

FORWARD

Disclaimer: Oftentimes people in recovery from addictions, usually men do not need to ever return to a fourth step after doing it once, they don't need to talk about their feelings, nor do they need an empathic listener. They are emotionally and spiritually healthy. These types have either had an intense spiritual healing experience or they have gone to therapy for a year or more and worked through their core emotional issues, or have done both. Alcoholism in itself is traumatic experience to our hearts and minds. My suggestions in the following articles are for those in recovery who have a knowledge of the 12 steps and have had trauma in their past and are in need of an emotional healing from that.

Overcoming Fear the human condition from which all addictions spring

PRELUDE to the book.

"Let no man condemn himself; for it is by self-condemnation that we set ourselves above God who is our only True & Righteous Judge. For it is He & He alone who possesses a capacity for the unconditional Grace and Love which mankind's collective soul so desperately needs to survive the deceptive throngs that encompass death and the grave?"

It is written that the fear of death is the mother of all fears and from it springs all manner of worry, fear, and anxiety and so we engage the great struggle to defeat these feelings.

We can quickly destroy all our loving relationships due to natural knee-jerk reactions that fend off fear and the feelings that fear creates. Some deadly knee-jerk solutions are blame, criticisms, hate, playing the victim or the oppressor anything that relates to putting down and condemning others to make ourselves feel better if even just for a short while. There is no shortage of people to condemn including ourselves. In the meantime we lose what our hearts really need and crave...to Love and to be Loved, to comfort and to be comforted, to understand and to be understood, to follow our conscience and to live guilt-free.

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

They say that the most common phrase in the Bible is "fear not". Some say it is written in the Bible 365 times once for each day of the year. Staying in faith and trusting in God is easier said than done. Things happen that strike fear in us, fear of loss, fear of losing control of a situation, fear of sickness and death, fear that people will not like us or will desert and abandon us. It is said in the rooms of AA that people most commonly have fears associated with these three things. Sex, Society, and Security.

First we often fear losing our partners, boyfriends, and husbands. Second we fear losing our "status" in our society of peers. Third we fear losing our homes, jobs, money, and car. The feelings that fear produces is at the core of addiction and codependency so we must find solutions to gnawing and torturous feelings.

When we are well grounded in our Higher Power by exercising regular prayer, meditation, meetings, and service work we not only receive fulfillment by that charity but we also have less reason to fear because our faith has been exercised and strengthened by regular communing with God. We must get our [daily bread], our spiritual feeding to continue trusting God and to repel fear.

When we pray and meditate yet find that our lives and minds are still full of discord, animosity, worrying, anxiety, and stress then there is more we can do.

"Out of the problem into the solution!" We write down our fears in a list, we look it over and realize we lack trust in our Higher Power. We then courageously ask God to help us to trust Him/Her/It and if our religion requires, that we repent. We remember our second step

Step Two

"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

and the insanity that God has delivered us from. Sometimes the insanity of a second step returns if we are not active with living these steps. We remember that beating ourselves up is counterproductive and not a solution to anything. We revisit our Third step and remember that we have put our life and will into Gods caring hands so everything will be ok if we do our part. Have we done a formal and thorough fourth step if so; do we have any new active resentment? If so, we do a proper fourth step and ask ourselves what our fear is behind the resentment. Have we completed our amends by either apologizing or giving back what we have stolen? We do not gravel or expect any certain reaction from the persons with whom we make amends. We can't make them feel better by amends, but we will feel better by it no matter their response. If we still resent anyone, we have worked a fourth step on we pray blessings upon them daily until we forget about it and the resentment is gone.

By these steps which include God we learn to Love ourselves and others. By these steps we replace our old survival skills of blame and all its cohorts with healthy and loving coping skills based in truth, honesty, righteousness, Love, and compassion. We replace character defects with good character. In this text on a day by day basis I will explain the “whys” and “hows” of working the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous which can apply to any addiction including the addictions called drama, self-hate, and co-da.

During the first year of my recovery I had the opportunity to be in an addictions therapy group. During therapy I learned that there is no wrong feeling and that I must believe this in order to accept myself. For when I label my feelings “wrong” or “bad” I label myself and my own God given heart wrong and bad. Terms like; “I shouldn’t feel this way” or “but there’s nothing to be afraid of” are no longer in my vocabulary because there is always a valid reason for the way I/we feel. Even if that reason comes from years prior or is physiological there is always but always a valid reason for the way our hearts feel.

We are not bad or wrong ever by the way we feel. Usually if our emotions get “stuck” in us and we hurt and fear seemingly endlessly it is because no one has taught us how to process our feelings. They certainly didn’t teach it in school even though teaching a healthy emotional process should have been at the top of the curriculum. Actions and reactions are the only things that can ever be wrong or bad. I have found solutions to the feelings that I don’t like and have learned that some feelings just take time to walk through and that I need not let them paralyze me anymore. I have learned that feelings are “right” and appropriate yet sometimes unpleasant such as grieving a death or fear of a situation that’s new and different. In this book along with the 12 steps I will teach emotional processes to help let go of anger, rage, hurt, disgust, and the rest of the fear based emotions that we feel. I will share with you what has worked for me during my eight years of recovery from my two devastating bottoms which did include incomprehensible demoralization like the Big Book addresses.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Kent my true soul mate. He came along right on time to be a spiritual support system and recovery guide that helped me fulfill my own life's destiny and engage in my life's work. Kent you are one in ten thousand.

To my daughter Gabrielle who has a great & spiritual calling in her life, more will be revealed my darling daughter.

Daily Meditation for October 9, 2013 THE GOD BOX



My Heart is warmed when I remember my first year of recovery. I was so relieved to be free of the drink and drugs that I beamed with anticipation and gratitude. I was scared to death at the same time! I had no idea what kind of life I was in for but I did have hopes, dreams and the vision. I knew as long as I was doing God's will by being clean and sober that He was at the helm and life would be good...and by God it was!

It is so important to plan goals in life and to have hope they will come to pass. Hope is one of the spiritual axioms (spiritual foundation, principle) that us AA's depend on to expel fear of the future. Doing a thorough Third step includes making a "God Box" to put all our overwhelming fears in. Early recovery is scary but with the God box we can really let go of many things that we are powerless over.

The more my heart relies on God the more free I am. When I got sober my home was a thirty-two foot travel trailer that I was so grateful to have. I was like a wide-eyed child so eager to do everything that was suggested of me...except the commonly quoted rule of thumb; "don't get in a relationship for at least a year when first getting sober".

I kind of missed the boat on that one. We are like sponges when we first sober up. It is so important to surround ourselves with healthy sober people.

When I met my partner in 2006 he had seven years sober in the program already. Honestly, he triggered my over-sensitive raw emotions often. However I was taught by the steps and

my counselors that he was not to be made responsible for the way I felt. My partner could never process what needed expressed inside my hurting heart. Though he is capable of wronging me and hurting my feelings ultimately only I can work through those feelings by taking responsibility for them.

I let go of blame, focused on my own recovery and miraculously with God's leading began to heal. When I was triggered emotionally it was usually due to the excess baggage I brought with me into the relationship. I called my sponsor often and processed the intense feelings of inferiority that haunted me. I was taught to think of myself as "bad & wrong" and walked in the line of defense against that programming most of my young life. While my own heart condemned me, I was split emotionally right down the middle of my being. Healing would involve becoming who I really am and accepting myself as "good, blessed, right, & a child of God".

My partner and I are together still today by the Grace of God, he is one of the many blessings that God has brought me in recovery. "Don't quit till the miracle happens" they told me. That cliché means that we do grow and become comfortable in our own skin in recovery if we do the 12 step work & get the right empathic therapy.

I began chairing meetings at about six months sober and did so for many years. Chairing meetings built up self-esteem and confidence in me. (Step 12) I learned to be assertive not passive-aggressive as I had been for so long.

I learned to say no and stick to it. Why would I be passive aggressive? Friends, I was ashamed of myself in 100 different ways, not so much because I was evil. But rather I was programmed at an early age to believe everything about the real me was "WRONG"! By who?

By the system itself, by everything around me, by the programming of my parents who also believed they are bad & wrong. It took me 7 years sober to realize this revelation of self.

And so...I began to invoke self-love that took a lot of positive affirmations during meditation. I reprogrammed my own mind by repetition. The same way that the evil system programmed me as a child.

These addict neural pathways do not go away. They are etched in the brain's roadmap of self. However, I did, and you can build great and positive bridges over these nasty negative self-defeating, self-loathing roads of contempt that have haunted us addicts for years. By the tools of recovery we can reprogram behaviors.

One thing sure...the program works if we work it.

One thing is certain, Children of God do not have the right to condemn themselves ever.

2 third step prayer

October 10, 2013

Peace of mind is by far one of the most valuable things a recovering addict can possess. The opposing powers that fight against our peace of mind seem to be the people and conditions that surround us. And yes these circumstances can be malicious and overwhelming. However if we have peace within us then we have acceptance. Peace is what acceptance is made up of. Therefore peace is a greater power over people places and things than we ever imagined. This supernatural serenity tool can only be given by a Power greater than us which can be named or remain nameless that is our choice.

The 12 steps are our solution to madness and chaos if we do them thoroughly and honestly. Starting with Step Three we turn our will and our life over to the CARE of God as we understand IT. If we side step this important Third Step the rest of the steps will not work under the guidance of a supernatural helper, All we have to do to bring a Higher Power into our step work is pray with an open mind and a seeking and desperate heart.

THIRD STEP PRAYER

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better

Do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and

The way of life. May I do Thy will always!

Once we have kneeled down and sought a Higher Power for help with our desperate heart we will be heard by our unique Higher Power that is ours to keep. We will then get the help we need with the rest of the steps. Now we can do a Step Four in the way it was intended so we get the results that the Ninth Step Promises say we will get.

MOVE A MUSCLE CHANGE A THOUGHT



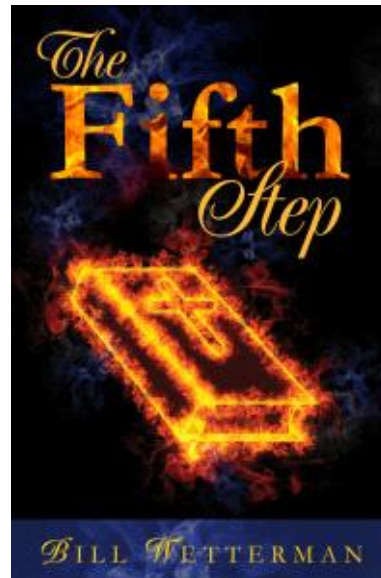
Woe woe woe the addict mind. When our mind is racing, when fears are in the forefront there are many tools we can implement to change our thoughts and the direction those negative thought patterns might take us. "Move a muscle changes a thought" is a sure solution to obsession. When we put on our shoes, pet the cat, do the dishes, go to a meeting, call a friend in the program, take a hot bubble bath with candles, make a proper meal, journal, do step work these are solutions to emotional darkness. When we put on our shoes we will feel our power, when we take a walk we get our blood flowing and we feel better.

Oxygen is nature's free drug and believe it or not it's a good one! Deep breathing techniques are simple and a must for relaxation and prevention for anxiety. Exercise produces endorphins that relax us and produce a natural high. After all there's nothing wrong with wanting to feel good. Studies show that people who exercise gain self-esteem and are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/exercise-depression>.

To recover we must move contrary to what our feelings are telling us to do. Sloth and procrastination is the recovering addict's enemy. Sobriety is uncomfortable at first and the addict mind seldom believes that there are simple and free solutions for the way we feel. Doing the "next right thing" does become second nature.

To recover we must consistently try new healthy behaviors until they become a way of life. "The same man will drink & drug again" and so we do the steps and use the tools to achieve the psychic change that will save not only our lives but our children's.

4
THE FIFTH STEP



Daily Meditation 10-13-13

Because of what life throws us quality sobriety doesn't always look pretty. At times the appropriate sober emotional response is to throw down the mask and promptly fall apart. We must release the poison that negative human emotions can create in our hearts if we are to survive not only sober but sane as well. Contrary to common belief crying is a healthy emotion that should not be shut down by force of habit.

Psalms 30:5 "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Pretending we know no sorrow does not exhibit strength it exhibits weakness and fear by forbidding others from seeing who we are and how we truly feel sometimes. It is not sincere for those in the program to constantly portray that "It's all good" all the time as if those who are having struggles are inferior for lack of a decent program.

Sharing from our heart during times of struggle is often a huge relief to our fellows because now they know...they are not alone. By the same principle of honesty the most important thing to share on a fifth step is the deep dark secret we are the most ashamed of. Shame is an exhausting emotion that cannot stand the light of confession and so it leaves. Thank God we have a way to emotionally heal.

WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES ANOTHER DOOR OPENS

“When one door closes another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed-door, that we do not see the one which has opened for us.” Alexander Graham Bell



“When one door closes another one opens” Once we have done our Third Step our lives are in God’s care but we don’t always remember that. After living a life of addiction littered with betrayal and lies suddenly we are challenged to trust that God has our needs covered. Trusting God is a process usually consisting of walking through uncomfortable and downright scary changes. If we lose our job we end up with a better one, if we lose our spouse by divorce we adjust and realize we are better off in many ways. Even when disaster occurs things can end up better than they were, we could end up with a better house or a better car or a fresh appreciation for what we do have. Suddenly we no longer take for granted our blessings.

When terrifying changes strike we draw closer to God, often times that’s the only reason we draw nigh unto our Creator. Once we put ourselves in God’s care He, [She or It] has our back. We can now sit back and let worry, manipulation, and grasping fearful behaviors go. God has a way of pulling us close to Him so we don’t stray back into self-destruction. It takes practice to build trust in God and unfortunately that trust is usually built by trial and tribulation. Just as we have to get to know people before we trust them; it’s hard to admit we also need to get to know our Higher Power and watch Him save our ass a time or two before an unshakable trust is built.

6

DEALING WITH FEAR



IT'S GOING TO BE OK. It will all work out one way or another. When we fear and visualize scary scenarios and they won't let up even though we are going to meetings and sharing our feelings what do we do?

Sometimes fears derive from core issues and won't let up because they need attention so we resort to the steps. We put the fears on a piece of paper. (Step 4) Next, we revisit our Third step and remind ourselves that the future is in God's capable Hands. We ask God to remove our fear, we contemplate the obvious fact that we do not trust our Higher Power or we would not be insecure about the future.

We then drop the problem into the God Box. Our God box is full of fears written on little pieces of paper. We remember how our Higher Power has taken care of us and kept us sober. Alcoholic's most common fears are of loss, financial insecurity, social fears (fear of what people may think of us) and fears associated with our sexual partners. We admit our shortcomings to God and ask them to be removed; we share them in a meeting or with our sponsor.

It's going to be ok our Higher Power has our back. If we do not see how struggle and conflict in our life is a result of the little fears then we are still living in denial and blame. We don't beat ourselves up. Self-awareness takes practice the blame game kept us sane when we were still using but now that we are sober blame (even in the form of criticism) is counterproductive to our spiritual growth.

Fear is not wrong, emotions/feelings are never wrong granted feelings are really miserable at times. What is wrong though, are hurtful and destructive knee jerk responses to emotions and fear. If we label our emotions wrong we label everyone wrong, if we label our fears bad and wrong it makes it easier to choose denial rather than self-appraisal.

How can we ask God or a Higher Power to remove something that we are too ashamed to admit to ourselves? If we can get to the root cause of what we are afraid of we can do a thorough fifth step and ride the spiritual principle of courage that will build in us self-confidence and make life happy, joyous and free.

OPTIMISM

“And if I ever lose my legs I won’t moan and I won’t beg oh if I ever lose my legs, I won’t have to walk....no more.” Cat Stevens

Cat Stevens’ phrase is the epitome of optimism; however we don’t always wake up with a good outlook on life. The best thing to do is to have our coffee, stick to our daily routine and thank our Higher Power for the blessing we do have. There is so much in life that we can lose that we often times don’t appreciate the wonderful things we have at our fingertips.

There is an important thing called “food for thought” that the typical recovering addict desperately needs to stay out of their own head. We go to a meeting and hear the problems of other addicts. We apply their plight to our own experience and add our strength and hope. We share not just for them but for ourselves. We listen to the solutions that our fellows share in that meeting.

Our day is enriched by our morning meditation and prayer. Sometimes we are the only one in the room that will provide solutions. Remember without the expression of fear and anxiety in meetings there is not much inspiration to share our solution.

My sponsor taught me “respect other people’s process of recovery.” Meaning we are not all hurting at the same time nor do we all have the spring of gratitude in our step at the same time...we mustn’t judge our fellows for having the courage to open their hearts to us. It takes courage to share “What happened and how it made me feel.”

Optimism is a choice that we inevitable must make for ourselves to be content. We share to expel our overwhelming fears and leave room for the joy and optimism to enter our hearts.

Psalms 37:4

“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

"It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." The Big Book

If we were made up of perfect Love and nothing else there would be no need for the tear ducts in our eyes, however we are not gods...yet. Expecting ourselves to be such is a recipe for self-disappointment.

If we are not careful this passage is a formula for self-condemnation, emotional repression and an invalidation of our own natural human God given feelings. God gave us tears for a reason; our hurts need expression that words could never suffice. Crying is a healthy emotion and not all hurt should be categorized as self-pity. Grieving loss and betrayal is part of the human process. If we sight our emotions as "wrong" we label ourselves wrong.

Ouch! We have all been verbally attacked and hurt by loved ones for reasons less than right.

What do we do when we have been wronged by others that we consider our partners, brothers, sisters and fellows? It is written in the big book on page 417 (in certain editions) that if we are disturbed there is something wrong in us. Well let's see..... Sometimes that "wrong" that is in us is perfectly right. Meaning if a fellow stomps on our toes the appropriate human response is to say "ouch" and get angry with the attacker. Even if we were to have complete Loving understanding of why the person wronged us it still hurts and that emotion needs expressed in an appropriate and non-attacking way. Otherwise we are simply repressing our pain, condoning disrespect of ourselves and have made no advances toward emotional honesty and maturity.

