

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Letting Go of Regrets

For most of my life, I remember having regrets about numerous things. It wasn't until I got into the program and got serious about working the steps with my sponsor that I started to realize why this was, and how to look at and address them properly. The problem is, there were decades between those two sentences. And there is one regret which stands out above a lot of others.

Both of my parents were alcoholics who thankfully got sober three days apart through AA when I was twelve. They spent the rest of their lives giving to, sponsoring, and helping hundreds of others. My siblings and I were introduced to Al-Anon and Alateen, which probably should have helped steer me toward the right path, or so my parents hoped anyway.

Instead, I started drinking, graduated high school, headed to college, and basically began a life which avoided my family of origin. Sure, we reached out on birthdays, got together over holidays and had occasional visits, but nothing of any real substance. Even through my marriage(s) and having children, I kept everyone at arms' length emotionally. Therefore, my children didn't get to have a relationship with their grandparents, aunts, uncle or cousins.

I realize now that I was a combined mess of arrogance, self-pity and indifference. I dreaded my parents' condescending attitude toward my lifestyle (although, they were likely just concerned and it probably wasn't all that condescending), so I dug my

heels in, pretended to not care, and avoided them and any confrontation. This also carried into other areas of my life, which eventually got smaller and smaller as my disease progressed.

So, one of my biggest regrets has been that my parents never got to see me in recovery. They passed away a few years ago, four years apart almost to the day, with just shy of 40 and 44 years of sobriety respectively. It was over 2 ½ years later when I finally got sick and tired enough to surrender and honestly ask for help, from both my Higher Power, and those close to me.



I am learning that I can't continue to regret this or anything from the past. I can't change what happened, so I choose to accept it. I can, however, change my input toward how the rest of my life plays out. Today is all I have, and I am learning to live more in the moment, and in doing so, looking for ways to make small, positive differences. Loving myself is a critical part of this process which I am also learning to do.

So, I will continue to pray for the strength to get out of my own head, look at what is real and present, focus on helping others, and as I recently heard from a very wise member of our fellowship, I will "Put myself lovingly back on the Path" and do the next right thing, leaving regrets behind.

~John L.

Keep It Simple

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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.

Giving Up Control

I was blessed to grow up in a loving home with non-alcoholic, caring parents. Despite that, I remember feeling like I didn't fit in with my peers and felt excessive social anxiety. My Dad tells me that if he raised his voice I'd immediately react and was easily upset. Looking back on it now, I believe I was born with an unhealthy amount of fear of not being accepted by others.

As I grew into my high school years, I still had fear and anxiety about not fitting in. When I

was 16, I had my first experience at a keg party and I drank until I got sick. What I remember most was standing in a group without any of the usual social anxiety. That day I learned alcohol could help me control how I felt, and this discovery would follow me into adulthood.

In my late teens and early 20s, I thought I had life figured out. I didn't use alcohol excessively and, on the surface, was relatively successful. I received honors in college and landed a job in my chosen profession.

My wife and I were young, smart, successful, and on top of the world. What I didn't see was that the "success" fueling my ego on the outside was a smokescreen to hide the insecure fearful person I was on the inside.

Life happened. My wife became very sick during our third year of marriage. While she was recovering, I started using alcohol to help me through. If I drank after work, the alcohol removed my fear and anxiety about everything. I remember feeling an almost *(p. 3)*

Monday Night Beginners 45th Anniversary Potluck

Monday, June 24, 2024

St. Anthony's Hall

305 Flynn Ave, Burlington

5:00-6:30 p.m.- Potluck

6:30-7:30 p.m.— Speaker Mtg.

Meeting Change

Saturday, July 6, 2024

Living Sober will switch to in-person.

Saturdays, 8:00 a.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church

1250 Spear St., S. Burlington



Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more

local stories and meeting information.

almost spiritual “oneness” with the universe. I was using my wife’s sickness as an excuse to drink and was more concerned with my own feelings than being the supporting husband that I should have been.

Life continued to happen and surprise surprise, more excuses to drink appeared. Things went sideways in 2009. The Florida housing market crashed, we lost our house, and my company moved us to New Jersey. I blamed myself for the situation. The fear of not being in control and “not being enough” rose to the surface. I didn’t have a spiritual solution to deal with it, and

my alcohol abuse increased along with my excuses and resentments.

For the next 10 years, I skidded along the bottom. Sometimes feeling better and drinking less, but always drinking. I was diagnosed with clinical depression, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. In 2014, I tried AA at the recommendation of a counselor. After a few meetings, I decided I was not an alcoholic and quit. I spent the next five years hiding my drinking and being untruthful with my wife and family. Eventually, I hit my physical and emotional bottom and went back to AA in 2019.

Through the program I found my Higher Power. I’ve learned that God is in control of my life and I am not. If I can remember to ask God for the strength to give up control of my life, He shows me the next right thing to do and gives me the power to do it. Life is still difficult, but with a Higher Power, the problems don’t seem “unmanageable,” and I look forward to seeing what God has in store for me each day.



~Anonymous

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Open ~ All Are Welcome

United Church of Underhill

3 Park St., Underhill

Wheelchair Accessible

Monday, 8:00 p.m. | Step Mtg.

Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. | Big Book

Friday, 7:00 p.m. | Discussion

Saturday 6:30 p.m. | Speaker Discussion

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

I Kept Coming Back

I've been thinking lately about the things I'm grateful for. It's a long list.

I've had periods of not attending meetings and drifting away from our AA program. Top on my gratitude list is that during these times my higher power helped me return to the Twelve Steps rather than to the drink.

From the beginning, drinking for me was different than for people around me. By 16 I was blacking out, passing out and waking up not knowing how I got to that particular location.

I gradually accumulated friends who drank like me. When I drank, I did it to get drunk. I compartmentalized things in my life - I didn't drink at work or family events. But when I left those, it was straight to a bar.

As I approached 30, the drinking compartment got bigger. I was drunk more, sometimes for a few days at a time. Increasingly reckless, I came to in places that still shock me.

At a moment when I was able to hear it, a friend suggested that I consider AA. Though an avowed atheist then, I now believe that my higher power was helping me that day.

My early years in recovery were mostly just about not drinking. I had only one foot in the program - I didn't get a sponsor until Year 3. I don't recommend this approach.

My life choices continued to create stress and chaos. I eventually got more serious about the Twelve Steps and got a sponsor. He taught me many things, including that I suffered from "terminal uniqueness," that the only thing I needed to know about God is that there is one and it's not me, and, during my first 5th

Step, that if there is a word for it then I'm not the first one to do it.

I embraced the program and my life kept getting better. So, of course, I stopped going to meetings and became my own sponsor.

This pattern repeated itself a few times. Another item high on my gratitude list is that my higher power helped me have willingness to come back after I messed up my life.

For several years now, I have been consistently active in AA. I heard somewhere we should always have a good answer to four questions: what's your home group, who's your sponsor, what step are you working, and what is your service commitment? When we have solid answers to these questions, we should be able to maintain good spiritual footing one day at a time.

Practicing the principles of the Twelve Steps means everything to me now - my daily practice (reading AA literature, setting aside time for prayer and meditation, the 10th Step), going to meetings and sponsor work. These help me lead a happy, productive, and peaceful life. I often experience real freedom and a feeling of wellbeing. I'm a better husband. I have more than 30 years of continuous sobriety from alcohol, and I am
grateful.

~Anonymous

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