

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

Stories from the Monday Night Beginners Group!

WILLINGNESS IS THE KEY

When I first came into the rooms, one of the only things I was able to hear was “willingness is the key”. When I heard people talking about Higher Powers, inventories, and meditation, my head swam. It was all too much for me. But I did pick up on the theme of willingness.

I was at the end of the line, and AA was my last option. I tried to control my drinking, tried to deny it, and tried to hide it. Nothing worked. So when I finally hit my bottom, I knew the jig was up. That’s when I went to my first AA meeting.

The topic was about Higher Powers and the spiritual solution. I was overwhelmed, but this idea of willingness being the key resonated with me. I just had to be willing to believe there was a power greater than me that could solve my alcohol problem and give me a design for living that really works. I only had to be willing to try things like writing inventory and

meditation. And by that point, I was willing to do anything and everything to stay sober.

For me, willingness has been the key. It is the key that has opened up the door to sober, joyous, right living. whenever I am in doubt, I only have to demonstrate that willingness like I did in early sobriety and the answers seem to come.

~ *Melissa E.*
Monday Night Beginners

BEGINNING AGAIN, AN AA STORY

I first got sober in 1987 in San Francisco. I had been going to Adult Children of Alcoholics meetings and had started looking at my pattern of drinking, so I went to AA meetings too.

I did the least that was expected of me, but that seemed to be enough, and I stayed in AA for the next five years, through becoming a mother, moving from San Francisco to New Jersey and then from New Jersey to Burlington, Vermont. At that time I thought “I’ve got this. I don’t need

meetings any more,” and I never joined Burlington AA.

I stayed dry for the next five years, but then, because I was not treating my alcoholism, I thought that I was cured, that I could drink like a normal person. “I can have a glass of wine with dinner,” my diseased mind told me. So I did. Nothing happened at first, so I continued, gradually increasing the amount I drank until I was drinking every day, hiding bottles around the house and deluding myself that I was hiding my excessive drinking. I lied about my drinking to everyone; my family, my friends and my healthcare providers.

I couldn’t hide it from my body, mind and spirit, though. I became severely depressed, my physical health was suffering. I was suffering. Like a lot of suffering alcoholics, I made my family miserable and alienated my friends and coworkers with my verbal abuse and bad attitude.

My last big bout of drinking was during the holiday season of 2007. My husband and daughter decided to go spend the holidays

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with Grandma in New Jersey, leaving me at home because I was so awful to be around. I drank around the clock for a week, trying to decide between suicide and going back to AA.

That's when my Higher Power stepped in: A thought came into my mind that killing myself would be very bad for my daughter, who I love deeply. I decided not to do that to her and went back to AA.

It was the best decision of my life. My new sobriety date is January 7, 2008, and I intend to keep it. This time, I have plunged into the middle of AA, I have followed all the suggestions to the best of my ability, attended lots of meetings, got a sponsor, worked the steps and did service work. I enjoy the Fellowship very much and I have great AA friends. My life and attitude are very different than before. I feel "happily and usefully whole."

~ Christine D.

Monday Night Beginner's Group

IS IT THE CHURCH?

This was the text I sent as I sat in my car behind the Trinity Episcopal Church in Shelburne. I was meeting someone; they had invited me to an AA meeting. I was uneasy, ready to be disappointed.

It was the third week of my stay in the Day One rehab program when AA came up in a serious

way. Soon I was going to be out and I figured I would have to keep doing...something.

By that time, I was feeling positive about rehab. I felt like the reins had been taken from my hands and the relief was huge. All of the work I had been doing to hide my drinking – more and more as my body broke down – had been blown. The part of me that wasn't freaking about how I would need to adopt an entirely new lifestyle appreciated that I didn't have to do all that work anymore.

So, when someone offered to set up a meet with someone who was in AA, I said sure. And I said sure when that person invited me to my first meeting.

The person I was meeting came and got me and brought me up some stairs into the middle of a large room. Five or six people sat on old-looking stuffed furniture, facing inward to make a circle. A candle sat burning on a small table in the center of their circle.

That candle may as well have been burning in the center of a pentagram drawn with human blood. I had been a self-identifying atheist since I was very young, and though I had come to respect the religious beliefs of others, I knew all that was not for me. I was a rational, educated person; I believed in facts.

But there I was, walking to a couch because even with all the

facts in the world I hadn't been able to figure out a way to solve my drinking problem. When they told me that we were about to meditate for fifteen minutes I closed my eyes despite the voice in my mind shouting "Cult!"

Finally, it was over. As I was tensing my body to make a break the safety of the parking lot my way was blocked by someone standing there, holding out their hand to me. We exchanged some awkward "So what brings you to AA?" talk, and, in the end they offered to sponsor me. I said sure.

That word "sure", which has evolved over time to "yeah" or "yes" when I am asked to try something that voice tries to tell me is "not for me". It is termed in AA sometimes as "taking suggestion". This program is full of suggestions. Ask anyone involved. And if you start with one suggestion and find that goes pretty well, then what could be the harm of the next?

~ Andrew D.

Monday Night Beginners

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