When our emotions have settled a bit we may approach our loved one and tell them "That hurt, I consider it disrespectful and please do not do it again." Put arguing off the table establishing our innocence will not cure our emotional pain. Contending to be right reveals self-esteem issues.

If we are having trouble letting it go we may pray for the person daily do a mini fourth step and ask ourselves what is actually going on with that person. Many times our partners are experiencing some kind of struggle in their life and projecting their self-resentment at whoever is closest to them. We can try to understand what is really going on with them by keeping an open mind and being kind, they may be sick or hurting. If we want a healthy relationship with that person we must stay clear of resentment, not by denying that we have one but by doing our tenth step and keeping our side of the street clear. Otherwise we will be retaliating in our own passive aggressive or just plain aggressive way.

10

Don't get into a Relationship for a Year they tell us!

In most cases waiting a year before getting into a relationship is the best advice. That period of time allows us to learn and activate a solid 12 step program without the major distraction of romance. However sometimes relationships are designed by providence even for the newcomer. For instance if one of the persons in the relationship has several years of recovery under their belt and is aware of the pit-falls of co-dependency and enabling the relationship could be a wonderful thing allowing both parties to grow spiritually and emotionally.

The closer we are to our Higher Power the less we NEED other people in a codependent way. Being desperate for another person to the point of unmanageability comes natural to more addicts than not. Continuous struggle is a hard thing to endure when we really just want companionship and Love.

Newcomers are highly impressionable and when romance comes along and provides the close human touch that they crave; often an intense fear of loss is not far behind. Not to mention the newcomer's emotions are off the charts and having a scape-goat for those feelings is dangerous at a time when taking full responsibility for their feelings is vital to their emotional growth. If both parties are not careful before they know it they are not only attached at the hip but they are also making their partners punch a time-clock while they rummage through their loved one's contact list and call log to check up on them.

Seems for the addict the very things we love about our partners in the beginning are the very things we later struggle to change about them. Rather than pleading and bargaining with God to change the behavior of our partner we need to dig into the 12 Steps every way we can and work on ourselves. We must pull ourselves away from our partners to allow both them and us to recover. If we put our relationship in God's hands by revisiting our step three and keeping clear of dysfunctional fears by using the fourth step we are in a much better position to Love.

Having someone other than our partners to talk to will help keep the relationship healthy. Learning how to communicate with empathy, and caring is vital. We choose our battles; we ask how important is it? Our partners are not perfect and it's not fair to set them up as demi-gods or to make them our beast of burden by blaming all our miseries on them. Self-respect goes hand in hand with respecting others and we can do both. Sarcasm is the enemy of honest communication. We say what we mean and mean what we say to be fair to our partners. We don't need sarcasm, name calling, screaming, or mind reading to be any part of our relationship.

We in recovery have a destiny and a higher calling we have important goals to attain. If our partners do not support us in attaining those goals and we find ourselves struggling against them just to do the good that we need to do then we are responsible for removing that obstacle from our spiritual path.

Love is an action as well as a feeling.

Any act of giving without strings attached is a Loving act. We don't have to feel fuzzy and yummy in our hearts to create an act of Love. The fuzzy and yummy does sometime come after the giving act however.

When individuals come into recovery often times we are riddled with guilt concerning our children. Usually for us woman our deepest regret and guilt is in the arena of our children. Either we abandoned them or we lost them or we neglected them.

My first counselor and sponsor told me during the reading of my Fifth Step that I would not have done the things I did had it not been for the addiction that had such power over me. When I was strung out on pain killers they became my world. I had to be well first and foremost and if I did not have my opiates I was not well. I put the needs of my daughter on the back burner. I had to do allot of journaling and confessing to get that guilt off my chest.

I also did a thorough Ninth Step with my daughter. It was an emotional time she was only nine years old yet she understood that she had been neglected the many times I left her behind with her grandparents or brought her along on drug runs. Telling her how ashamed I was of myself for those times was an opportunity that some addict parents never get.

The 12 Steps are designed by providence for those of us who want to change our lives and have a conscience to not live an addiction based life.

I make daily amends to my daughter by being present and raising her with Love by making her meals, buying her clothes and putting her needs ahead of my own. By the Grace of God and the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous the poison shame that would have killed me has been released. Without my Higher Power there is no such thing as a "program" that works.

I don't have all the answers concerning God and the state of humanity as to why atrocities are allowed by a great power and creator. However if I balk at Step Three and Step Eleven where my connection to God is I balk at Love and that would be an atrocity in itself.

12

Why is everybody so afraid of the Fourth Step?

Doing a fourth step is work. When many of us get to the room of an 12 step program we are full of guilt, remorse, shame and fear the emotions nobody want to admit or talk about. We have been programmed from youth not to show weakness or it will be used against us by our fellows. If we show vulnerability we are made fun of, taken advantage of, cast out, gossiped about or worse. It's understandable that we cringe by what is asked of us in a fourth and even worse; Fifth step.

There is a saying that the truth will set us free. Humans need forgiveness from guilt, we need to be able to walk without a cloud of shame causing us to be hyper-sensitive to our interaction with others. We need the poison of deep regret to be cleansed from our hearts. We will never be relieved from guilt by denial or lies. Trying to ignore a past full of wrong decisions and hurting others will eat us up inside.

If we weigh our options to either bury our guilt and suffer a continuing soul sickness that affects every relationship we have especially the one with ourselves. Or choose to cleanse our hearts and be set free and open up the opportunity to have truly loving relationships with ourselves and others....hmmm which would we choose. Do we keep our skeletons hid to save face?

No! Saving face is a lie and the longer we keep our guilt hidden the sicker we become. We must write down all the things we are afraid and ashamed of including our deepest darkest secret to have peace and serenity. We are children of God and we are not alone. There are only seven deadly sins and most addicts are very familiar with at least a few of them. All fifth steps have been said and done before. Our sponsors are usually not shocked by them or even surprised.

The truth is not our enemy...oh contraire! The fifth step truths will set us free and start us on our road to happy destiny. Give yourself a fighting chance my friend! We must learn to be kind to ourselves by making the steps our way of life. We will truly be reborn if we are honest.

Perceptions are everything!

Is the glass half empty or half full? Dealing with life on life's terms is not always easy. We humans are blessed with inner duality. We have a "Spirit man" and a "carnal man". Whichever man we feed most WILL be stronger.

Few people actually take the time to feed their Spirit man. There are many ways of feeding our Spirit. 1. Go to meetings 2. Pray 3. Meditate 4. Connect with nature by swimming, fishing, hiking, sitting quietly in the woods, watching a sunset. 5. Help others by service. 6. Read uplifting positive literature, read morning meditations. 7. Stop and write a gratitude list 8. Writing, journaling. 9. Watch uplifting spiritually based programs on TV. 10. Pet your animals. 11. Go to church. 12. Sing or listen to uplifting music, create art etc.

Common sense will pretty much guide us as to what activities feed our Spirit man. One thing sure if we do not feed our Spiritual man our perceptions of all things will take a turn toward fear and negativity. We can be in the same situation at different times and see that event in a completely pessimistic light or a loving and optimistic light.

There are many factors that can drag us down like illness, detox, menopause, loss, aging, and divorce, our interaction with others, being around emotional vampires who rant and criticize. However none of these circumstances can oppress the spiritually fit. When we are spiritually fit we see things in their true light and can say to ourselves. "It is going to be alright because my Higher Power has my back." When we are spiritually fit we know when to walk away.

If we are spiritually weak even winning the lottery can turn out to be a bad thing in our eyes...how you ask? Because fear and greed will take over so we would either be afraid of loss or it would still not be enough money to bring us peace of mind. The spiritually fit poor man with peace of mind and Love is far richer than the wealthy man that is full of fear.

Change Everything

Getting sober is sometimes like walking into a whole new world. I remember back when I had only a few months sober. The days went on forever; it felt so unusual to be alert and present for an entire day. I felt kind of lost not knowing what to do with myself. Early recovery is a time to form new routines and stick to them religiously. We begin our day with coffee and a daily reading to feed our soul. We include an exercise and diet program, we don't leave out meetings, we call another alcoholic, we do some journaling and either work on our written steps or do a mental step 10. We read 12 Step literatures.

If we are afraid we revisit our step three and remember that all our securities lie with our Higher Power, He has our back! It is so important that we make long term goals in early recovery and a plan to them carry out. It is vital for our emotional growth and self-esteem to accomplish tasks regularly. All we need to do is stay sober today tomorrow will take care of itself.

Many addicts quit smoking cigarettes when they get sober. This is not advisable in the first six months because of the stress that nicotine withdrawal produces. However it is advisable to quit after that first six months the best method includes either nicotine patches or gum detox. It's just not a good idea to stop nicotine abruptly because of withdrawal issues. Taking vitamins is a good practice drinking and drugging puts a strain on our health and our bodies are in the process of healing.

There is a God and I'm not it! We do not have to stay in denial about our defects of character, we do not take inventory to beat ourselves up, we now have the tools to change...but little change will come without courageous self-appraisal.

We in AA have identified an array of character defects that are the culprits of our addictive patterns. Among these are the inclination to control everyone and everything around us. Some of us are painfully controlling while others are more passive-aggressive with their scheming. Our defects cause friends and family to run from us like we are ravenous wolves.

Some of us have learned to use other peoples control defect to our advantage. We can passively control others by handing over a certain amount of our own power to them.

Ah yes how we can puff up a gentlemen's ego by asking him to make our choices for us. Handing over our decision making is a perfect way for a damsel to relinquish responsibility for any consequences of that decision. At the same time it makes our Knight in shining armor feel so powerful and smart that he is more than willing to help us. The problem is the Knight is weaving his own manipulation, there are many invisible strings attached to his assistance.

When we snatch our power back and the knight inevitably becomes disturbed we will just label him possessive and take out a restraining order. Yikes! Don't try this at home!

The damsel and the gentlemen is just one example of controlling behavior. We have all seen those painfully controlling, they are the one's running around like directors on a movie screen. When the movie doesn't play out like they want they promptly fall apart or get very angry and spin around a bit. Take it up another notch and you have obsessive compulsive disorder.

The fact is if resentment is rearing its ugly head you can bet there is a control issue at the heart of it. (Pg.417 BB) Getting in touch with one's own "God syndrome" is important during a fourth step. Once we have established the identity of our controlling side we can use that knowledge in all our tenth steps. Contrary to popular portrayal in The Rooms resentments do crop up and it doesn't mean we are not "working a program". People can be ass-holes and they are going to piss us off. Getting a resentment lets us know we are still [feeling] and still sober. Holding on to resentment is dangerous and can result in misery if not checked.

Finding the part of us that wants to play god doesn't happen for everybody. Some sober people just never get it...the blame game worked for them for so long they are just incapable of trying a healthy solution. You will find them engaging in numerous sick relationships with train wreck break-ups that are never their fault.

The steps are in order for a reason meaning the third step must be done before a fourth will have that supernatural kick. With God's help the revelation of self will happen during our fourth step.

If you realize that your resentments are rooted in wanting to control other adults then join the club, but consider yourself blessed you already know yourself better than many.

NOVEMBER 6 NEEDS EDITING

Fear and Shame are not just alcoholic traits; they are human traits however in the addict psyche these instincts are blown out of proportion.

Making decisions and telling people "No" are not always the easiest things to do for an addict new to recovery. We don't always know why we fear telling people no when asked out or someone wants to make plans with us. It could be that we are afraid of people not liking us or it could be rooted in the fact that we have been irresponsible and unable to follow through with appointments. Even more so the addict feels the world revolves around their belly button so if we tell someone no they might fall apart. Delusions of grandeur and self-loathing go hand in hand. The Step Ninth step promises tell us "Fear of people will leave us", we must know we are not alone in our fear. Low self-esteem tells us addicts that other people are better than us, hence "fear of people" or more accurately defined; "shame" consumes us."

The professionals have identified addiction as a shame based disease. The steps are utterly designed to fix our self-esteem and shame issues. Most people are highly ashamed of admitting shame. It is the ugly word no one wants to address. We isolate and we hide from our fellows, we lie about who we are, we wear a mask all because we have either been taught that we are "bad" or our actions contrary to our conscience have marred our self-image.

If we take a gander at the step four grid on page 65 of the Big Book we see fear and self-esteem under the heading "effects my". Yes the actions of others do cause us fear and affect our self-esteem" but more importantly low self-esteem is usually at the core of all our resentments. Once we start identifying our behavior patterns by doing step four & five we can better do honest steps 6 & 7. Being "entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character" means that we know and feel how deeply our own defects are hurting ourselves and others. We receive a psychic change; we no longer see these defects as a protective shield from other people. We are awakened by the realizations that we have not been doing what is best for us, the next right thing. Doing the steps thoroughly and honestly will bring about the change it takes to save our lives! But for the Grace of God.

“There are those too who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders.” Pg. 58 Big Book What is a grave emotional disorder if not an inability to express feelings in a healthy way. Our feelings are stunted and repressed because we think that they are wrong and weak.

There are many things to complain about and believe it or not criticism and complaining is an emotional survival skill. By taking a pessimistic stance toward life we are distracted from the way we feel and what’s really going on inside of us. There are endless circumstances that we can generate drama over. We can embellish our difficulties, be intolerant and find a battle at every turn. In every veg statement spoken by others we can find offence. However, being negative is not necessary to keep us distracted from ourselves. We can take the road less travelled by addicts; we can look for the good in people, places and things.

Looking for the good in people and things can become a habit just like fault-finding and criticism is a habit. The difference is looking for the good feeds our heart and soul good energy that spreads into the lives of others.

In recovery we can learn emotional balance. We learn to express our deep core pains and vent deep hurts in our journaling and with our confidants and counselors who understand us. At the same time we also need to practice being optimistic in our everyday lives. This all tends to become jumbled and confused to us when we are carrying emotional baggage but it need not be.

If we have a sponsor who shuts down our emotions by cutting us off when we need to cry or vent...that’s ok we can still work the steps with them if they are willing. However, we need to find at least one empathic friend who we can cry to and vent our strong feelings to. Sponsors sometimes label all sadness as self-pity and all anger as a character flaw that is a dangerous misconception. If we bottle up our core issues and only express them in a controlled non-emotional tone we really aren’t getting out the deep pain that is at the core of our addictive personalities.

Having a friend that will hurt with us and understand us when we are angry validates us at the inner core of our hearts. This kind of heart validation is not to be confused with “co-signing bullshit” or “assigning blame”. Expressing our feelings in a non-attacking way is part of taking responsibility for our feelings and our life. When we are wronged and hurt by others it’s better to express our hurt with a neutral fellow than to hold it in and later explode and commit murder.

Recovery is not as much about learning to restrain our emotions, as it is about learning healthy ways to process (express) our strong emotions. We can try to shut down our own heart however hurt and anger will eventually come out sideways most likely at the people we love the most.

Mathew 6:33 & 34

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Sometimes I get caught up in worries. Perhaps I think nothing is going the way that I would direct it. Maybe there is so much happening around me that triggers my fear of the future and arouses my fear of loss of home, partner, job, money, security. Or maybe I am just plain agitated and angry. Out of the problem into the solution by God! Sure we know the simple tools AA and NA have set down for us but what about moving a step further into a deeper level of solution, one that starts in step 11 and ends up with peace of mind.

I fast for a day. I pack my bag and go to a secluded place or make my home secluded. I kneel to my knees or I lie down and pray and seek God for as long as it takes for me to experience a spiritual breakthrough. I set a time limit either 24 hours or three days to fast and pray. I meditate and seek God with my heart. I reach out to the great beyond for The Holy Spirit to fill my heart with healing, understanding, Love, faith, hope. I ask God to remove the selfishness, resentment, intolerance, and any other character defect I am aware that I have. I offer myself to my Higher Power by saying the eleventh step prayer. I pray for the knowledge of Gods will for me and the power to carry that out.

Amen

Working the 12 Steps thoroughly and honestly is like writing a new program for our brains. The new program is based on Love rather than on fear.

We cannot possibly be in a Loving partnership with a mate until we learn to Love our selves primarily. The blame game has to stop! We find ways other than blame to deal with the feelings that our heart issues us. We also use the tools to expel the chaos that our mind puts out.

Step four and five will accomplish a big chunk of the over-haul our self-image needs but there is more work to do! The steps are a blue-print for an on-going way of life not just a one-time working.

Feeding ourselves spiritually by making Step 11 more than just a sixty second prayer in the morning is a must! Taking responsibility for our actions in steps Eight & Nine teaches us how to have humility by making amends yet not over-apologize.

The old program and the new program are in our psyche, whichever program gets more updates will be prevalent in our daily behaviors. We can feed ourselves positive affirmations in step Eleven by reciting to ourselves the many right choices we are now making.

We show humility by not always having to have the last word in a disagreement. We are not who we used to be, God doesn't make junk! Therefore we never speak down about ourselves or label ourselves negatively. We are new creatures in Christ or whatever Higher Power we choose!

We no longer up-date the old program of chaos and struggle. When we get resentment we know what to do.

The same man will drink & drug again. By working the steps we receive the psychic change we need to not only stay clean & sober but to learn to Love others and accept Love. After all what the hell good is sobriety if we don't have Love.

Is it insane to hear voices in our head that tell us we are worthless and criticize us at every turn?

