

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Sober Living in Vermont

I was born in Minnesota, into a typical Midwestern family. My parents worked in the corporate world, we attended block parties and BBQ's, I dug holes in the large snow hill that formed in the middle of our cul-de-sac. We moved around and ended up in California. I drank sporadically in high school and immediately loved the release it gave me. But my drinking rarely interfered with the rest of my life.

By graduation, I was living the dream. I got into my dream college, and I was in love for the first time. She and I spent a blissful summer walking on the beach and staring longingly into each other's eyes.

During Freshman year, I excelled, but was drinking daily, and for the first time, drinking alone. By the end of that year, I was neglecting my hygiene, missing classes, and my girlfriend had left me because of my drinking. In my mind, I was taking care of important things and drinking the rest of the time. Over time though, I considered fewer and fewer things "important." By my senior year I was drinking heavily every day, in the mornings before class and all night after. I did homework when I had to, and skated by. I failed a few classes, but was on pace to graduate. I rarely left my house, and slowly, lost all my friends. I was a miserable sick pariah, but none of that mattered when I was drunk.

I graduated in 2020, into the pandemic, which was perfect for me. Suddenly, my agoraphobic behavior

seemed normal, even commendable. I knew I had a problem, but figured I would grow out of it. After graduation, I drank my days away at my parents house until a family friend offered me a job in Vermont. I thought a change in scenery might help me stop drinking. So, I packed up and left. I did stop for a while. But before I knew it, I was right back to old habits. Things were worse now, I only worked 4 days a week and was making good money. So I'd spend 3 days in a row drinking every week.

After a year, I quit my job, planning to start fresh in New York. I allowed myself a few days to 'recuperate' before leaving. Days passed and suddenly, it had been a month. I went outside only to buy booze and, occasionally, food. During a brief moment of lucidity, I decided that I would continue like that until I ran out of money, and then kill myself.

After weeks of avoiding calls from my parents, I answered. I broke down and all I could say was, "I need help, can I come home?" I was on the next flight to California. After 70 days of treatment I moved back to Vermont, into sober living. I found the Brown Bag group out of Essex and it became a second family to me. In those meetings I found a community of support, friendship and love. Through Brown Bag, I met my wonderful sponsor, who guides and mentors me and whom I learn from every day. (p. 2)



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.

Today, I'm 6 months sober, I have supportive friends, an amazing girlfriend and sometimes, serenity. There are days I feel that old urge to sit in a dark corner all day, but it's manageable. I work full time, have rediscovered my hobbies, and have a new career path. For all of this and more I thank AA, my home group and the many people who believed in me during my recovery.

~Ben
Brown Bag

Coming Back

This alcoholic

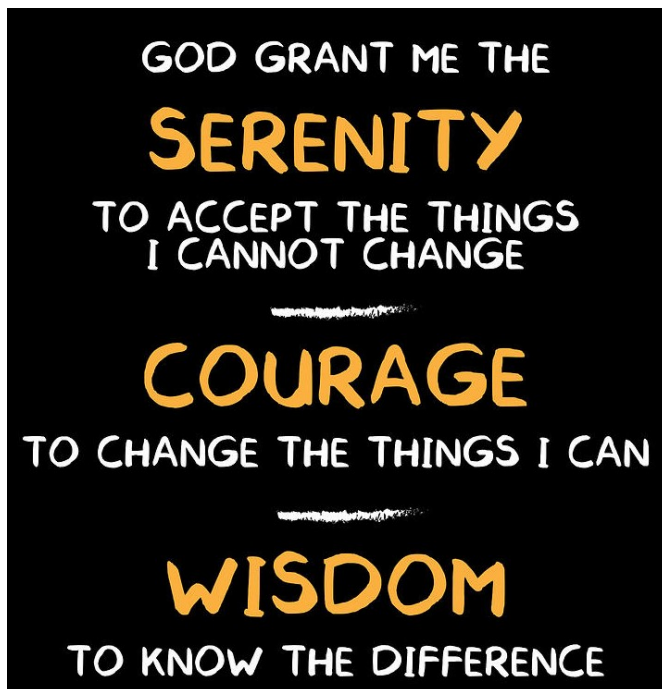
had to go out and do more research.

I was sober for 6 years, but the last 2 years I did not attend meetings. I thought I was "good to go" and started to believe that I wasn't an alcoholic. I would think "oh, I'm not a drinker" then turn around and ask my friend if I could taste their beer. Then I started to "enjoy" a glass of wine. I didn't really like the taste, but I was happy with the one glass... until I wasn't. For 18 months, I spiraled down into the abyss of hangovers. I came to a bottom in lightning speed compared to the 40 years it took, to hit the same type of bottom, waking up hungover, sick and hating myself.

