

The Eye Opener

Vol 20 No 2 – February 2020

Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

THEN AND NOW

When I arrived at my first AA meeting I was eager to find out how to fix my drinking problem. I knew my life had gotten off-track, that people were worried about me and that I was having bigger and worse problems than I had ever had in my life. I specifically did not want to lose another job and was on the verge of being fired for the third time in a short period. I didn't understand why any of this was happening and didn't think I was an alcoholic but did not have a better idea than to try a meeting.

Once I attended and heard people share their stories and went to literature meetings I couldn't help but identify with what I was hearing. I saw these people whose lives seemed to be going well and they looked so happy. I was elated to believe that I had found the solution to my problems – AA.

Now I thought I can get my life back on track and things will get back to normal. That is not what happened exactly. What I discovered is that I couldn't go back to try to resume what I

thought was my normal life. In truth, it had been the life of an alcoholic despite the fact that it took years for me to become dependent on alcohol. As I learned that alcoholics tend to be super sensitive, self-centered, grandiose, immature and more I slowly started to rethink past behaviors in light of this new information. I had never thought the problem was me. It had always seemed clear to me that I was a pretty nice person and people kept treating me roughly and even abusively. I thought they were just mean people and felt really sore that I wasn't being appreciated.

Now when people get upset with me I understand that I have done something that brought this reaction. I understand that even if it is not my intention, I can cause people to be upset. I know now that I am responsible only for my actions and not others reactions. I am responsible for my little section of the sidewalk but I also want to get along well with my neighbors. Now when people get upset with me, I try to see things from their perspective and don't get defensive. I try to learn. I need

negative feedback from bosses in order to improve. I also have better self esteem as a result of working the program so I don't fall apart if someone criticizes me. I don't like to be criticized but I no longer fall apart. I am stronger and try harder to be honest and fair – all thanks to attending lots of meetings, working the steps, having a sponsor and trying to be of service.

~ Janet A.

ANYONE, ANYWHERE

I'm Dave and I'm an alcoholic/addict. I identify myself this way because I'm hoping that someone else can identify with that part of my story. When I came in, I had just turned 60 and the first thing I had to do was embrace abstinence. The second thing I had to do was go to meetings, every day and twice on Sundays.

The next thing I had to do was to learn to stop doing something I've always done and to start doing something I had rarely done. I was always comparing myself to other and I identified with no one. At one

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point my first home group wrote the word "identify" on a piece of cardboard and handed it to me when I blanked on the word.

In meeting after meeting, I walked in filled with how different I was from every another alcoholic. In meeting after meeting, I walked out after hearing some part of my story from another alcoholic. The thing that hurt the most was that I wasn't a "pure" alcoholic. It didn't matter to me that, for me, one of anything was never enough. It didn't matter to me that whatever it was that I consumed, I consumed it until it was gone and then all I could think of was getting more. It didn't matter to me that I thought I successfully hid my erratic and errant behavior from everyone, even though I hid it from no one. It didn't matter to me when the big book described time and time again exactly who I was and exactly how I behaved.

I travel for work a lot and one of the great joys of the fellowship is what I call AA tourism. As I travel up and down the East Coast. It was at one of these, out-of-town meetings that I first heard the chair read, "In the spirit of A.A.'s Singleness of Purpose, we ask that you confine your sharing to the topic of recovering from alcoholism." I also heard from a certain type of old-timer who complained about the "druggies"

and that their problems were diluting the message.

I was told that there was only one program of Alcoholics Anonymous and that it can only be found in the first 164 pages of the first edition of the Big Book. It didn't sound, to me, like a suggestion. At that time, all I had was the willingness to believe and didn't know willingness was the only thing my Higher Power required of me.

I compared my program and what brought me into the rooms to other alcoholics. Then, at a meeting in Jeffersonville, we read chapter 16, titled "Acceptance Was the Answer" from the stories in the back of the fourth edition of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous "Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. [...] Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake." (Big Book p417)

I was to learn later that in the 1975 3rd edition of the Big Book, the title of this chapter was, "Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict - Dr. Paul Ohliger".

I can remember the word identify now. I've found something to identify with from every alcoholic I meet, from every alcoholic/addict I meet, from every addict I meet and even from the "normies" I'm blessed to have in my life. All I had to do was to forget the word compare.

... from the heart

~ Dave W

90 days have come and passed
the drink I drank became my last
I've found a clear and beautiful path
Free of resentment, pride and wrath
Serenity, happiness, selfless living
A fellowship based on acceptance
and giving
The fade of anxiety, depression
and ego
The rise of hope, simply taking it slow
One day, one breath, one thought
at a time
Creating a new life that I can
call mine
To love thy self without loving thy self
The riches of life without all
the wealth
Faith and trust in a higher power
Living each second, each minute,
each hour
Willing to listen and willing to change
Priorities and goals have rearranged
Courage, wisdom, acceptance
and trust
Free of gluttony, pride and lust
I finally paused to stop and listen
To friends who shared their stories
and mission
Serenity, gratitude, joy and peace
A love for life with a brand new lease
I wasn't alone, I was home at last
90 days had come and passed

~ Geoff G.
Early Bird Group



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