Little Annie grew up with an older sister who continually gave her the verbal beat-down. Now that Annie is grown-up and moved away you would think she would repel any more verbal abuse from anyone. Not so, she has created a voice in her head that says mean things to herself just like her sister used to. (like Red Dragon Hannable Lector movie)

The thing is when children are young the blueprint of our psyche is being drawn. The voice of her big sister is written in non-erasable ink on Annie's brain by repetition. The neural pathways are carved out. Annie not only has that harsh voice in her head but also she is attracted to people much like her sister and can't figure out why she keeps getting in toxic relationships.

Little does Annie know she has found her emotional safe-haven of comfort by always having a beast-of-burden type to blame for her own unhappiness. Even if that beast of burden process is subliminal and she has no clue of it. Its an emotional fail safe that makes her feel "good & right" instead of "bad & wrong". Blame has become her emotional survival tool.

Humans will never be perfect therefore it's easy to find things to cut us down about. If we were raised with years and years of verbal abuse it is natural to do what little Annie did and continue the beat-downs in our head. We also seek people who are nice as pie at first but then turn sour quickly usually after the first ninety days of interaction. We use these people to play out the scenes

that our emotions have come to know as [comfortable] and familiar. We equate the beat down with love & family.

Cutting ourselves down mentally and verbally is a huge part of the addiction process and must stop. Rather than eradicate the neural-paths in our brain (which cannot be done by us) we learn in AA & in group therapy to build bridges over those pathways and by-pass the sick, hateful thoughts.

How?

The same way they forged, REPITITION of meditation. Begin with a prayer asking for God's help/guidance/ stating as children of God all the good things we did today including simple actions of "eating right, being kind, taking action like a meeting or working, writing our feelings, prayer, cleaning". And do on. We learn to tell ourselves the truth of what good things we have done each day. IT WORKS.

By doing the maintenance steps 10-12 regularly we are conditioning ourselves to think differently. The steps condition our brains to roll in a different direction. We check ourselves regularly by step ten not to condemn ourselves (condemnation & criticism is not one of the steps or how we stay sober, it doesn't work) but rather so we can get help from God and our sponsors to create the psychic change. We check ourselves when we slip into hateful thinking and we take an action to change our thought!

By working the steps we choose to get to know ourselves at a level where we understand why we chose to drink and drug and stay in sick relationships. We come to find out by the steps that we are not "bad" people trying to get good no, we are sick people trying to get well and we are courageous for doing the 12 steps.

It feels very uncomfortable at first to put ourselves in a vulnerable state by doing steps five and nine. It is very scary to write all the worst things we have done in step four as well. However it takes more courage and strength to get to know ourselves, change and realize our dreams than it does to hide in a bottle of whisky and die. The 12 steps teach us that change is good and that we have a Higher Power who loves us and will make every good choice worth it by far.

Those who are brave enough to see and change the patterns of their dysfunction & shortcomings also become equipped to see their gifts and skills. Therefore they receive the payoff of earning their goals and reaching their dreams no matter what the committee tells them. We learn to laugh at the critical voices in our head because we know the words are based on lies...CAUSE GOD DON'T MAKE Junk! "Here here!"

20

IS AA A MORAL PROGRAM?

The very nature of the 12 steps are truth, humility, tolerance, perseverance, Love, graciousness, open-mindedness, hope, faith, courage, service, willingness and more.

How many times have we heard in the rooms; "AA is not a moral program?" And yet the Big Book authors have stated here that the Big Book is both moral and spiritual. Some people just don't like the word "immoral" I think and that's why they swear the program is not about morality. I believe what they mean to say is the program isn't about policing our sexuality and it isn't.

The principals of AA are absolutely spiritual and moral!

However more importantly is that our authors have stated here that The Big Books main objective is to "enable you to find a Power (capital P no less) greater than yourself.

Chapter Four: WE AGNOSTICS Page 45 Big Books of Alcoholics Anonymous

“Lack of power that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?”

Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.

That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God.”

21

Love is a choice

Mathew 5:44

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Mathew 5:46

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?

It's usually easy to Love; the people around us who are friendly and kind. We connect with our family and friends and feel the gratitude flowing through our hearts and minds. We see people who seem innocent and hopeful and we hold compassion in our hearts for them and help them if they need it.

And then there are the other times when we have annoying house-guests, or a friend of a friend that we wish would either be quiet or just go away. Often we run into people while we are out who are angry even spiteful and sarcastic. The list of personality-types we want nothing to do with seems endless.

Showing Love to the hateful and unruly is not an easy choice especially once they have annoyed us. Maybe we feel somehow the sick and beggarly don't deserve Love. Or maybe we are just scared to let our feelings get close to them because they are needy and we just don't have much to give we feel. Still if we can reach into our hearts and put ourselves in their position we find that we ourselves have been in similar situations as they, if not circumstantially, emotionally at one time or another and we can relate.

We then make a choice to either give to them emotionally, spiritually, or monetarily. The Love of Christ is to Love them when it is not any easy choice for us. Not out of guilt mind-you but we Love from the stance that it is the right thing to do at the time and we hope that if we are ever in their position we will find Love also.

Without a supernatural punch in your step work the results will be natural rather than supernatural and miraculous.

My Heart Aches

There is no disputing God's part in the 12 Steps of recovery programs. We can name God anything we choose. My best advice is; Seek God fervently with your heart for help with all the steps. Miraculous is just what we suffering addicts need after we have hit a painful bottom.

We can pray for each other but that rarely if ever gets the results that a heartfelt Third Step will create for oneself.

John 9:4

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Isaiah 55:6

" Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:"

There is a window to God that seems to be open wider at certain times. If you feel nudged to pray we should take the opportunity to do so without delay.

I met a man whose life was tragic, he was beaten and abused severely. Where was God when that happened he asks? Why did he have to be beaten and abused while just a small innocent child?

I have to keep the hope that there is a reason for the boy's experience that will turn out for the greater good of all mankind, somehow, someday. I must keep the hope that God will heal the abused if they seek him.

My God is gentle and kind, He Loves more than we can comprehend. In the next life our answers will come and we will know God and his reasoning as well as we are known by Him. Blessed Be!

You will hear it echoed in the rooms of both AA and NA; “Whatever you do don’t pray for patience!”

The valid reason for that saying is that trials are one common way we build patience; that is if we don’t act out during the process and react out of intolerance which defeats character building.

The reasoning behind the cliché is that if we pray for patience we will automatically receive trials. But hey we can always put a stipulation in our prayer to receive patience as a gift floating down from heaven absent the tumultuous trials.

He who exerts a calm and patient spirit adds days to his life and protects both himself and those around him. Patience is of much value!

Have you ever looked around a meeting room and watched people’s legs bounce up and down for a whole hour. Waiting is hard it causes anxiety and fear about the thing we may be waiting for. Sitting in a meeting builds patience if we don’t get up five times for coffee and a snack. Meditation builds patience. Devoting 20 minutes every day to being quiet and praying build patients.

At first doing step eleven feels uncomfortable. In early recovery our mind spins like a hamster wheel. Chanting a mantra and keeping our mind on that one thought builds focus to use in our daily lives. Meditation also improves our listening skills. The benefits of doing step eleven are endless because when we die we want our Higher Power to recognize who the heck we are, we want It, Him, She to know us. We invite a supernatural boost into our lives of emotional chaos by working step eleven.



“You can’t always get what you want, you can’t always get what you want,



you can’t always get what you want...but if you try sometimes, well you might find...ya get what ya need. Rolling Stones

What do we really need today?

Oftentimes before we get into recovery and therapy we have no idea what’s good for us emotionally. Sure we know the common sense things we should do for ourselves but what about our emotional needs? Our heart craves validation; we need to have people in our lives that understand us and have felt like we do. We need to develop outlets for strong emotions such as rage, anger, hurt, trauma, and devastation that don’t hurt other people or ourselves. We develop outlets such as sharing, journaling, crying, screaming, meditation, and prayer.

We will benefit abundantly by sitting in meetings and listening to others. Finding the similarities rather than the differences in people helps us heal emotionally. Our old survival skills prompt us to look at others and discover where they are wrong, stupid, and bad, unlike us. Our low self-worth compels us to compile information that we may use to criticize them. However the only real advantage to having something or someone to criticize is so we don’t have to look at ourselves and feel so f***ing wrong!

A critical mindset comes under the character defect of “blame”; we no longer require a beast of burden to hide all our guilt and shame under because we are working the steps, we have new survival skills. We can safely let other people into our hearts and show them Love.

When we look for similarities in people we gain emotional relief. We find that we are not alone; we discover that we have fellows like us so we don’t feel so alien and wrong. We connect on an emotional and perhaps even a spiritual level when we relate to others. By looking for similarities we are no longer putting ourselves below or above others. We no longer need to either loath ourselves or entertain delusions of grandeur. We join the human race and gain balance.

Allowing ourselves emotional sobriety means realizing we are equal to others. We let down our guard that has kept us lonely for so long. We replace criticism with Love and understanding which fits perfectly in the huge hole in our hearts that is left by the absence of hate and other fourth step baggage.

We will get what we need emotionally if we are open to change.

GOD HOLD

Most of us have heard the term “God hole” in meetings. The term refers to a feeling of emptiness and pain that craves satisfaction and fulfillment. It feels like having a hungry animal inside of us searching to be fed any way that it can putting its hunger before healthy human responsibilities. It is the epitome of our disease if we use destructive measures to fill that void.

The God hole hungers, craves, searches, and prompts us to seek relief anywhere we can. It’s an agonizing feeling at times that makes us groan within. Our heart feels an emptiness that certainly needs filling yet our mind belittles us for having that need. The voice inside us screams; there is something wrong with me! Why am I so discontent? Why am I seeking relief by sex, food, drugs, alcohol or worse? We either condemn ourselves for our condition or we blame everyone around us for our feelings.

STOP! We scream, no more looking for Love in all the wrong places! The steps give us directions to fill the insatiable God hole. But wait...we finally get relief by doing the Twelve Steps only to learn that our spiritual condition requires on-going treatment. We pray, meditate, do our Tenth step, help others by service and we do become joyous, happy and free only to find that the joy we finally obtained is temporary.

Just like we need to feed our bodies daily our spirits need fed likewise. As much as we would like to fill the God hole and be done with the work we find ourselves depleted again unless we use the maintenance steps called 10, 11, and 12.

The Atheist would surely use other terms to explain the irritable condition of a spiritually depleted addict and that is fine. The term we use to explain our “crisis” (chronic, restless, irritable, discontent, syndrome) is not as important as knowing and doing the solutions that restore us to sanity and peace. The solutions are the same for each of us no matter what

But for the Grace of God there go I.



“Later on we'll conspire as we dream by the fire to face unafraid the plans that we've made walking in a winter wonderland”... 

Christmas is closing in on us and it doesn't have to be a time of drama, struggles, and fear. We have the pieces of clay in our hands that represent our day.

We are the only ones able to mold that clay by our choices. We may look for the good or look for the negative. We can exercise Love or fear, either one is in our own power. Yes circumstances may turn out in ways that we want or don't want however our reaction is what really molds our day.

Once we have identified our patterns by working the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous we have the edge. We now know by our Sixth and Seventh steps what our sick survival skills have been throughout our addiction. We can now use self-restraint, the telephone, meetings, Fifth step confession, and re-visit our oh-so wonderful Third Step to stifle our old traits and build and reinforce our new ones. Our Higher Power helps us build new character that is built of respect and Faith.

It will be uncomfortable at first not reacting in hasty and defensive manners. But we will find after a while that new interactions command new found respect from our fellows. We gain welcome respect by the actions we take not by asking for it.

When people see we will not engage in the defensive struggle and dance with them they will stop trying to push our buttons. Our families will become very uncomfortable themselves when they watch us walk away rather than fight. We do teach others how to treat us by our behaviors. If we quit reacting they will give up trying to manipulate us and meet us in a place of honest

People enter our lives for a reason, a season, an instant, and sometimes for a lifetime.

Most people crave companionship and intimacy no matter their age. Especially in our twilight years it is a blessing to have a partner we can trust and respect to pick us up when we fall and visa-versa. In our youth we have strong passionate desire for our wives, husbands, boyfriends etc. Passion is not Love though it usually accompanies Love... for a time. Being attracted physically definitely makes it easier to Love a person.

God did not invent intense passion to be an eternal part of lasting relationships. With passion comes an intense fear of loss, jealousy and often possessiveness, these qualities are sin-provoking qualities of youth and become too much trouble for the emotionally mature. When we are young we wonder what else there is to hold onto in a relationship if there is no passion. Many-a-divorce has been carried out in the name of a "loss of passionate intimacy".

We do well to flow with maturity and change rather than fight it. A person who dumps his wife or husband because the flame has gotten smaller knows little of what True Love and partnership is in the broader scope of life.

Maybe it's time we re-access our definition of "relationship" and ask ourselves..."What is truly important to me in a relationship today?" and "What do I really need from a relationship today?"

If epic and passionate sex is our primary pre-requisite in our search for a significant-other we may not be ready to meet our spiritual soul-mate quite yet. If good looks and animal magnetism is at the forefront of our needs then perhaps a long-term help-mate and partner would be far too mundane for us.

Lovers beware! If at some point the playboy doesn't lay down his quest for "ego-supplement" and pick up some "nourishment for the soul" he may never experience human Love at a deep level. Being there for one another in a giving and compassionate way even after the games and passion have fled...this is True Love that is epic.

A true soul-mate supports us as we step into our spiritual calling rather than being our spiritual calling.

A VICIOUS CYCLE

Not always but many times when we first enter the rooms of AA or NA our listening and concentration skills are very limited. We are easily offended and hide behind an emotional cloak of defense as if our life depended on it. We tend to only hear the things that we want to. Our minds are so closed that we are incapable of processing new ideas. We are stuck in fear-based concepts of basic emotional survival and ego protecting behaviors as if sitting in a pair of cement shoes. Unfortunately these emotional survival skills that we have kept so close to our hearts are at the core of our often over-sensitive and prejudicial personalities. We have found a way to protect ourselves from looking at who we really are at any cost because of the moral compromises we have made while drinking & drugging.

We must not be too hard on ourselves, if we were to look at the truth about us while using we may hate ourselves enough to commit suicide or we would just stay depressed, unable to change. However we must look at ourselves so we can change.

We have fooled ourselves but rarely fool others...we are known by our actions and our heart knows every ugly little guilt-ridden compromise we have made along the way. Each time that we have crossed the line that our conscience dictates our great need to get and stay numb is increased. Our hearts are hurting and we need set free from our emotional oppression. By exposing the truth about who we think we are and what we have done to feel so ashamed we let our hearts and minds finally breathe.

No matter what we have done in the past, if we seek our Higher Power and confess all of our shortcomings by doing Step Five we will be set free. We will be forgiven by God and the steel trap door of our minds will magically be able to listen again to hear new concepts and ideas. We will no longer be stuck on "emotional defense" mode by which we were so easily offended by anybody. We will have many epiphanies and spiritual enlightenment if we work the steps thoroughly.

When we confide our darkest secrets we are released from wearing our hearts on our sleeve where self-loathing hides crouched down like a dirty toad waiting to pounce on the first comment it construes as a threat. We have been in a war with humanity and ourselves...it is far too exhausting and it is time to stop the lies and get our spiritual rest!

Let no man condemn himself; for it is by self-condemnation that we set ourselves above God who is our only True & Righteous Judge. For it is He & He alone who possesses a capacity for the unconditional Grace & Love that mankind's collective soul desperately needs to survive the deceptive throngs of death and the grave.

RELAPSE

Relapse Feels Horrible here is a great solution for the remorse. It's one little assignment that is tried and true...if we can just pick up a pencil and paper to do it!!!

Relapse brings up a lot of guilt and shame which sucks, however it is the perfect time to get some serious baggage off of our heart. Building self-esteem happens when we take one right action at a time. First thing, write core feelings. Write the self-loathing and the feelings of utter worthlessness you feel. Example: I feel like a failure, I hate myself for the things I have done to me and others (children especially). Write the fears associated with thoughts like: I let down my fellows, what will they think of me now? I want people to like me but now they will know I am a failure. Write all the society fears associated with relapse. Write the shame of re-entering the rooms after a relapse and what that does to your reputation and how it makes you feel. **GET TO THE CORE FEELINGS THAT MOST EVERY RELAPSER FEELS UNLESS THEY ARE A SOCIOPATH** or can't get honest. These admissions of feelings and fears **WILL** cut the ego to the quick! These core human emotions, when addressed & processed will set the addict free from anxiety if done thoroughly and regularly.

Next write all the fears about security. I lost my house I am scared shitless, I am ashamed I now live in a trailer. Write: I maxed out my credit cards, how will I ever pay it back? My life sucks now financially, all that money I spent, regret, regrets regret! I am afraid I will be homeless! Don't just write it like your balancing your check book or something, no! Write an expression of emotion straight from the core of your heart words that would embarrass you thoroughly if anyone read them.

On a Fourth Step let's face it folks; if we only write what we are comfortable sharing with others we won't get a damn thing out of the step work. Write the stuff that you want hidden, write the stuff that makes you squirm at the thought of anybody seeing it! Write the stuff that you have hidden for years!

There is a reason that we talk about the three fear groups. Sex, society and security are mankind's main concern, not just the addicts concerns. When we get into fear 99% of the time it's about losing our security in one or more of these areas. Therefore it makes sense to write these fears like it instructs us to in the fourth step Big book.

After we have expressed our feelings on paper and have listed our fears we re-visit our third step. We remember that God has our back in all these areas and we ask him or her or it to remove all the fears we listed.

Next we confess our fears and feelings in a meeting or to our sponcer. We do the fifth step on the worst of these fears and they will lose power over us!