I couldn't seem to stop. The insanity of telling myself, I wasn't going to drink, day after day. Until my Higher Power woke me early one morning after a long night of drinking into the wee hours. I was on my feet, before my eyes opened and heard, "Get to a meeting, or you're going to die!" That got my attention. I looked up AA meetings in Florida, as that was where I was living and where I thought I would make a home. I drove that morning, still drunk from the night before, and fearful that I wasn't going to make it to the meeting at the beach house.

Turns out only one other woman attended that meeting. "Susan" became my sponsor in FL and she was my sponsor for 4 months. The new bottom I hit, plus a planned wedding, propelled me back home to VT. It was a good thing: my tenant told me they were moving. Thank God I didn't sell my home. Thank God another sober woman had advised me not to sell when I left VT.

I found a sponsor here in Vermont, and she walked me through the 12 steps, and by golly, she told me to keep repeating steps 1-12. I didn't like this at first, but I was desperate and was grateful that she was by my side. Now I like this way of sponsorship. I am doing a new kind of 4th step, focusing on past relationships with men and making amends to and loving myself. How can I ever get to know just who I am, when I've never taken the time for myself? I respect myself and love myself, and if I don't then why should anyone else? I'm finding out that I can love myself and enjoy doing things on my own, discovering new places and things. (p. 3)



Loving myself takes some work. I've always had older siblings telling me what to do, how to act, and how to think. I learned that I don't have to listen to anyone tell me how they think I should be, I only need to focus on my sobriety and love myself. To do this, I pray for the willingness to be willing, ask my HP to guide my thoughts, and remind me not to listen to the "untruthful ideas" in my head. To stay present and focused, I have a regular schedule to meditate. My mind is part of my body, therefore, I want to have a healthy mind, to help my body to grow healthy.

Sponsorship is part of this plan to keep me positive. If I share my experience, strength and hope with a newcomer, and help another alcoholic find serenity, this will reinforce and come back to me in many positive outcomes. Time will pass and my life will be more fulfilled. Thank you Bill Wilson and Alcoholics Anonymous!

There is a solution and it works, if you work it. So work it, you're worth it!

~Anonymous
Promises Meeting



Service Keeps Me Sober

Dr. Bob said it all in his last talk delivered in 1950: "Our twelve steps when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into two words: love and service."

As it says in the Big Book, "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people around us." (P. 77)

Service keeps me sober; service helps many people I know stay sober and live happy lives dealing with adversity and with life on life's terms, one day at a time.

Service came easy for me. Before AA I had always been "involved" in things, even while young.

My "resume" of service was long: civic, religious, and fraternal

groups; private clubs, elected public office, major appointed public office; I was always active in things. However, when I came to AA I learned that in many cases this frenzy of activity was endemic to my status as an egomaniac with an inferiority complex; my high ego/low self esteem.... Fortunately, I was able to translate my enjoyment of service into real beneficial service in AA. And it has worked. My AA "resume" is extensive, but it is not important to me or others. It's just part of being what the old-timers called "good AA."

Our literature emphasizes the benefits of service. However, it does involve priorities. As noted in the Daily Reflections book, "It is through service that the greatest rewards are to be found. But to be in a position of offering true, useful, and effective service to others, I must first work on myself. That means I have to abandon myself to God, admitting my faults and clearing away the wreckage of my past. Work on myself has taught me how to find the necessary peace and serenity to successfully merge inspiration and experience. I have learned to be in the truest sense, an open channel to sobriety."

As the Big Book says about working with others, "Life will take on a new meaning." (p.4)

Speaking of service, it is a form of insurance. As the Step book says, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." (12 and 12, p. 89)

Wow. Immunity, eh? That IS a great benefit. There are so many more gifts from service. And service, no matter how seemingly small, is valued and important. You never know that the coffee you made that day might be just what a newcomer needed to sit and listen. That slogan you painted and put on the wall may have been an unforgettable inspiration. And that key you held and put in the door to open up a meeting room might be a key to recovery for so many.

And there's a warning too. As a Grapevine quote said, "Recovery is giving it away. If you don't give it away, you can't have it. Be part of the pipeline."

And there's our Responsibility Declaration:



There is much to do every day; service with a smile; service with a handshake; service with a comfortable meeting room; service with a phone call, service with timely and participatory attendance; service in setting up and taking down; service is being there willing to help. It's up to us. No. it's up to me.

~Dennis McM

Brown Bag Group



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

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