

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

My Higher Power Rides Shotgun

“If you play with fire, you

get burned.” This is the phrase I would tell people when they asked why I came into the rooms the first time I tried to get sober in November 2020. At that time, I was living in an illusion that my alcoholism had yet to burn others or myself. I approached sobriety as a preventative measure rather than as a solution to my drinking. I went through the motions of the program; I found a sponsor, pretended that I had a Higher Power, and half-assed the steps up until Step Four where I just fully stopped working the steps. The Big Book says, “...few will sincerely try to practice the AA program unless they have hit bottom.” The truth is, the first time I tried to get sober, I never truly accepted that I was powerless over alcohol and I never surrendered. I did not work a thorough and sincere program. And, to no surprise, I relapsed.

I stayed out for 8 months, and during those months I hit my bottom. I entered a drug-induced psychosis that lasted a few months. I was stuck in a cycle of insanity that my alcoholism kept perpetuating. The psychosis shattered the illusion I had held on to for so long, the idea that I could control my drinking. I could see clearly how the world around me

was scorched, as my drinking burned bridges and people, including myself. I finally accepted that I was completely and utterly powerless over alcohol. I was fortunate enough to be given another window of opportunity for sobriety, and this time I had the willingness to do the work.



The difference between the first time I tried to get sober, and this time, is black and white. This time, I have a Higher Power. I used to think that in order to have a Higher Power, I had to understand and be able to describe it. I now realize that to understand something is to have a degree of power over it, whereas my lack of understanding and the indescribable nature of my Higher Power is what makes it a power greater than myself. Even though my connection, or closeness, to my Higher Power can ebb and flow, I never doubt its presence and that my Higher Power unconditionally loves me. (p. 2)

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THEY DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OR POSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EYE OPENER COMMITTEE OR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

I once heard someone ask, "What are you plugging into? People? Yourself? Or God?" This question was like a punch straight into my gut. I used to plug into myself, and, if not myself, then people. Now, I hand my life and will over to my Higher Power every morning and night. I invite my Higher Power into all of my affairs. For instance, as ridiculous as this may sound, I now drive with the passenger seat open to let my Higher Power ride shotgun with me on my commute to school. I have found the power in the pause, for only by pausing am I making space for my Higher Power.

Sobriety is much more than just not drinking. It is changing behaviors to create a new design for living. Sobriety and the program have given me a life I did not and could not have imagined. I have stable, healthy and happy relationships and friendships. I intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle me. I am able to show up for others and feel empathy. I do not live in my head anymore as I allow myself to trust God's will and be present. I am finally sane.

~Anastasia L.

Design for Living

No Matter What, Just Don't Drink

I could not imagine life without a drink. I didn't want, nor could I go, hours without a drink. I fashioned my life so that anything that got in the way of my drinking disappeared. I once heard someone say, "I didn't hit bottom, I

My drinking came to an end when I was living alone and separated from the world and I began to have hallucinations from withdrawal. The police were called after I scared the neighbors with my behavior. Instead of taking me to the station they took me to the hospital. My mother found me a rehab and the rehab found me a sober house. I had no idea what to do for myself,



skidded along it." That sentiment really spoke to me. I would see a police officer and wonder how someone could work a profession that doesn't allow smelling like a hangover, let alone drinking on the job. Even after almost a year into committed sobriety, a DUI divergence counselor told me that many people just stop drinking after their first DUI. My alcoholic brain still thought that was a strange reaction.

and the help of others saved my life.

Early in sobriety I didn't know what I was doing. But I did know that no matter what, just don't drink. That was my only non-negotiable. Anything else I could be wrong about or not very good at. And, as it turns out, being able to be wrong and not good at things was just what I needed (and still is). I had no idea how to live sober so any expectation that I had was probably not how things were. (p. 3)



When I moved into a house away from my sober house one of the first things I saw was a big box of beer on the kitchen table. My new roommate said it was old and thought it was expired. My second thought was that it was not my place to educate him on the shelf life of alcohol. My first thought was that the rest of the world does not care that I do not drink. The alcohol will always be there and it is up to me to do what I need to do to maintain my recovery, including finding the help and support of others.