It's easy for other people to tell us to "get over it". But that's easier said than done, we can't take our heart out and put it in the dishwasher with the dirty dishes. Sure some things we can just shrug off but other feelings need a little work to help us process and get out. The people who say "get over it" are often the ones who repress so many emotions that they are one heart-beat from a break-down. We came to AA to learn how to deal with our emotions not how to shut them down and get sicker. Always pray before any step-work so your recovery gets the supernatural kick-start that it needs.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen

As creatures upon this sacred Earth there are so, so many circumstances and people who are utterly out of our control. We struggle to keep the things that are most important to us in a place that makes us feel secure. We battle to try to make people understand what we mean. We struggle to have enough money, the right car, to be beautiful enough. We panic when we are blindsided by unforeseen events that throw our whole world out of balance, events we have no control over.

Struggle, struggle, struggle till one day we realize that to have peace we must put all these precious matters into God hands. Our Higher Power is the only one that can actually keep peace and order in our lives. We wish for the things that we think would put our minds at ease such as money and securities, however material possessions though they do make life comfortable and exciting; will never bring us the peace that surpasses all understanding.....and so we pray....

**GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE
THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW
THE DIFFERENCE. AMEN**

STOP THE FEELINGS!

Active alcoholics and addicts are all about “not feeling”! It is so scary to walk into a room full of people we do not know and say: “I’m scared! I feel like a glass vase cracked and ready to break at any moment.” However this is exactly what will help us. Yes making ourselves vulnerable is the only way to receive the help we need to heal and overcome our great spiritual malady.

Addicts who sit in the rooms (prior to gaining seven years sober anyway by which time if we have done the work we are ardently living the program) and talk about how wonderful life is 100% of the time either have a network of people that they confide in when things get rough and they just don’t show their pain and fear in the rooms or they have never really gotten honest about their feelings and are wearing a mask with a smile on it and are destined for a nervous breakdown, suicide or both. Before you criticize me on this check the statistics on sober addicts who do commit suicide. It’s crucial that we process our core issues if we are going to stay or get sane!

“Fake it till you make it” so we say well that works as long as we get real with somebody. Things always get rough in one way or another that’s why we build a support group and develop coping skills. Once we know how to live the program meetings are really optional as far as regular attendance goes as long as we are feeding our spiritual man we will remain well. (This is my own experience not an AA concept)

We must have at least one person we can tell anything to...we are as sick as our secrets! We don’t need criticized or spanked for our shortcomings. Punishment is not what recovery is about. We do however need people who can relate to us on an emotional level who shake their heads up and down and say “I have been there too”. We don’t need made fun of but we do risk that if we share in meetings at a heartfelt level. It is better to save our ass than save our face so let it out! Once we share our feelings they lose power over us and we set ourselves free. That’s how we see people in the pulpit share their deep dark secrets of things we are still ashamed of, they have done their fifth steps and are free from the feelings attached to their past baggage. The truth shall set us free!

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsoring a struggling & desperate addict is an act of unconditional Love if we don't demand anything in return. One common survival skill is to manipulate people into owing us, we have put manipulation behind us by working the steps. When we work with another alcoholic they are free to accept our suggestions or to balk at them. We never try to control another adult!

We don't set ourselves up as a figure of authority in the presence of our fellows by ordering our sponsees around in public...please that behavior only reveals our own insecurities and low-self-worth. Ego-feeding such as that is a common temptation among suffering and sober alcoholics. If we feel the need to put another person down to make ourselves feel superior it's time to re-work the steps ourselves. If that behavior is being done to us well; we may want to re-think getting a sponsor.

The point of sponsorship for us is to stay sober and build self-esteem by teaching, and showing up; which is being responsible. Sponsorship reminds us how far we have come in the program; it grounds us by driving home who we have become rather than who we were before we worked the steps. We never fire a sponsee they will fire themselves. We set our appointments with them on days that are convenient for us. We schedule the sponsee to meet us at a meeting we would be attending anyway and we work with them after that meeting, that way when they don't show up its ok we let them re-schedule. Our sponsees get us out of the house...that's a good thing.

When we teach them; we remember to apply all lessons to ourselves and ask ourselves if we are living by the principles of spirituality as well. Sponsorship keeps us out of our own head. We try our best not to criticize our sponsees, however we can discuss them with our confidants if need be, there is nothing wrong with venting in private with a trusted fellow. We are careful not to put too much trust into them by leaving our sacred and monetary possessions vulnerable, if they relapse they may need money.

We don't set ourselves up by offering to them information about our past that could hurt us or others if it were to be exposed. However we do share with them the things that they can relate to emotionally about our disease, things that are safe to expose. In turn we must never reveal any private facts about them that they want kept private that would be a betrayal that would hurt; we are put in their life to help them heal.

If they fire us and get another sponsor we accept their decision because they have every right to choose their sponsor. If they gossip about us we take it in stride because we have protected ourselves and our side of the street is clean, our hearts are intact. As they say in AA "We are the ones with the sober time so we should show it."

We don't know if our sponsee will stay sober and go on to sponsor a multitude of people as well, we never know how many lives we may actually be saving by our work with one person. However the first life it saves is our own. It is so fulfilling to meet

our grand-sponsors and to see the miracles of the Higher Powers working through the program by the practice of sponsorship.

34

NINETY MEETINGS IN NINETY DAYS

It is suggested in AA and NA both that we attend ninety meetings in ninety days. Is it true? Must we go to that many meetings? If we are a full blow addict or alcoholic then yes! It takes at least that much time to connect with enough people to learn the program.

We should start chairing meetings at thirty days sober; if that's not do-able then we should start participating in meetings in some way that holds us accountable and responsible to be there regularly. We can clean the meeting room or set up chairs, or make coffee or buy food and bring it regularly. The key is to get involved, get a sponsor of our choosing and start formally working the steps thoroughly and truthfully.

Having completed the 12 steps, when not if we get upset and miserable or bored enough to want to drink and drug again; we implement what we have learned in the steps to keep us sober. The goal is to obtain a "psychic change". What that means is our thinking becomes like that of a non-addict. Psychic change means we no longer see abusing ourselves as a solution to misery. Our eyes are opened.

If a Higher Power is not included in our program then we will in no way get the supernatural boost we need to stay sober and be happy. The good news is that everyone no matter how evil or how sick he is has access to a Higher Power. All we need do is seek with our heart and sit back and watch what we find.

Yes the program involves a lot of work. However life involves a lot of work anyway, whether we stay sober or not. We can work toward our demise or work toward our healing and salvation.

Our choices are our responsibility, we are not on a roller coaster that takes all our choices away...we DO have choices today.

Today I will make the right choice by going to a meeting.

35

THE MASK

Unfortunately the ones we Love most are not always able to express their fears, hurts, worries, or even their joys in a way we understand.

Humans learn by default to put on a hard emotionally protective shell so others will not see their vulnerabilities. However oftentimes that hard shell tends to offend or trigger others emotionally before they can actually see what is going on with the person? In other words; when we are hurt we may seem just angry or mad at someone who really has nothing to do with the reason we are actually at unrest.

Hurt and fear by default turn to anger in most alcoholics because it is a safer emotion to portray to our fellows. Depression is anger without enthusiasm with hurt at the core. We alcoholics tend to have trust issues and we are not willing to show our real emotions to anybody. We fear for our survival in this world that we see as cruel and unsafe!

So what do we do? Do we continue repressing every hurt and pain of betrayal unto infinity till it takes us down? No never! Not if we are to heal and actually be able to say "Hi, I am Lori, I am an alcoholic addict in recovery." Not if we want a redeeming psychic change...we must find someone we are willing to trust with our feelings, with our fears. We need, yes need someone in the program who will relate to us and have compassion, someone whom we can cry to.

We must for survival sake do a thorough Fourth and a thorough Fifth Step to get out the skeletons of our past that are eating our emotions and our relationships alive! We must make our step work personal and always speak in the "I" context. We should state our feelings and events with feeling.

IT IS THE THING WE ARE MOST ASHAMED OF THAT SHOULD BE AT THE TOP OF OUR LIST. A shallow and non-revealing Fifth Step with our most shameful events omitted will not help us. No, not if we are to recovery our joy and obtain the miraculous psychic change needed to not only stay sober but stay sane enough that we do not choose suicide over sobriety like countless addicts and alcoholics have.

We are dying out there and we must take serious action for our true survival... "It is better to save our ass than save our face." " Pride comes before a fall oh how deep that fall can be." Hope is the answer, hold on to the hope that we really can get better with God at the helm of our step work.

What should I do today to start the process of working the steps?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE? Part of self-awareness and recovery from darkness into light is to become aware of the good things about ourselves as well as the negative that we process in the fourth-seventh and tenth steps.

It is important to embrace our powers given by our Higher Power. Without the knowledge of our spiritual gifts and special talents our long-term goals could be a little skewed. Setting long-term goals and projects that match our abilities is part of healthy recovery. God has a way of fitting our spiritual gifts to our personality type.

In other words He/they whatever label you give your HP grants us gifts we can be enthusiastic about, gifts that motivate us. Here is a list of spiritual gifts that may help you recognize which ones rise-up within yourself. True humility does not a base or denies its good qualities. False humility loves to insult the gifted and blessed of God and call them devoid of any good.

I am a child of The King and he does not make junk. There is a thing called pride in a job well done. We do the footwork in this program and when we subconsciously acknowledge our good works our self-esteem grows. It's not a lie to acknowledge a job well done. False pride is born of lies that is how we can tell the difference between good pride/false pride and false humility or true humility. One is born of truth the other a lie. Please don't mistake that I am attacking the act of giving God glory for our recovery, of course that is a good thing as well! I am talking about self-awareness, personal growth, and building; one right choice at a time a new self-image. A psychic change if you will.

CRITISIZE TO SURVIVE EMOTIOALLY

Why do so many clean and sober addicts think that when there are two rights or two good things one of them has to be wrong or bad?

Recovering addicts so often believe that two rights have to make a wrong. They are stuck in the mindset that there is never more than one right answer to any question. They leave no room for variety, second opinion, different flavors, different styles of clothing, and different types of people who have a right to their opinion. They don't realize that just because an opinion is different than their own it does not mean one of them has to be wrong.

I joined a different recovery group. The header at the top of the page was that saying: "We are not human beings on a spiritual journey we are spiritual beings on a human journey. Even the say itself drives home my point! Why can't it be both? We are humans on a spiritual journey but also we are and were spiritual beings that are now on a human journey.

What I am talking about is an inability to open one's mind enough to see both sides of the coin.

Remember on the other side of the quarter is a picture of Washington, two sides to the coin and they are both worth money, both accurate and both right just different.

So many of the AA and NA cliché's drive home the limited thought processes of the addict mind.

God can't be a He it has to be a SHE well what if God were both male and female and neither. I think the creator of all mankind can be whoever It wants to be.

Labeling myself a comment on a post

My sponsor or somebody taught me that part of changing my self-image is to change the way I talk about myself. Words are powerful things, magic even. The longer I stamp a label on myself the more I believe it. Don't buy in to the ugly labels...yes it's going to take some step work to change behavior patterns. I have a friend who got sober with me. She and I went through group therapy together for 1 year when we first got sober. It helped us so much that four of us in that therapy group are still sober. That was eight years ago.

My friend now has bachelors in counseling. She is working for her Masters now. She is spiritually gifted and her calling falls in line with her goals. All of us in that therapy group had the chance to address our deep core issues. The first step was to get brutally honest with our feelings. We reached deep down to identify the core of our hurts and pains. Melanie that kind of soul searching is something most recovering addicts never do and they and their loved one's suffer for it. I am forever changed by that therapy which taught me NOT how to deny my fears and emotions and stuff them down till they come out sideways in the form of blame, but rather learn how to honor my feelings and process them.

Feelings will never stop as long as we are human; emotions are part of the human condition. "Grave emotional disorder" is defined as not knowing how to vent and process emotions in a healthy way. Anger, fear, hurt, jealousy, envy, disgust, the recovering addict must learn how to process these emotions without hurting themselves or others. Writing, journaling, screaming, crying, beating the bed with a plastic bat, or just honestly expressing in the "I" context are some great ways to get emotional trauma pains out. Yes sounds crazy, but what's crazier is taking out our pains on the one's we love most or ourselves. What some people label crazy are solutions for others. Repressing feelings must stop if we are to stay sober and have peace. That's what recovery therapy is all about.

Melanie the statistics of suicide and nervous breakdowns for sober/clean addicts is astounding we need recovery therapists who have the courage to learn who they are first at a deeper level than most. We learn to communicate with others on an honest level by omitting sarcasm & manipulation. We say what we mean and mean what we say. Showing others respect exemplifies emotional sobriety. Without therapy few obtain emotional sobriety which is in fact emotional maturity. Good luck with your future goals you are now at a crossroad. The window of opportunity is wide open beware of temptation and pray you not be tempted. Please don't buy into the labels.

40

SELF-AWARENESS.....XXXXXXXXXXXXFIND IT!

WHY IT WORKS

For me for now anyway my creator and God is the cornerstone of my spirituality. I obtained spirituality initially by step Eleven "sought through prayer and meditation" I continue feeding that part of my being by doing steps Ten through Twelve. But not just that; I revisit step three oftentimes and I revisit step two as I see myself slipping back into insanity a bit usually due to complacency. Lastly I keep a good handle on steps four and five because I do....yes on occasion pick up resentment. I have the directions to maintain spirituality by living the steps. That's "why" not just "how" it works for me.

Why it works? Because the steps are a practice of good character while the disease is a practice of character defects. As we practice the good character by doing the steps our sanity is established. The longer I live the steps...the more ingrained the good character becomes in my brain, building sane bridges over the neural pathways of the past. Not leaving out several formal long and thorough fourth steps and a year of recovery therapy. Why it works is not a mystery.... to me anyway.

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Thanks for the feedback guys!

The reason relapse happens is because the neural pathways that were carved out in our brains do not go away. If I do not maintain spirituality there is a possibility my thoughts will spill or drop off the new bridge of healthy thinking that has been built into the old carved out neural paths of the past. However If I remember that I DO HAVE A CHOICE and tell myself that; I have the ability to take the next right step.

“FEAR OF PEOPLE WILL LEAVE US” NINTH STEP PROMISE

Fear of what people think of us will leave us but caring what people think is emotionally balanced social human nature.

So many recovering addicts say they don't care what people think of them, yet their actions prove otherwise.

Contrary to what most people in recovery so defensively state, I believe people DO care about what others think and say about them. Of course that healthy emotional care can be taken to an extreme and turn into fear of what people think of us. That's where lying, dishonesty, artificial this and artificial that come into play. Vanity and false pride are character flaws driven by fear of what people think. Seems addicts with self-esteem issues to begin with don't know it's ok to care and highly normal socially to want to be liked and admired. Seems some have an inability in their minds to distinguish between fear and care.

Caring however, is not a bad thing and its human nature to want to dress nice and look good to our peers. People generally love to be the best at certain accomplishments, be the smartest, the fastest, and be a winner all so they can feel good about themselves and look good to others. Certainly if we were taught as children that we are bad and wrong we will carry that self-identity with us until is reamed out by either therapy or spirituality. Until that self-image is changed we will be hyper-sensitive to any perceived criticisms.

Personally it does concern me when people dislike me or accuse me but I must put it in perspective. Firstly I ask myself if the accusation is true. Then I delve into trying to understand the motivation behind the accusation. When I understand their reasoning it helps me accept their views. If their opinion sticks in my craw too long I will pray blessings upon them until I forget about it...works great!

Yes I care what people think! I am not ashamed to admit it. My admission of care does not make me a weak person, actually it shows I am self-assured enough to not fear appearing weak by that admission. Ha!...that's irony for you!

In other words, pretty much if someone is overstating the fact that they don't care what others think of them you can pretty much bet that they're

healthy social caring has morphed into a fearful self-consciousness of what other people think of them.

Blame

Blame rears its ugly head in ways that may surprise many in the realm of recovery. Blame, accusation, and just plain critical fault finding is an unhealthy survival skill for those of us who learned how to live through a life of addiction without snuffing ourselves out because of guilt. When I neglected my daughter, neglected my health, ripped through my relationships like a title wave I needed a beast of burden per say to take the blame for the destruction that I had caused. Looking at my own baggage and character flaws at that point was too painful. I had no solutions then so why even look? I used blame in all forms to survive the emotional landslide in my heart. Now that I am clean & sober I can honestly look at my flaws because I have solutions for the landslide of emotional guilt and shame that accompanies my self-awareness. It is perfectly normal to want to bury everything that should be on a fourth step. However the emotions connected to that baggage WILL come out sideways (blame) at those I love most and those I don't love until I get the work done! I am an emotional woman...my first thorough, and painstaking Fourth Step was 50 pages long. By doing it I found myself, it was my beginning of self-love. FEEDBACK WELCOME!

“God won’t give you more than you can handle.” OH REALLY?

All due respect to those that like to quote this cliché’ it can’t possibly be true. Between the nervous breakdowns, suicides, drug overdoses, deaths, addictions, murders, and just plain screams in the night there are plenty of things that happen to people that they can’t handle. So where did the phrase come from anyway? Well many people quote it assuming it is a Bible scripture. The phrase did originate from a bible scripture that has been twisted and misquoted through time. The scripture promises we won’t be tempted beyond that which we can handle and that God will always provide for us a way to escape temptation...an escape hatch per say.

1st Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

The phrase pertains actually to temptation rather than suffering. Just like “Godliness is next to cleanliness.” You won’t find that one in the Bible either. Truly if all it took to be righteous was a bar of soap and some scrubbing we wouldn’t need a Higher Power at all. There are several sayings in the rooms of AA that don’t quite make sense when we break them down. Quotes like “Meeting makers make it.” Well it’s true that it takes meetings to stay sober if you are a real alcoholic but what about all the step work? There are many things in recovery that it takes to “make it” besides going to meetings. However the saying leaves all that out implying that all we need to do is go to meetings and we will stay sober. How about, “My worst day sober is better than my best day drinking and drugging.” Really? Who in all honesty can say that is true except metaphorically? Some pretty horrible things can happen to a sober person. I didn’t drink and drug for thirty years because I had no fun doing it. I had some great times and met some great people before it all went bad.

