father to attend meetings for \$100 a pop. I attended one or two in support but was absent in thought. I should have been paying closer attention because deep down, I knew that his fate would likely be mine. I had known in my twenties my family’s proclivities and wondered often if I would have “it” too. Well, I do. Whatever “it” is...I have it. No health concerns or hurt feelings from friends or family could get in the way of it.

Once I saw that I was completely powerless over alcohol, I began to warm up to the idea of rehabilitation. I



could see no other option and was out of ideas anyway. Fresh out of the hospital again from sequestered detox at home, a good man picked me up and off to rehab we went. What a nuisance I thought, not knowing what waited. I took to the program with some eagerness and was drawn in by the positivity in the environment. I likened the experience to that of being on a college campus. This was favorable, and as the date of my discharge grew closer I was bargaining for another week. Sobriety felt brand new and excellent. I had only felt this clear during brief intervals for the entirety of my adult life.

Several years and several thousand miles later, I find myself in an excellent spiritual condition. The gifts from this wonderful program are presented daily. I’ve definitely taken some shrapnel along the way but am feeling at peace with the ongoing process. There is still much yet to be done. There is an excellent sponsor in my life who’s becoming a good friend. There is a strong program and an equally strong recovery community all around me. It’s difficult to imagine what life would be like without the program of AA in it, or if there would even be a life. It’s likely the latter. Even though I have “it,” I know that I’m one of the lucky ones. I

think I’ll try to come back again tomorrow.

~Billy S.

There is a Solution

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