In sobriety AA has shown me how

to develop a spiritual side of life, something that I knew nothing of before. My spiritual experience began not long after removing alcohol from my life. I had a realization that the feeling is real, that it is something natural. It seemed to come out of the void left by alcohol.

As my life in sobriety developed, I have incorporated three complementary programs: AA, a self-managed addiction recovery program, and an ancient Greek philosophy. AA teaches me the spiritual experience. The second program teaches me self knowledge (I need

some self knowledge in my life). And the philosophy, to me, is the basis for both the principles of AA and the self-managed recovery program. It applies the principles of sober living in the context of life in general.

And one more thing. AA has the people! In AA I have found other people who are learning to live sober. Without the AA community I wouldn't have made it a week into sobriety. Thank you all!

~Fletcher

Design for Living

AA Announcements

New Online Meeting: Tuesday Night Men's Zoom Meeting, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

District Officers, Committee Chairs and members needed in both Districts 2 & 11.

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

Pushing the Reset Button

July 18, 1996 is my first sobriety date.

The night before my one month chip I got curious. If I ate food with alcohol in it, would I "feel it" and relapse? And if so, would this mean I was really an alcoholic? After eating the food, I had an awareness that I was playing with fire. Curiosity killed the cat and it might have killed me too if I hadn't stopped there and called my sponsor. Needless to say, I did not get my chip the next day. The folks at that meeting who had supported my progress were baffled when I didn't get up to get my chip. We stepped outside, and I told them what I had done, explaining to them my mindset. I was playing with fire, hedging my bets, and straddling the fence to see if I would fall off.

I immediately pushed the RESET button, and August 18, 1996 has since remained my sobriety date, solid and sworn. The relief I felt for telling on myself saved my life. And the relief I felt when I finally got my first month chip was profound because I had told the truth. Some might say, "nothing even happened," or "cooking with alcohol is harmless," or, "if you didn't get drunk, it doesn't count." I say not for me! My dishonest mindset, trying to trick myself into being curious to see 'if something would happen', was just another way the words baffling, cunning and powerful come to life for me. I cannot risk being curious. Period. That kind of thinking will lead to a drink.

That November, my father died instantly from cardiac arrest. I was in my third month of sobriety. Numb and without tears, I was running on auto-pilot. I had to get to a meeting, and the only one that I found was a men's meeting. As soon as I entered the room I start-

ed to cry. Through my tears I told the room full of fellows that my father had just died. Would they allow me to attend? They welcomed me in. We talked about sobriety and our fathers. It was a miracle. I needed to be surrounded by men who were still alive, some of them fathers themselves that day. I was given exactly what I needed because AA is based on principles not personalities.

During the next few weeks folks from the rooms came to my house to clean, do laundry, bring me food and hang out with me so that I wasn't alone. I didn't understand what was happening, and one person noticed that I had no idea what to do other than go to meetings and stay sober. They said to me, "We are loving you until you can love yourself." I felt socially awkward and out of step with the program, but I understood what this meant. I heard what they had to say and took it in. I didn't even know if I loved myself or not, and I certainly had no idea if they knew that about me or not. There was so much that remained a mystery to me that I didn't know what else to do but to listen, feel good about being honest, grateful to be sober and certain that I was now sober for a reason. A reason I didn't necessarily understand.

Today I am still sober and I am grateful that I caught hold of my curiosity before it took over and lost to the odds of getting and staying sober. Sometime in that first month I heard something of value. Call your sponsor. Think, Think, Think. Meeting makers make it. Fearless. Painstaking. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly but they will always materialize if we work for them.

~Tamah

Living Sober

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