“I WON’T CO-SIGN YOUR BULLSHIT!”

Scream the 12 step sponsors to the detriment of their heartsick fellows! There is a great need in AA to understand the difference between co-signing bull shit and showing Love by exerting understanding, compassion, and care. There is a great need to understand the difference between self-pity and the expression of valid feelings such as anger, and hurt. Human feelings that result from an abusive past need expressed for us to stay or get sane. The words, “I know how you feel, you have a right to feel your pain, grieve and to process your hurt...even if, the feelings derive from years prior” are words that can heal a heart.

Most addicts have stuffed down tears for years that desperately needed to be cried for us to attain emotional balance and healing. Usually when we get clean & sober all our un-cried tears come to the surface and scream to get out. We then ask ourselves: “What’s wrong with me, why am I so depressed, nothing bad is going on right now? Next our sponsors quickly tell us to “get over it and write a gratitude list” as they watch us slam the door in the face of AA. Gratitude lists work great for those stomping their feet because things are not going their way (self-pity). However when it comes to the horrible feelings of grief that result from abuse, abandonment, neglect and other childhood trauma all our sponsors suggestion does is add to our low self-image and push us out the doors.

The most common “grave emotional disorder” that addicts in the rooms suffer from is the inability to process deep hurts and trauma inflicted as children & sometimes through adulthood. We have turned our hurt to anger and continually search for a scape-goat to blame for our intolerable feelings. Our hurts have morphed into anger because “grief”, unless short lived and a result of the death of a loved one is unacceptable in our society. When we experience any other cause of emotional pain except what’s socially acceptable we are often told to just “GET OVER IT?” So driven by shame we bone-up, pretend we are tuff-girls and boys, file our feelings under the “wrong and weak” category in our hearts and make ourselves sick till we have no other solution except to numb that which we have labeled “Invalid feelings”.

Is it no wonder that when one of us relapses so many seem to be so devastated by it...even when we scarcely know the person who went back out? We are desperate to let out some of our grief in a way that is acceptable to our fellows. We all step up our meetings and talk about our pain and loss when it usually has nothing to do with the guy who just relapsed who we have never invited to our home by the way.

The need for validation of our deep hurt is huge and necessary for healing. It’s hard for us in recovery to see when we are stuffing down a pain that really needs to be expressed. Few of us were taught by example or in school that it’s ok to scream and cry feelings out, or that crying is a part of emotional health.

Grave emotional disorders are not healed by just writing down [our part] and transferring all the blame from one scape goat to the next; [ourselves]. Please don’t hear what I am not saying...we addicts have boatloads of character defects that we need to work on however, not all grave emotional disorder is solved by doing a guilt based fourth step. Furthermore, if Bill W. would

have had a course in empathic healing and were taught that his feelings are valid and how to emotionally process them he may not have spent at least 12 years sober and depressed trying so many therapies and pharmaceutical remedies.

Typically Bill was too hard on himself. There comes a time when we must pause from blaming ourselves for where we are at emotionally if we are to find answers and heal. There comes a time when we should realize that we were dealt a mistaken hand where our understanding of emotions is concerned and the steps don't fix everything.

there are no wrong feelings

THERE IS NO WRONG FEELING once we establish this we won't be quite so quick to deny and shut them down. For anyone to label our feelings wrong is to label us wrong as a person because our feelings are our heart. The wrong played out is what we do with those feelings by blaming others for them or acting out in rage or violence toward others because of them. It's what happens after the feeling that is right or wrong. If we learn how to let feelings flow through us instead of getting stuffed we are on our way to being emotionally balanced. There are many ways to accomplish processing emotions.

Taking responsibility for ourselves includes learning how to process hurt, anger, guilt, remorse, disgust, fear, and pain. Labeling feelings wrong, staying in denial about them till they come out in the form of rage and blame is not emotional sobriety. How will anybody in recovery ever stop blaming others for their feelings if they still are not taught what to do with those feelings to get them out?

Have you ever asked why there is so much finger-pointing going on in AA or the world for that matter? And why is it that so few alcoholics and addicts in recovery find healthy and loving long term relationships? We can't make our significant others responsible for our feelings and show them Love at the same time. So many alcoholics just settle for the fact that they will never be able to have a successful relationship if they are to stay sober. Ouch!

Lastly have you ever heard anyone in meetings pit therapy against the program as if there were a war between the two? How about pitting religion against the program or pitting religion against therapy (that's a common one in the church). The fact is these all three are good they are not at war at all. All the people I know that show quality sobriety meaning they are mature enough to not still be in the blame game and exhibit Love and maturity are those that have employed a combination of therapy and the 12 step program including spirituality. All three are good and all three work if we are willing, open-minded, and honest enough to not practice contempt prior to investigation on any of them.

Humility

One definition of “humility” is to be aware of one’s own character defects or flaws. False humility on the other hand is to belittle one’s self or to take a false view or false statement of one’s self in a belittling way. For instance to know of yet deny one’s own spiritual gifts, positive traits, abilities, good behaviors, intelligence, and maturity etc. is the epitome of false humility. Denying our good behaviors and traits is a dishonest way of trying to show that we in fact are humble, however it is dishonest therefore listed under “false humility.”

Starting our day from the stance of a humble heart and mind will prompt us to ask our Higher Power for the right help. For instance if we have humility we ask God to remove our character flaws that we may better do His (or its or Her) will. Humility protects us from making decisions out of false pride and ego such as: if we were to be thinking with our false pride we may assume that we can handle a drink or a drug without consequences. A humble addict mind keeps in mind its limitations yet still accepts its high value in the eyes of God. If we are thinking with ego we assume we don’t need anybody’s help including a Higher Power.

A humble person does not consider him or herself more important or of higher value than others nor do they consider their opinions above that of other people. We consider ourselves to be on the same level as all humankind though many of us are in a different place spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, physically, and mentally even though we are all of equal value in the eyes of God. Humility knows we all have our shortcomings and we all come from a different starting point therefore we do not have the knowledge that it takes to judge others accurately. We don’t know how people were raised, we cannot see on a carnal level another person’s heart or what has led them to where they are at this point in time. Humility does not harshly judge other people.

We have quit the debating society therefore to avoid argument we say: “You may be right.” Humility is able to say: “I was wrong and I am sorry” without any buts behind it.

Mathew 18:3

“And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS

Early recovery is great when there's a pink cloud following us everywhere we go. We are so relieved to have escaped our living Hell that we just beam at the thought of the fresh day that lies ahead of us. As the years move on and "life on life's terms" sets in...not so much beaming happening eh? The daily chores like work, raising children, grocery shopping, house cleaning and laundry sink in as our gratitude spills out with the laundry soap. Ouch! And what about this whole aging thing? Another Ouch!

We in the program have two really great ways of escaping the pitfalls of relapse that threatens us. Relapse usually starts by losing our zeal for meetings and daily life then losing our gratitude. Next we experience emotional suffering and then perceive the drink and drug as a solution to depression and anxiety. Unfortunately this is the common progression of the classic addict thought processes and memory. Have no worry have no fear! Our solution for the mundane is in steps eleven and twelve.

Meditation puts our thinking on a higher plane. We start with a simple prayer, we pray for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out and we ask God to help us meditate. Next, we sit quietly seeking our Higher Power by repeating a mantra over and over. By this seemingly non-productive action we train our mind to shut out the chaos and fear the world and our own psyche offers us. Once we establish the ability to concentrate on one thought clearing our mind of all thoughts is the next natural step.

Once our mind has moved into the space that owns no fear, our mind is empty. We then are able to hear our Higher Power clearly while we absorb our God's Spirit and enjoy His or Her or its healing power of mind, body and soul. When practicing this regularly we are in a position to do our service work with a supernatural kick. We have a fierce gratitude for life, we don't forget where we came from and we work hard on keeping our side of the street clean and guilt free. By meditation we gain patience and tolerance toward ourselves, others and even the fearful and struggling relapsers. By chairing a meeting, speaking at jails and institutions or just working with a sponcee one on one we are reminded of our own progress and that classic addict memory that gets us in so much trouble is transformed to sanity. We no longer have the addict mind, we are free!



Mean People

Most people love to be around pleasant folks. Our hearts are warmed when the waitress calls us “honey” or a teller at the bank smiles at us like we are special. However sometimes it’s just not that way at times it seems like all we attract are angry people who want to make us the reason for their misery. And really we mustn’t be too hard on them; blame is the natural reaction to unhappiness. However, we that are in 12 step programs have the opportunity to learn how to delete inappropriate blame from our daily lives by using Steps Four and Ten. If we are to be happy in this world we must learn how to keep our peace around miserable and even aggressive antagonists.

They teach us in AA that “Our drinking is but a symptom of a deeper malady.” Each of the steps is a solution to our inner turmoil they are designed to teach us total responsibility for our own emotions. If we are in blame mode how can we apply any solution to ourselves? It is impossible to heal and change if we stay in the mode of blame. We must be able to look at “our part” if we are to get the emotional sobriety that the steps offer.

The steps do not teach us how to [not feel] because that would be impossible. Unless we are sociopathic we are living, breathing, feeling, humans that do get hurt angry and scared by life on life’s terms. The steps teach us how to deal with all the unpleasant emotions. The more we work the steps the more our trust in a Higher Power will grow and the less fear we will harbor in our hearts. The less fear we have the more tolerant we become and less likely to get angry and hurt by others.

When our faith is increased we know in our hearts everything is going to be ok. By the steps we build valuable self-esteem and are less affected when people accuse us in any way. We no

longer need to defend ourselves because our relationship with God has convinced us we are valuable children of a Great Creator.

THE MASK

IT'S NO WONDER MOST PEOPLE FEAR SHOWING THEIR TRUE SELF EVEN TO THEIR MOST INTIMATE FELLOWS, WITH EVERYONE ELSE HIDING BEHIND THE MASK OF EGO AND THE BRAVADO OF "ITS ALL GOOD" THE MAN WHO IS TRULY SELF-AWARE AND ACKNOWLEDGES A FULL SCALE OF HUMAN EMOTION FEELS ODD AND ALONE: AND SO FESTERS OUR SOCIETY OF ANXIETY, STRESS, PANIC ATTACKS, DEPRESSION, AND LASTLY MENTAL ILLNESS. BRING ON THE PHARMACEUTICALS CRY THE AMERICANS FROM THEIR BED OF DECEPTION. Seems like the theme of the day is healthy "risk taking". Without the risk of making one's self vulnerable in a safe environment we will never grow into the person who becomes who they really are. The person who follows their own heart and God's leading takes emotional risks.

When we are stripped of all self-worth by the beast of addiction we come into the rooms broken and full of resentment. After our thorough working of the 12 steps we are a clean slate. We are then sponges ready to absorb even download if you will our new programs. Oh yes the "Same man WILL drink again" therefore, if we don't download a new program we are destined to relapse. We absorb all the good we can around us in the rooms of AA, in the re-hab, from the sober friends we choose. We shut our mouths and listen and learn and grow.

When fear crops up & it will, we share it with empathic listeners who will hopefully validate our feelings. Please don't confuse this with "validating or co-signing bullshit meaning co-signing wrong behaviors and actions. I don't know about you but my heart and what's in it is not bullshit. How can feelings ever be wrong when they come from our own heart? They are who we are and should be given validity otherwise we are still in a process of tearing ourselves down.

We cannot change our own feelings but we can validate and process them. If we don't have some intimate fellows in recovery that are open and honest enough to admit their own feelings to us they are living behind a wall of ego and a mask of bravado. It is very important for our feelings to be acknowledged so we may then move on. Our feelings absolutely should not steer or directive however if they are not addressed (the reoccurring and intense feelings) they will come out sideways by the old survival skill of blame and judgment.

Granted children of God, the skill of fault-finding does work to brush off fear however it usually involves hurting either ourselves or others by developing and nurturing hate & accusation which pollutes our own heart. It is important to surround ourselves with sobriety and good Loving people when we are healing from a life of pain from self-induced abuse. We need not accuse my brethren for accusations are the first fruits of Satan's own spawn...so says the word. Rev. 12:10 THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE!

Today's Encouragement

Back when I was drinking and drugging I went through the pains of withdraw so many times. I went through so many sleepless nights of misery I cannot count. I went through so many fights, betrayals, fears, and neglects and abuses to me and by me both.

Now I am older, eight years ago I ran out of gas you could say, I was just done with that life.

I sat in one of my first AA meetings scared to death and shaking filled up with so many issues that I had never faced about me. I honestly had no idea who I was. I had developed emotional survival skills that were killing me now it was time to learn who I am and a new set of healthy coping skills.

I held the gift of desperation in my heart and the open-mindedness of humble and sacred Hope sparkling like a diamond among a dense darkness.

That Hope had to be carefully nurtured or it would be buried alive by darkness and fear of the future.

They said things like, "This minute are you ok do you have what you need?" And I did. They told me "It's completely natural to be afraid it's ok". They said "If I weren't afraid something [was] wrong". They said "Go to two or even more meetings a day if you need to". They told me to "Express your fears because we are as sick as our secrets"...so I journaled.

Slowly my self-confidence rose by working step 12 chairing meetings regularly. I was a sponge that absorbed every recovery tool I could.

Through it all I prayed fervently for God's help and guidance. My Higher Power does not always do things the way I think He/She/It should.

However that little bit of Hope that was there in the beginning is stronger now. The darkness that surrounded it is commanded to stay back. I still must nurture that Hope unto the end. I choose today to endure to the end no matter how scary life looks. I get up I put one foot in front of the other and I go on unto the end of my days. So I live on and keep that darkness at bay through faith, Love & Hope. Fear would have me take my end into my own hands but be reassured things always, always, get better if we endure and hold on to Hope and Faith.

Meditation: There is one thing true that will end a man before his time that is the fear of the future and a lack of trust in a Higher Power that

does Love Him. Surely if I choose Love how much more will a God of my own understanding of Love save me from the throngs of death and suffering in this natural life and lead me unto a better eternity.

Isolating

Sometimes for those of us recovering from the traumas of abuse, abandonment, neglect, and addictions sobriety gets tough. Life on life's terms seems to drag us into a rut and the negative thoughts takes hold...Ouch! Its ok it happens to the best of us. However we need to remember that staying home in our safe caves watching our favorite programs on TV will eventually compound our negativity if we continue there. Though it seems cozy and safe do not be deceived, what we really need is to get up, put our shoes on, get some exercise, go to a meeting, go for a swim, a bike ride, bird watching, or any other bright and lively activity we can think of in spite of the way we feel.

What daylight and nature does is renew our minds and feeds positive energy into our soul. Going to meetings gives us food for thought keeping our mind sober. If we share our experience, strength, and hope in a Loving way it feeds fulfillment to our soul. We are one with the universe; we become who we think we are. Being one with creation gives us the power to attract success and joy. However we must keep our minds on a positive track and sometimes that means getting very real with our Higher Power by praying for more of Its/His/her positive energy to enlighten and refresh our weary bones. Without a refreshing of our minds now and again things can get very hum drum and mundane and then down right depressing.

Be compassionate toward yourself if you are feeling down. Do not be angry and criticize yourself for feeling the human emotion of sadness. Remember that will feed the negativity. Instead be kind get out of the problem by taking action into the solutions that you know work. Recovery is not letting our feelings rule us anymore. We become strong when we pick ourselves up in spite of what our feelings are telling us to do. Good feelings follow right actions not the other way around. Sometimes we will start feeling better when we get just a block down the road. Bill Wilson and the authors wrote some great prayer examples on page 86 & 87 of the Big Book under step eleven to start our day. You are God's child you are of great value; you are special and have a sacred calling, a mission in life that is to be fulfilled. God will give you what you need to leave your great and humble mark upon this Earth. The good works we do for your fellows WILL echo in eternity! Don't believe for a minute the lie that tells you otherwise.

Overcoming feelings Flashback Feelings

Most likely and more likely than not in recovery and regardless of how long we have been sober we will wake up one day feeling afraid. We will wake up scared of one of the many things that threaten us. Things like sickness, loss, homelessness, Alzheimer's, and pennilessness, an inability to take care of ourselves, our children's wellbeing and so on. The horrible things that can happen and have happened to us are endless.

What do we do on these days do we wake up and distract ourselves by attacking those we love most. Do we try to control everything around us? And even if we could control everyone would that even work to protect us from our fears and problems? NO! What then do we do? We revisit our Third Step and remember that our wellbeing is in the hands of our Higher Power. We remember that our Higher Power Loves us and has our back.

We should not be ashamed that we fear we share our fear and then move on to the solutions. It is hard though because humans try so hard to hide their fears that it leaves us feeling alone and even more afraid thinking we are the only ones who feel that way.

We do not always know why things happen, we don't always know why we are so afraid however be encouraged for we do have the solutions for that fear. We put on our shoes, we tie them up and we do our work. We do what we can for ourselves and at the end of the day we are reminded that we do have a purpose in this life and that we are strong. We are here in the flesh to give Love and to be Loved. We are here to give and to receive to help and be helped. By us giving encouragement to others and sharing how we overcame a state of hopelessness in addiction we teach others that they also can overcome their fears, and their feelings of impending doom with the help of God.

Oftentimes we don't know what we are feeling just that we are uneasy or have anxiety. One sure way to get out anxiety is to walk outside and scream loudly "I am not going to take it anymore!" Again louder! After all

at the heart of all anxiety is fear and we do not have to let it rule us anymore! We do have a choice!

Put Two Irons in the Fire

Ecclesiastes 11:6

"Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well."

I Love reading the words of The Preacher in Ecclesiastes. Who knows if it was The Great King Solomon who wrote all of the book? Scholars are uncertain of the books author. It is important when beginning a life of sobriety to set long term goals and to have more than one goal. An idle mind gives us time to obsess on ourselves and grow fear in our minds. When we have hope for the future we do the work and put the outcome in God's capable hands.

Diligent work is what brings success. Consistency with our projects is also a key to success. The open-mindedness that we learn by working the 12 steps carries into all aspects of our work and our play. Keeping an open mind is akin to creativity and creation is a godly quality.

We should be sure to have at least one creative outlet of music, literature, art, and these wonderful creations of God when practiced for entertainment will bring us joy. A consistent work ethic is good but we mustn't neglect our times of play. Go swimming, barbeque at a park, go to the beach, ride a bike, buy a motorcycle and travel.

And like Solomon (we think) said, put more than one iron in the fire who knows which one will burn hotter. We in recovery tend to work for ourselves and have our own businesses. Perhaps because of our rebellious nature's when we were out there. Or maybe it's because we are free thinkers and are good at finding ways to get what we want. Bless God and thank Him/Her/It that we have the ability to work some are unable and suffer for it.

Anger

In AA we are sometimes taught by comments in meetings and other people's attitudes that it is a shame to be angry. We learn that if we have a resentment even when wronged we have somehow failed so we receive a giant "F" on our recovery report card! We get the feeling that if we are angry that our spiritual condition is less than it should be. Granted if we were made of Love and Love alone anger would be below us and not in tune with our own natures because if we were only Love we would be only Spirit.

BIG HOWEVER! No matter how much we meditate, pray, read the big book, go to meetings confess our shortcomings, work on core issues, call our sponsor, restrain pen and tongue etc. etc. we will still eventually become angry and hurt because we are humans and anger is one of our primal key human survival emotions.

ANGER IN SPITE OF POPULAR BELIEF IN THE ROOMS IS NOT A CHARACTER FLAW. Wrath on the other hand is a flaw and also one of the seven deadly sins. The trick is not to allow our natural anger to become wrath by hurting ourselves or others in result of it. We in recovery must learn how to admit our anger to ourselves, God and another human in spite of our shame. And so we say to ourselves; "its ok I am angry" and then we move on to the solutions of how to express the anger in a healthy way to let it go.

We journal our feelings. We write a letter that we will NEVER send journaling all the reasons for our anger. We leave logic and self-conscience maturity behind and we write our core feelings toward ourselves, others, and our Higher Power if need be. At the end if we have wronged anyone, are not trusting God, or are playing God in our minds we admit our part. We ask our Higher Power to remove any defects of character. WE DO NOT BEAT OURSELVES UP FOR HAVING EMOTIONS. Our emotions should flow through us. We addicts tend to hang on to feelings and not let go. We revisit our Third Step...we are in

God's care and we sigh a sigh of relief and giggle at ourselves a bit for forgetting we are human.

Third Step Prayer

Great and Wondrous Higher Power "God I offer myself to Thee to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Perhaps it is because we alcoholics know what pure and sacred goodness is that we sometimes feel an intense shame for who we are. Is that consciousness humility or is that self-degradation? Our thinking may tell us that even our feelings of shame are lowliness and wrong. However our Higher Power created us imperfect beings to strive and struggle toward righteousness and purity. We while in the flesh will never be perfect. We must let ourselves off the hook how can we be anything but the children of God as God intended us to be with our struggles and faults.

Our solution to the human condition of an addict is to rely on a Higher Power just like the Third Step Prayer exhibits.

If we start our day from a platform of humility knowing full-well the character patterns in us that were unveiled during our step work then we do have the goodness and awareness enough to ask our Higher Power for help throughout our coming day.

Reliance on God works for us...it is our solution to the human condition we are not alone in our sometimes perilous yet wondrous journey.

PSALMS 118:24 "THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE; WE WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT."

Rejoice, rejoice, and rejoice! The preacher wrote back in the days of the Old Testament. "The Lord has chastened me sore yet I will live!"

"But for the grace of God" is what we say in AA, we prefer to think that it was our own consequences that chastened us sore or rather; stung so much rather than our Higher Powers punishment.

Due to the way we have been taught our thought process of good verses bad we may all too often when met with two circumstantial possibilities feel we must label one of them "bad and "wrong". Perhaps we seek out "bad" due to our need for deflection from our own self-image. Is the cup half empty or half full? Well, in recovery we have learned that many times when we pit one option against the other in all truth and actuality both are correct. The illusive third option. Much to our surprise the cup is both half-full and half-empty is it not? This kind of consideration is called open-mindedness. This is a challenge for us in recovery because it requires us to forge out new neuron-pathways in our brain by repeating open-minded thinking over and over until we have built sound and strong bridges over those pathways carved out by a life-time of closed-minded and accusing thoughts.

Is it not the Great Creator that put Karmic law into play? Maybe. Or perhaps Karma comes from the Universe itself by which all living/moving things must abide. Cause and affect. Excluding of course Grace itself. When Grace comes into play our consequences are quelled and we are saved from punishment. Grace continues for us as long as we live and thereafter.

Whichever way you wish to look at consequences and Grace non-the-matter. The good thing is we are alive this day to give thanks that we did not die from those things which we inflicted upon ourselves and are ashamed. We call that Grace. Karma back up, you take a back seat to the wondrous and saving relief that we in recovery and those in the spiritual frame of mind call Grace.

In the Big Book it is written that alcoholism is but a symptom of a deeper spiritual and emotional malady for which the only solution that works is of a spiritual nature (paraphrased). The steps are our spiritual remedy and God is the arbitrator of our saving Grace we believe.

For that Grace and our Higher Power we give thanks and rejoice!



*Is the glass half
empty or half
full???*

In all truth

*And actuality
the open-minded
thinker knows
both answers are
correct. Two
rights don't make
a wrong!*

Laura Edgar

“The Right Sponsor”

The right sponsor will not be perfect. If we were to find a “perfect sponsor” they would be worthless to us, we don’t need perfection. Alcoholism is a symptom of a deeper issue and the deeper issue needs to be worked on so we can stay sober. This means we need to work the steps. Staying sober is our primary purpose however the steps are devised to address the deeper emotional and spiritual issues in us.

Obviously it doesn’t take fellowship and 12 steps to comprehend “just say no” and “put the plug in the jug”. It does however take 12 steps, fellowship, working with others, and a spiritual connection to remedy an addict’s emotional and spiritual disorder.

We addicts beat ourselves up relentlessly because one day we are saying “tomorrow I won’t drink or use” and the next day we drink and use. What we don’t realize is that our emotional disorder has stolen away our ability to follow through on our choices about using and that if we are to regain our power to follow through we must learn what it is or remember what it is that empowers us spiritually and emotionally.

***We need a sponsor who knows how to stay sober and has worked all 12 steps.** Mutual respect and honesty are high priority on the list when choosing a sponsor no one deserves being disrespected. Next we need a sponsor who will be dependable and will show up for our meetings or at least have the courtesy to call and cancel if they can’t make it. If our sponsor misses an appointment without calling more than one time we may have to fire them and find one who will show up. Keeping our appointments with our sponsor no matter how loud our inner-voice screams otherwise is imperative if we are to stay sober. A sponsor who does not show for his appointments with a sponsee is acting brutally irresponsible. A sponsee who stands up his sponsor could die or worse. Even if a sponsee shows up and his sponsor doesn’t they have learned a good lesson about that sponsor and unless a valid emergency has occurred should fire them immediately and move on to the next possible right sponsor.*

In the program there are sponsors who feel they need to beat down those with less clean-time with criticism, sarcasm and by pointing out your shortcomings for you. There are even those who will turn around and use your confidential fifth step confessions against you. God forbid you choose that type of person for a sponsor but if they do betray you...it will come back on them. All the steps are written for us to apply to ourselves not for us to apply to others by taking their fourth step inventory for them.

A sponsor's job is to encourage, counsel, guide, teach, share, and teach us to work the steps and how to continually apply the steps in our lives as a way of life. A good sponsor is a good example and does not continually point out our shortcomings. It is part of the growth process for us to take responsibility for our lives by making our own choices and reaping the consequences of our new good choices. A sponsor should never try to make our choices for us that would stifle our emotional growth and give us a beast of burden to blame for our life.

Building confidence and self-esteem is accomplished by making and following through with esteem able choices.

When we addicts get into romantic relationships it feels good and we tend to become emotionally unhealthy with it by either handing over power of choice to our partner or trying to control the other person then we quickly lose interest in sobriety and personal growth. A sponsor/sponsee relationship can get dysfunctional also if we don't set clear boundaries. Again if a sponsor want to control us rather than suggest to us then we ought to walk away and find another one. We should not character assassinate anyone by gossiping including those who have wronged us.

*We all need to vent our strong feelings or they will eat at us but when we vent about a person in AA we need to vent with someone who will not gossip. When we first come to the rooms we won't know who to trust but it won't take long to figure that out. **KNOW PEOPLE BY WHO THEY SHOW US THEY ARE NOT BY WHO THEY TELL US THEY ARE.** Gossip is done by spreading ugly rumors about people to people who we know will tell even more people. Venting on the other hand is when we share our feelings about a situation in confidence with a person we trust. God*

save the sponsor who does not allow their sponsee any emotional venting of feelings. Some people pretend they no longer have feelings and never get hurt or angry because they are in recovery. Not true! As long as we are human we will have strong feelings. We should not shut our sponsees down by cutting them off unless they are going on too long in the blame game and speaking about other people's wrong and bad behaviors rather than their own feelings. We must protect ourselves from emotional vampire's which will suck us dry spiritually if we listen to them bitch long enough.

Woman especially however need to have a safe place where they can share their feelings about situations and people this is not gossip. To be continued..... I will be doing a segment on communication, relationships and working with others. The next post will be in the next couple of days. Thanks for reading along. If you are a stickler for recognizing my not so great grammar and punctuation please e-mail me at lrb68@yahoo.com and put "EDITOR" in the subject box. I really could use a reliable editor who doesn't mind working once in a while for free in the name of the 12th Step. Thanks Lori

WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD?

"Thy will be done" that a tough order in the mind of a control hungry addict! That's a tough order for any human for that matter unless they are thoroughly convinced that God's will, will feel better than their own. And what's more, what is God's will anyway and where does it fit into the steps? Well most of us are familiar with the Eleventh Step prayer that is all about God's will and our own self-centered dysfunction.

Eleventh Step Prayer Of Saint Francis

"Lord make me a channel of thy peace -- that where there is hatred, I may bring love -- that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness -- that where there is discord, I may bring harmony -- that where there is error, I may bring truth -- that where there is doubt, I may bring faith -- that where there is despair, I may bring hope -- that where there are shadows, I may bring light -- that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted -- to understand, than to be understood -- to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life...

AMEN

Truly starting the day with this prayer is a good way to test if God will really is better than our own. Experience is what strengthen faith not just words. Meaning we can be told all day long that God's will is best and halfway believe it but if we pray this prayer and then reap the benefits of fulfillment, enlightenment, some joy and some tears then we know that even though we are sober and OK our hearts and minds are more at peace when we are in the will of our creator. Test the prayer.

If we are seeking an answer for the question "what is the will of God" then the best answer available is "help others do no harm." We are human, we have defects of character and patterns of false pride, ego, and fear. It is best that we understand it is not our place to tell others what to do and especially not tell others what God's will is for them. We may however express suggestions for the benefit of those who have requested them. We as members of Alcoholics Anonymous should be careful to not play God.

It is said that pure power corrupts, having sponces and fellows who look up to us should not be an abused power. If we are careful not to tell other adults what we think they should do or make their choices for them we leave them room to grow emotionally. Making right choices and reaping the benefits is much of what emotional growth is based in. Furthermore each man has the right to reach their own level of incompetence.

Recovery sabotage is very common in early recovery and happens more often than not. Let's face it, most of us have tried and tried again to stay sober with many failed attempts. Each failure we beat our self-image to a pulp and leave our self-esteem in the gutter.

“Recovery ain't for sissies” they say, but hey, screw that! We are not sissies! Nor are we “bad people” who make a conscious effort to hurt our loved ones and ourselves by our addictions. **We are sick people trying to get well!**

Therefore folks, it helps to know one of the most insidious sub-conscious sabotage techniques that our addict mind uses to keep us sick. The good IS the enemy of the best. In early recovery ninety meetings in ninety days is a must. We know that we should take this suggestion because it worked for so many people in the rooms that have multiple years sober.

Usually what happens is we get a couple weeks sobriety under our belt and we are living responsibly so we miss meetings to do some “good” thing such as...take our children to the fair because we have neglected giving them attention and time for so long. Or we might finally get a job and put that before our daily meeting. Or maybe we are finally getting some work done around the house that we have procrastinated on for years. Perhaps we are finally considering visiting our parents to tell them how good we are doing now.

These types of tasks are the only ones that can logically pull us away from meetings because we can justify that they are “good tasks” “responsible activities” and we are doing the “right thing” by putting them before our meetings.NOT!

The thing is if we do not attend the ninety meetings in ninety days our new-found responsible behavior will quickly fall by the wayside. To build a truly responsible life, one of which we are no longer hurting ourselves emotionally, beating down our self-esteem and destroying our relationships we must stay sober. And to stay sober we must build a foundation in recovery by attending allot of meetings initially. Why???

- To build relationships with sober friends.
- To build new habits and behavior patterns.

- *To learn the solutions for emotional meltdowns.*
- *To establish a knowledge of the Big Book.*
- *To get a sponsor and work the steps.*

*Put it this way my sacred and lovely fellow addicts who deserve a kick-ass & wonderful life. Our brain needs a new program, it needs re-wired. Rewiring of the brain is absolutely possible and it does happen allot **but** it takes installing a new program and the download time for the sober program is lengthy.*

*The initial download for the installation of a sober brain is ninety days of daily meetings. After that you can cut down to four meetings a week if you like. Then somewhere during that four meetings a week if we work the 12 steps including a fifth step with a sponsor we **will** no longer view meetings and the program as a pain in the ass. Fulfillment and enlightenment will occur along with an amazing psychic change and we will take hold of the solutions to addiction by doing them.*

So when we have a “good” and “responsible” task that we think is best to put before our meetings; buyer beware! It could be our addict mind cunningly and insidiously plotting our demise! After all, we are too smart to fall for missing a vital life changing meeting just so we can watch Netflix or take out the garbage.

What's wrong with me?

<https://www.recoveryfarmhouse.com/sobriety/whats-wrong-with-me/>

"If anybody knew how I really felt inside they would know that I am not doing well in my recovery. I feel like something is wrong with me. I must be doing something wrong! I am sober but I am depressed, I am sober but I still have anxiety attacks. I mustn't tell anyone how I feel or they will know I am not really emotionally sober. I don't have quality recovery how could I if I did I would not feel like this."

Hmm??? Ever hear anybody share the above statements in a meeting? Most likely you answered no. However the above scenarios show the way that many addicts think and feel even though they have worked the steps and regularly work steps ten through twelve.

WHY????????????? First let's define this type of thinking and what it's connected to in us. Let's explore the dreaded word, feeling, and thought called "SHAME". Alcoholism & addiction have been explored and painstakingly researched by many experts who have finally defined addiction as a "shame based disease".

In the Big Book it is written that alcohol is but a symptom of an underlying problem. And that we alcoholics suffer from spiritual and emotional maladies. So what is this underlying malady and how do I fix it? In "How it Works" it is written that some of us suffer from "grave emotional disorders". It says that those who suffer from these disorders can also get better and stay sober. Well guess what ALL ADDICTS AND ALCOHOLICS SUFFER FROM EMOTIONAL DISORDER in my opinion. It takes some serious open-mindedness and lots of journaling, meetings, therapy, working with a sponsor, prayer and meditation to get in touch with and admit to ourselves our underlying malady of shame.

Shame tells us that we are not worthy of a Higher Powers Love. Shame tells us that we don't deserve anything good. Shame tells us that we are bad, wrong, evil, and that we must keep who we are a secret or we will never have anything we want or need. Starting the day from the platform of shame blocks us off from so many good and spiritual things. It causes us to have to justify and defend ourselves. It causes us to be in defensive mode. It shuts us off from Love. Shame shuts us off from God even in our prayers we block off certain parts of our heart hiding parts of us from our Higher Power in hopes that even He, It, She will Love us if we pretend to be someone we are not.

What's the solution? We must first realize that we are human and we will never be perfect as long as we are human so we can never ever approach God as a perfect and totally worthy person. We must quit hiding and keeping secrets from God and man.

ACTION: *We should lay on the bed or floor stretch our arms out as far as we can to our sides focus on God and expose all of our heart to God. We should approach our Higher Power in all honesty and transparency and say; "here I am just as I am, I want a relationship with You I need your help."*

We are our Higher Powers creation and we were created INCOMPLETE that's why we feel so incomplete. Not because we are bad, wrong, unworthy etc. but because that's the way we were made. We are only complete & fulfilled when we exercise an ongoing relationship with our creator. Fulfillment, enlightenment, encouragement, comfort, and healing are some of the things we get from opening up to our creator. That's why the steps work, they show us how to have a spiritual connection with our creator.

WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO FEEL GOOD ALL THE TIME even when working the steps correctly, we were not created that way. It doesn't mean something is horribly wrong with us.

So, we acknowledge and honor our feelings no matter what they are and we continue on with our daily lives in spite of them. We don't let our feelings create Kayos in our minds. "THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS THAT ATTACH THEMSELVES TO MY FEELINGS ARE NOT FACTS." FEELINGS themselves ARE FACTS because they are very real to us and come from our hearts experiences. It's the thoughts that get us in trouble. If we don't honor our feelings and journal them, talk about them then we are dishonoring and invalidating who we are. Our unhappy feelings come from somewhere real and often times we need to do some crying, some screaming (not at anyone) some beating the bed with our fists to get these intense feelings out in a healthy way so they don't come out sideways at other people.

Addictions spell emotional trauma and that trauma needs an outlet. Emotional trauma does not have to mean that we were abused as children by adults. Emotional trauma can result from emotional neglect and a lack of nurturing as children. Deep hurts from rejection and abandonment don't go away just because we are grown. We usually blame other people for the way we feel we are confused because other people trigger intense feelings (from past events) that live in us. Blaming others for the way we feel gives us temporary relief but will never ever help us heal.

All humans have a capacity to be hurt emotionally by others, if we do not have a healthy outlet for hurt it will evolve into anger and continue to live inside us until we connect with it and express it in a healthy non-attacking way.

When deep emotional hurt does not have an outlet it turns to anger which in turn can evolve into rage.

Depression is anger without enthusiasm it happens when we are just too worn down by our own anger & we haven't the energy to be angry anymore. We have not processed our anger we have merely changed our focus so the anger evolves into depression.

ACTION: *Putting our emotions in order by talking about our feelings with someone who won't shut us down and will be empathic is healing. Journaling is healing, moaning in guttural sounds to let hurts out is healing. Putting on our shoes and getting out of the house to do 12 step work or meetings is healing. Crying is healing. Screaming when we hurt so bad emotionally that words will not suffice is healing.*

WE DO NOT RAMBLE ABOUT HOW BAD OTHER PEOPLE ARE AND WHAT THEY DID TO US UNLESS IT'S ON PAPER. WE ONLY NEED TO SAY IT ONCE OUTLOUD, IN A MEETING AND AGAIN TO OUR SPONSOR OR EMPATHIC LISTENER. It's the talking about "how it made me feel" that heals us. It made me feel worthless for example or it made me feel dirty etc.

I am talking about healing core issues that are the cause of our relentless effort to numb out our feelings and our life. But let's face it had we really wanted to be dead we would have gone through with suicide. What we really want is balanced and orderly emotions not lack of emotions.

We woman will die if we don't talk about the way we feel. Criticizing others, character assassination and living in blame are character defects that we should not confuse with the expression it takes for healthy emotional order.

ACTION: *What about anxiety? The fourth step in the Big Book has an exercise called the "fear list". We write down all our core fears, we explore them. REMEMBER FEARS COME FROM OUR HEART AND DO NOT HAVE TO BE LOGICAL. Just because our mind knows we don't have to fear something if our heart fears it we should recognize it and honor it. Furthermore we should not let our shame throw us into the deep river of denial. Our fears need expression if we want to stop the anxiety attacks. So we write all our fears down and consider them. We realize we are not trusting God and that our faith is sometimes little if we are in fear. So rather than sticking our fear in the "denial box" we stick it in the "God Box". We then ask God to remove our fears and help us to rely on him, it, or her.*

Anxiety is intense fear that we have buried rather than expressing it, perhaps it's a fear associated with trauma. After all who wants to be labelled "chicken shit", "spiritually unfit" or other judgmental words to label he who has fear? But guess what? Every human on the face of the earth has fear it's just learning how to express it and taking action in spite of it that turns it into courage or emotional growth. Intense fears need to be expressed and released (not dwelled on) so they don't live in us and turn into intense anxiety.

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS: *Why is screaming a natural response to intense fear? Screaming releases boatloads of endorphins and is a solution to fear. Why do some soldiers come back from the war with PTSD and others don't who have the exact same experiences? Because often times we were taught that our expressions of fear and hurt and anger are wrong, bad, weak, stupid, ugly, disgusting etc. We were taught that our healthy emotional expression was wrong by some adult when we were very young and so we believed them and we became ashamed and shut down our own healthy emotional process.*

What's the solution to emotional disorder? Drinking and drugging of course! Yes I am serious. What happens when drinking and drugging quits working because of the consequences? Find a way to express and process our emotions in a healthy non-attacking, non-hurtful, non-destructive way.

God gave us vocal cords for a reason we can either save our face or save our ass! It's time to let the emotional child within us out of the box so she, he can have a half way decent recovery.

Disclaimer: *I own two supernatural boxes. One is called the "GOD BOX" the other is called the "DENIAL BOX". I have and do use both.*

seven deadly sins II

Sin is an uncomfortable word for many addicts because of being judged unfairly by religious people in our past. After all, power over others can be very seductive and addicting. We need to be very careful and stay mindful of this when we sponsor newcomers. Being an authority in a church has its own sinful pitfalls like the obsession to control others, usurping authority over others, and the yummy feelings we get humans when we get to manage another person's life its often downright luscious to our flesh.

The desire to play God is the exact reason why our early founders of Alcoholics Anonymous set up the 12 traditions the way they did. Bill W. and the rest of the early members knew that power corrupts and that if addicts got a taste of power it would be all she wrote for AA.

Greed and the lust for money are right up there with the hunger for control and authority. It is written in the Bible that; "The Love of money is the root of much evil." This scripture gets mis-quoted probably more than any. It's the "Love "of money rather than the Love of God which turns our insides into a den of thieves and makes us sick.

One solution for these greedy & selfish fear based character flaws are to realize that we aren't trusting God when we struggle for more, more, more and simple giving. To combat greed we give away something that we absolutely do not want to give away like a hundred dollar bill or something we covet. Giving away what we covet takes sins power and smashes it into smithereens. It also frees us from our own fears that drive us to selfishness.

Giving away something we value or covet will curtail possibly even cure our greed. Giving away that which we don't want that bad anyway won't work in the same way. It's a spiritual law that is obvious to the spiritually

mindful furthermore Jesus spoke about this Karmic law in the New Testament when a ruler asked Him how or what he needed to do to have eternal life. The man was very rich and Jesus suggested to him that he give all his material possessions away and follow Him. (Luke 18:22) I believe the ruler walked away saddened by the instructions unable to carry the directions out.

We also need to firstly not hand over our power by asking others to make our decisions or take on our responsibilities and second we should never tell our sponsee's what they must do. Our sponsee's are sick and they oftentimes will want to turn over their power of choice to someone of authority like a sponsor. No doubt if we start making their choices for them at some point the power they gave us will get snatched back and we will be left wondering why we feel like crap. Not to mention when the choices we have made for them don't turn out well we will become their beast of blame. Best we tell help them by going over their options, possibilities, and then they can make an educated choice and reap their own consequences called self-esteem and confidence.

How do we increase our Faith?

If we don't communicate with God then how will our faith ever be increased past the initial morsel that is given to us at the dawn of our lives? "Each man is given a measure of faith" so it is written in the Holy Bible.

Some manage to increase their faith when going through trials at which time they pray and ask God for a safe outcome to the adversity they are facing. I am guessing that not everyone reaches out to a Higher Power when facing adversity but apparently many do since the act has a label called "foxhole prayers". For those of us that do pray, when the outcome does turn out as we requested we are blessed to have our faith increased. And when the outcome does not go our way we just reason out that the answer from God was a "no".

But surely we can have our faith increased by other means besides foxhole prayers. One way to do that is by meditation as suggested in Step Eleven. Meditation is a quieting of the mind in an effort to seek out and become closer to our Higher Power. Meditation will increase our faith, tolerance, and patience.

Best we start our meditation with a prayer to improve our conscious contract with God and pray for the knowledge of His, (Her, It's) will for us and the power to carry that out. Some people pray to be protected during their meditation. Seems a little strange that we would need protection while embarking on a spiritual exercise to seek God but here's the reasoning behind it.

It's a fact that most humans use very little of their brains...10% is the common number. It has been shown by MRI result that those who meditate have light in parts of their brain that those who don't meditate do not have. So who can say what could happen during meditation in the way of astral-travel, data collection, visions, possible alien encounters, dream-travel and so-on that's why a little prayer to our Higher Power for protection can't hurt.

Granted some people have faith enough or a lack there-of that they don't fear any aspects of meditation therefore have no need to ask for protection. Clarification-total lack of faith in God would dictate that meditation will get us nowhere except to places within our own mind. Or

that if astral-travel is possible the universe is made up of nothing but pleasant fluffy fairy beings anyway that dance to and fro and that even the word "supernatural" equals Love and goodness so there's no need for protection prayers. Whereas, belief in the supernatural and faith in God usually suggests that there are evil spiritual beings that would do harm to us if they had half a chance. However a strong faith can believe in evil supernatural beings yet know that they are protected and safe during meditation because their faith is strong.

Some of us were raised by parents who glorified and gave more credence to the evil and scary supernatural power of Satan than the supernatural and miraculous power of a good and righteous God and so we pray for protection when we endeavor on our supernatural quest to find a deeper connection to God.

But what other ways are there to increase our faith besides communication with our Higher Power? We who are in the program of AA and NA are blessed and present to watch those who come in after us broken and afraid. We then see them restored to not only sanity, but to health and happiness in a miraculous way due to the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and its members.

This experience also increases our faith and warms our hearts.

STEP FIVE-There is a huge difference between struggling for unattainable perfection then failing to live up to it and beating ourselves to a pulp in our minds and heart thinking that somehow if we flog ourselves enough THEN we will be good and acceptable to our Lord and our fellows. Verses the pure and anointed process God has set down to relieve our guilt by confession. **WE THE CHILDREN OF A CREATOR ABSOLUTELY DO NOT HAVE THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO CONDEMN OR PUNISH OURSELVES.** The decision do punish or not to punish lies in the realm of our Higher Power.

Furthermore it is a rampant and common illusion that such an act will render us pure and perfect...probably rooted in childhood punishments.

Interestingly my spiritual teacher whom was a missionary, reverend, a grandmother, and a friend once informed me that "there is a counterfeit for every spiritual principal in existence on our Earth". Surely our former and destructive method as sick addicts of cleansing ourselves by self-abuse even if only in our mind is surely the counterfeit of the pure and enlightening act of confession that we do promptly after our thorough and painstaking Forth Step.

PSYCHIC OR PSYCHOTIC?

I do write much about “emotional disorder” as Bill W. mentioned in “How it Works” and the solutions to that. But today I want to tap into the topic of “mental disorders” which our founders mentioned as well. Furthermore I don’t know if anyone has noticed but bi-polar people make up a huge part of our 12 step programs.

What is schizophrenia? I am not so sure weather our schizophrenic fellows are crazy or have actually tapped into a real dimension that most of us never hear or see. I am not a physician therefore medically I am not equipped to give the whole story concerning mental illness. However, I do know people that can hear my own thoughts and I know this beyond a shadow of a doubt. These psychic friends of mine believe that schizophrenics have the ability to hear into other realms and that is what drives them to drink and worse. . Many times we humans label those who are spiritually gifted as “crazy” and “insane”.

We as humans who depend so highly on what we can see with our eyes cannot connect with higher realms unless we close our eyes and develop our “Third eye” the one that does not optically view things but rather shows us visions by our minds eye

Step Eleven requires that we quiet our minds to the point of open-ness and a child-like hopefulness that we are going to tap into our own supernatural gifts as well as communicate with our higher power.

Step Eleven teaches us that we need to seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him. However initially our understanding of God is marred by our emotional issue laced perceptions and an inability to see and hear with our higher mind. So we start by repeating a mantra so we can learn to focus on just one thing. Once we have practiced that for quite some time it is natural for our mind to move into a state of emptiness. Usually when we hit this phase of meditation a door will be presented to us that will appear as a symbol that we are comfortable with which represents our higher being. For me it is usually crosses and triangles that appear surrounded by blackness and stars.

Our door will appear to us usually surrounded by the Earth's outer realm called the "In between" which holds other images we won't want to focus on. And so we maneuver our mind through the door by focusing on it.

From here we can communicate with our higher power. We can astral travel to other realms or times. We can see visions and even great mysteries will be revealed to us.

DOES THIS MEAN WE ARE CRAZY OR DOES IT MEAN WE ARE GROWING SPIRITUALLY?

We are in the care of our Higher Power if we have done our Step Three therefore we need not fear the many different realms that may be dangerous or evil. I always pull out of any places that seem spiritually dangerous to me. Everything we need to seek and find God we already have within us.

MANKIND WILL ALWAYS TRY TO PUT SPIRITUALITY INTO A BOX LABELLED CARNALITY, meaning mankind tends to apply his/her own character defects to his spirituality. *But don't be too hard on us we can't help it. I am sure you will see some prime examples of this in my own writings, I am not "all spiritual" and my mistakes do not stop me from continuing my writing and fighting the good fight.*

If we do our Step Ten regularly and keep our side of the street clean we will be less likely to look for someone to blame and something to control. Not everything as a matter of fact very little is under our control therefore trying to keep things under control is as futile as thinking that we as the chairperson in AA control the meeting. Of this we are but facilitators just as we are only facilitators of our own actions and nothing more. Realizing this takes a huge burden off our shoulders. We sigh with relief because we need not judge anyone as "crazy" including ourselves. We are not responsible for the human race we are only responsible for "me".

THE CARROTJOHN MELLENCAMP EXCERPT FROM PINK HOUSES

*“Oh but ain't that America, for you and me
Ain't that America, we're something to see baby
Ain't that America, home of the free, yeah
Little pink houses, for you and me, oh baby for you and me*

*Well there's people and more people
What do they know, know, know
Go to work in some high rise
And vacation down at the Gulf of Mexico
Ooo yeah”*

What do we do after we have processed our painful traumatic pasts, we have a new set of friends in AA, we have let our feelings out, talked about them and the circumstances surrounding our feelings, (make no mistake it is vital we express both our feelings and the circumstances that surround them, we wrote about same, identified & related with others about same, talked about our shame, and thoroughly worked our steps, we have reconnected with God YET we feel bored, something needs to be done, we feel like the spark is gone from our recovery and all we do is work, work, work!

So I tell my partner “Partner” I say, “I am bored and feeling unfulfilled because I must work, work, and work some more!” “Partner”, he says; “set your eyes upon the CARROT” and so I do just that. I work, work, work, and keep my thoughts on my up and coming “vacation down at the Gulf of Mexico Oh yea! And yes, the next paragraph of the song talks about “the pills that kill” but I shall save that for my next article on that and the choice of taking meds for pain, anti-depressants, psych meds etc. while in recovery. If I can't go to the gulf then I will go to the local springs or wherever I can get with nature and be refreshed. I count my blessings

and am filled with gratitude when I get close to God's natural creations and then I do it all over again. Step Twelve gives me a purpose. AA-ers need to tell about what is going on with them in meetings. It is not our place to shut anyone down who needs to express their pain. We share the solutions for their pain and that is a twelfth step action but it can get old being around that negativity continually especially when we just want to enjoy life and stay on a positive train of thought.

When we vacation down at the Gulf we get to go to out-of-town meetings that are new and different. That in itself is a positive change.

And so we use the carrot as one of our survival tools for the good life in recovery.

Which Feelings Need Addressing is Step 10 enough?

I woke up in the middle of the night with an intense feeling of impending doom. I felt like I was somehow in a position where I had no safety. I felt like I was dangling miles high in the air with no safety net. In my heart and mind I must be putting my wellbeing in the hands of the wrong thing. It is not uncommon to sub-consciously put our faith into a cigarette or a pill while in recovery from a traumatic addiction. When in that addiction our neuro-pathways had been trained to take the direction where drinking is a solution. Sometimes in recovery our brain takes a wrong turn if you will. All we need do is put our faith back on the right neuro-road where we depend on our spiritual God rather than a person, place, or earthly thing.

When I was a very young child I remember having an intense realization that one day I would die. It frightened me because there is no earthly solution for death. It prompted me to seek and connect with my Higher Power.

*When I experience impending doom all I have to do is pray and tell my Higher Power how I feel (fear) and remember that He/She/It **does** have my back and the feeling of fear will leave me. Maybe it was the prospect of death itself that haunted me. Perhaps I had awoken from a nightmare that I don't remember. Do I need to write a fear list? If the feeling does not let-up by prayer alone then "Yes" back to Step Four!*

*The fear list is an important part of our on-going maintenance in sobriety. You will find the directions for it in Step Four of the big book. **"But that's Step Four I should be over that!"**....So some say. However my experience is in the matter of emotional sobriety and overcoming grave emotional disorder I revisit the fourth step as often as needed and Step Ten is far from enough maintenance to keep my emotions in check.*

In Step Ten the book reads that we are pretty much cured of regarding drink & drug as a solution, this is true to any extent. "The problem has been removed, it does not exist for us." However emotions and emotional sobriety are another matter, if I don't stay emotionally balanced I will eventually see alcohol as a solution. Absolutely we do "recoil" from alcohol if we work the steps but will we "recoil" from being self-destructive or hurting others? Or will we just switch to another self-destructive habit?

STEP TEN-“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

This is a very limited prospect of which is useless without the rest of the 12 steps.

Step ten works good enough for a quick apology or when simple self-acknowledgement of a defect then a little prayer will resolve resentment, shame, guilt or fear but if it doesn't rectify my deep negative feelings a little more work may be necessary even though I have worked the steps thoroughly. Truly Step Ten is not much of anything without the rest of the 12 Steps actively in place in our lives. Furthermore without prayer and meditation we are usually not spiritually fit enough to take our own inventory anyway.

Do I have any unresolved resentments I ask myself? If so I need to pray for that person and if that doesn't work I do a step four and five including “my part” and not eliminating “wrongs done to me” and how both of those have made me feel. If it brings up deep feelings I let myself feel them and I cry.

If I have a reoccurring memory of an event in my past and it is attached to an intense feeling; that is when prayer is not usually enough. That does not mean I don't pray. It just means that there is something in my past that I need to explore with an empathic listener who can hopefully relate to the event. I write down what happened. Have I wronged anyone? Do I feel guilt or shame? Remember our heart does not have to make sense it just needs to express itself, raw, & without editing. I share my feelings with a listener whom will neither shut me down, shame me, nor invalidate me for my feelings.

Staying disconnected from our feelings is an old survival skill that worked. To truly process core feelings we need to connect with them 100% and write, cry, scream, talk, moan, run, or even punch (the bag, pillow) them out.

Let's face it folks some AA, NA members are in the business of invalidation. These members will always look for the differences instead of the similarities. Furthermore they will look for the “wrong” in anything

you propose to them. This may work for some people...but blame is a principle of co-dependency not a principle of healing in recovery.

Do I feel dirty, wrong, and bad? We must not allow our intellect to cloud our fourth step by invalidation. Admitting core feelings like “bad, dirty, wrong, disgusting, or cheap sounds embarrassing but these are the common human feelings that surface after living an addicted life. These deep feelings need to come out or they will make us sick. Let’s face it not only have most of us crossed our own moral boundaries when in addiction but we also have core issues that need addressing from childhood. Oftentimes adults taught us that we were just plain “wrong” and that we don’t even have a right to be who we are and feel how we feel.

Remember we in recovery usually reach out for some secondary dependencies or lesser addictions when we get sober. You won’t hear it talked about in the rooms much but that’s what we do.

There are two kinds of people in AA those who struggle and admit it and those who struggle and don’t talk about it. We certainly don’t struggle at all times and we do reach a place of peace if we work the steps but we are never finished doing the work while human and alive.

Do not be too hard on yourself for that is a character defect within itself! Come on folks! We are all doing the best we can for right now. From what I have experienced in Narcotics Anonymous the way they sometimes ostracize fellows for secondary addictions it feeds into the sickness of keeping secrets, repressing emotions, and feeds our shame issues. Some groups forbid members to chair meetings if they are on much needed psyche meds or pain meds even non-narcotic meds. Intolerance and a lack of acceptance for others and their personal medicinal status is just that...a lack of understanding and empathy.

In recovery we often struggle with sick relationships (co-dependency), cigarettes, food, sexual promiscuity, anger issues, even your non-narcotic prescription drugs...nevertheless we are doing way better than we were before AA and the 12 steps. Do not think that your recovery is counterfeit if you struggle with one of these? Believe me we all struggle at times. You will find that when one of us overcomes ALL of our little crutches we then become highly judgmental, and our control issues hit their highest peaks. It’s always something! Not a justification just fact. Best we accept ourselves and other as human and remember “OUT OF THE PROBLEM INTO THE SOLUTION”!

WHAT DO I HAVE POWER OVER?

“Disclaimer this does not omit my Higher Power from having ultimate control in spite of my next right or wrong thing.

- 1.Δ Higher Power has ultimate power.*
- 2. My health, by my diet and exercise.*
- 3. All of my choices regarding the way I treat myself & others*
- 4.My attitude no matter what I am going through I can change my attitude.~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~*



Journey to Recovery



The Serenity Prayer

Part One ~ Introduction  Part Two ~ Serenity  Part Three ~ Accept  Part Four ~ Courage  Part Five ~ Wisdom



THE SERENITY PRAYER

God, grant me the
SERENITY
 to accept the things
 I cannot change



COURAGE
 to change the
 things I can



and
WISDOM
to know the difference

The Full Version of the Serenity Prayer

**God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change...
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.**

**Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will.
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.**

Attributed to Reinhold Neibuhr



How Did The Serenity Prayer Originate?

People from around the world have shown great interest in this beautiful prayer and there are a number of theories as to how it originated. One only has to go to a major search engine such as Google and type in Serenity Prayer and you will be presented with hundreds of hits on various views on the history of a prayer that has become synonymous to Twelve Steps Programs everywhere. One interesting version is given at <http://www.aahistory.com/prayer.html>

Little did we know that in 1939 when an AA member who liked the Serenity Prayer so much and brought it to Bill W., the Co-Founder of Alcoholics Anonymous that it would become the most popular prayer in the world. Bill and his staff made up some little cards with the prayer on it and they were printed and passed around. From that day on, this simple and beautiful prayer became a

part of the AA movement and subsequently to Twelve Step programs everywhere.

What we have also found interesting is that Reinhold Niebuhr whom many believe wrote the Serenity Prayer denies it and actually credits Friedrich Oetinger, an 18th century theologian, for writing it. This "theory" also suggests that in 1947, Niebuhr read the prayer in an obituary notice in the New York Tribune & was so taken by it that he shared it with Bill Wilson. Perhaps Niebuhr himself, was the "member" spoken of who handed the card to Bill in 1939.

With the Serenity Prayer as well as other inspiring words that speak so eloquently to compulsive eaters and others struggling with addictions, it could be that God in His wisdom orchestrated a series of events that led to the words so many of us say each day ... words which make the quality of our lives a little better ... words that give us hope ... and words that inspire each of us to pray daily for the serenity to accept, the courage to change and, most of all, the wisdom to know the difference.



Back



*JTR
Homepage*



Email Us

I want to personally thank
"Journey to Recovery" for posting this beautiful rosy page on their website.

FOR WOMEN ONLY

*Why is it that there are more men getting and staying sober in the program of AA than women? Why is it that we women seem to have more emotional issues that need addressing than men? Partly we just talk about our issues more, men repress on a much larger scale. Nevertheless we woman that **do** stay sober are usually more of the “tomboy” type. The very feminine and highly fragile woman rarely can get through what it takes to stay sober. Experience teaches that us rough types even often bi-sexual type women have a much higher chance statistically of staying sober than do the frail and feminine. But we must learn to make ourselves vulnerable emotionally rather than protecting ourselves emotionally.*

“Sobriety ain’t for sissies!” So bone up ladies! You can do it but it’s gonna hurt! The bad news is...we can feel again, the good news is...we can feel again. Yes and we have a boat load of emotional issues and character flaws to give to our Higher Power and to ebb-away at.

Firstly in my nine years of recovery which ya, hey it is allot of clean-time and I won’t pretend that it isn’t even if it is by the Grace of God I have done a hell-of-allot of work on myself with the help of other women. And what I have seen in AA is that there is only one woman in AA that I have met whom was not sexually abused as a child. I have silent theories that that is the “why” behind most addictions. The guilt and shame that a young child will place on herself for something they really were not equipped to fend off is astounding and life-changing. We addict woman have learned by the age of ten or younger that we can use our sexuality against men (or women) to control them, manipulate them, and force feed them guilt to get whatever we want from them.

*We are in recovery now it is time to do our sexual inventory not absent of crimes done to us and how that made us feel but right now we are addressing our side of the street and cleaning it. On page...ok ya page **69** in the **Big Book** it gives us a long list of questions to ask ourselves to help us with this inventory of our sex based wrongs. It is imperative for our emotional sobriety that we go over this list honestly and thoroughly and own up to all those that we have manipulated with our sexuality. Usually the men on our Fourth Step resentment list will also be a big part of our sexual inventory. In spite of how these men have wronged and abused us it is vital that we see “our part” so we can not only stay sober but more importantly...learn to Love and keep Love close to us and in us. Yes I am saying Love is of greater importance than anything however we are usually incapable of showing Love and acting out of Love when we are deep in our addiction so that sets sobriety up as a priority before anything else in our lives even Love.*

*All most of us wanted when we allowed the sexual-predator abuse and didn’t run to an adult and snitch the assailant out was someone to Love us. We confused affection with Love and we thought to get Love we had to drop our moral boundaries. We thought we had to be hurt to get what we needed. Perhaps that’s what our parents ingrained in us. And so we turned things around because we **are survivors** and we used our*

sexual power accompanied with lies and deception to get what we thought we needed at the time...usually money, drugs, & the basic things like food and shelter.

Some of us even sold our bodies outright for money to get drugs. We were exposed to many disgusting and painful situations. Some that we barely made it out of alive. It's no wonder we learned to hate men. It's no wonder we learned to hate women! They were our competition they betrayed our confidence! Screw woman! We could not manipulate them as easily.

*But now we **must** put our "woman's issues" on our fourth step. We will need other women if we are to heal and stay sober. So we pray for God to put the right woman in our lives so we can experience the "sisterhood of The Spirit". Men absolutely are incapable of relating to many aspects of our personalities therefore they are of limited use to us in recovery when working through these core woman's issues. If we have a chance to get into a woman's meeting we **DO IT!** These meetings are much more intimate and women **will** share things that you absolutely will not hear in a regular meeting, shares that are vital for our healing*

*We begin to let our abuses out of our bag of secrets. We expose some shameful actions of our past in our fifth step with a sponsor and we expose other secrets in the rooms with the woman. We will find that doing so will put in place the connection that we need to other woman. When we listen in our women's meeting we train ourselves to **LOOK FOR THE SIMILARITIES RATHER THAN THE DIFFERENCES!***

Finding someone to criticize is an old survival skill that deflects self-guilt. Criticism feeds the ego that which it needs to go-on however, criticism is not what we need now...we need empathy, we need healing and that will never come whilst seeking differences so we can criticize others. We write ourselves a note "seek the similarities don't criticize!" and we put that in front of us in every meeting we go to until we have trained our brains and have built a bridge over the sick neuron-pathways called addiction. Our brain-bridge is called "survival for the sober". Building a sober brain-bridge takes work and a supernatural kick so we start by ninety meetings in ninety days and we pray for willingness, clarity, guidance, healing, and for HP to make a way where there seems no way.

We have deep and imbedded trust issues that simply must be ignored to an extent so we can get what we need. We may not be able to trust but we will nevertheless choose a sponsor and work the Fifth Step leaving no debauchery uncovered. That which we want to keep secret the most should be at the top of our fourth step. The Truth will set us free.

We put the "blame-game" in the garbage. We are responsible for processing every feeling that comes into our hearts. If we have sex with a person they owe us nothing! It is our choice weather we have sex and unless we tell the person up-front a price for that sex...they owe us nothing. Not a phone call, not to fix things for us, not to make our choices for us, nor a place to stay they owe us nothing. If we expect something from a person we are in bed with then we should be up-front about it. We can propose that if they are screwing other people we will have to leave the relationship. They are adult they can do as they please. They can make promises that they won't keep. If they

don't respect us then we leave the relationship it is our choice if we stay therefore blame is off the table. Granted we can command respect but it is us who must draw the line in the sand and walk away when it is crossed. We cannot make other adults do anything we can only request and suggest.

If we feel we have been wronged we should call a woman and talk it out. If a law has been broken we may call the cops. We may find if we talk things out with another woman that it is our unresolved issues that are haunting us rather than the person we are in bed with in the present. We addicts tend to carry an ink-blotter stamping "guilty" on anyone we are intimate with once the fairy-tale phase of the relationship is over. Not anymore! Now we journal, we write "fuck you" letters (do not send) to vent our angers. We scream in our cars if we have to. We beat the pillow, we talk it out with woman but we do not blame anyone anymore for our feelings ever.

Even if we are wronged...can the person process our emotions? No! If others had the responsibility of processing and dealing with our feelings then we would be slaves to other people which we are not. We are learning how to take responsibility for our lives and our emotions. It is not easy, it is not for sissies but you can do it my dear because you are stronger and capable of a deeper Love than most women can even imagine. Why? Because of the deep pain you have suffered.

Your emotional pain has carved out a deep dark hole in your heart. You will process that hurt and replace it with Love. That is why we women in recovery are more capable of a deeper Love than anyone who has not been through the trauma that we have. Seek God and The Sunlight of The Spirit and you shall be a vessel of joy, Love, and happiness amidst the tears that have gone un-cried for too lo

FEELINGS FOLLOW ACTIONS

“On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.” This quote is taken from pg. 86 of The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Today my mind may be telling me that my life is a disaster and that I am a mess! I refuse to believe this because today I am taking action for my recovery and my well-being. Today I will help others, do no harm. I will exercise, eat right, and go to a meeting.

Many times before I joined AA and learned how to live and take responsibility for my own actions I used to often say “I don’t feel like it!” I said this in response to being faced with many responsibilities. I said it when people asked me to go places, on social outings, to the beach, on a road trip, pretty much in response to anything that would take me out of my isolation and out of the state of sloth.

I used to think I had to wait until my feelings were right to do the task at hand. I would get to-it when I felt up to it. I feared somehow that it would hurt me to take an energetic action. Somehow I felt I had to nurture the deep emotional pain that was inside of me. Depression & isolation were my bedfellows. Not to mention I feared subconsciously the unknown and felt it was a risk to go to new places and do new things. However what I feared was an illusion.

I have since learned by working the steps and addressing core issues that feelings nine times out of ten, are a result of my actions and I can act my way into good feelings. Please understand that healthy emotions include a certain amount of grief, hurt, pain, and anger and so-on that should be neither ignored nor shrugged off. We should not put a mask over our feelings nor should we let them rule us.

Emotional balance in recovery and understanding when to ignore feelings and when they should be addressed & processed takes time and much work. In early recovery it’s beneficial to both explore our feelings with a

therapist or empathic listener on a regular basis and to spend time doing recovery based activities, laughing and forgetting ourselves and all our self-centeredness. However we mustn't swing from one extreme to the other. Labelling all feelings character defect based is very dangerous but also labelling all feelings a priority at all times is just as dangerous. Just because our feelings are always valid does not mean we let them paralyze us or always give-in to tears.

Good feelings do follow right and constructive actions. If I get up in the morning and feel like crap I do not have to make my day follow suit. I don't have to create a crappy day. I must not allow my feelings to rule over me and oppress me. If my character defect is sloth then the spiritual remedy is to repeatedly take action contrary to sloth such as go for a run or go outside grab the hose and pour cold water over my body and take a walk. If I clean my house I will feel better about myself. (Opinion) Sloth is a spirit that attaches itself to humans and tells us immobilizing lies that we hear in our mind.

Sloth is the enemy of recovery as is wrath. If I am angry I should never, ever take it out on those around me. Again in early recovery we must learn outlets for anger. Denial and distraction works for a while but it is not a solution. The rage I feel inside is MINE I need to own it and then learn the solutions for it. I have written many articles on the solutions for anger. Anger is not the defect of character wrath is.

My message today....feelings follow actions not the other way around. You are a beautiful child of a Creator. God don't make junk! No one taught you how to deal with the intense feelings that drove you to drink and drug therefore you are innocent. You, if you are an alcoholic or addict are a sick person trying to get well not a bad person trying to get good. In this way its true AA is not a moral program. However if you continue working on the steps and stay in meetings, work with others and do the maintenance steps of 10, 11, and step 12 you will learn to follow your heart and this will bring you peace and morality both. All morality really is, is the act of following one's own heart of which we also call the conscience.

We in early recovery must first learn what our true heart's desire is so we may follow it to find peace. Many of us for survival sake learned to disconnect our hearts truths from both our intellect and our sense of reality through deep denial. He who learns to follow his own heart and resists perfectionism has found wisdom.

Beware of the “It’s this not that syndrome” common to the many Earthlings.

Recovery is a journey not a destination!

Do you want to be right or happy?

"Serenity is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it."

"Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open. "

They say in AA to get in the middle of the boat if you want to stay sober.

The first thing we should do is put ourselves out there in a meeting. Introduce ourselves as a newcomer and share our fears, feelings, and any other struggles we are having. This will attract people to us and make us approachable. We must get to know people. Just what and where is the middle of the boat. Firstly we go to 90 meeting in 90 days that way we will establish some new relationships with sober people...soooo important. We need to find out who and how people are staying sober.

We should join a "home group" for sure, it's important to feel "a part of". After all we have earned our seat in the rooms of AA and NA by our history, we have been in a war with ourselves that has not been easy...it is time to surrender to our hearts call.

I believe there are spiritual windows in time that make it easier for us to stay sober within a certain starting point...as if it were a spiritual call. Trying to get sober without that spiritual window things just don't "click" like they do when the window is open. Don't worry you will feel it when it happens. For instance I got sober and arrested on Good Friday in 2006 which also fell on Easter weekend. I must say many times people that stay sober for years and years have a sobriety date that is either a holiday or some kind of special date. Just a little factoid.

Secondly after a few months of exposure we should get a sponsor start working the steps. Also we should make a commitment to one of the activities that AA-ers do like chair a meeting once a week or speak at a jail or institution. None of these commitments will feel natural. Oh contraire it will feel uncomfortable but you will be growing both emotionally and spiritually because of it. Taking meetings into detox is the easiest place to begin with to share your experience of how sobriety is for you. When we see those sick and suffering addicts in detox it works like magic to keep us sober. It makes us remember all too well what it was like and we realize how far we have come. We addicts in recovery usually need reminding that we are doing well.

After 6 months of sobriety and a completion of working the 12 steps we should definitely volunteer to sponsor newcomers. This process happens very quickly. Don't worry too much in you are on probation, I have found that probation actually help build a structured life in the beginning of sobriety and gives us something to focus on odd as that may sound. Not to

mention the drop tests aid in keeping us sober. Sobriety is not for sissies it is a challenge that we can meet with hope. One day at time.

CHICKEN SHIT

"Fear not" is easier said than done. We need to learn the 12 step tools and especially invoke step three to keep fear at bay. There is no shame in revisiting a third step to remind us that God has our back! One of the first things we do when beginning our walk in sober school is identify, seek, and find a Higher Power.

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

"They say that the most used phrase in the Bible is "fear not"

The psychological make-up of an addict

Many of us when we were very small children were often told by parents that we had nothing to be afraid of when we expressed our intense child-like fears. Unfortunately during our forthright expression of true feelings our parents often implied by their lack of empathy and understanding that our fears were not only unfounded but ridiculous and perhaps absurd. These adults knew no better. Parents do not usually know that some validation of our feelings along with the comforting and logic was necessary for our emotional health. Therefore our intense little feelings were invalidated, we felt "wrong" for being afraid. After-all our parents knew best how we should feel so our fears must be wrong.

What's worse once we got to pre and elementary school we found out just what kind of people express their fears openly. We learned about the scaredy-cats, the chicken-shits, the pussies and the yellow-bellies. We learned that people who express any form of fear will be ostracized greatly by their fellows and friends. We must be bad we must be wrong!

And so we learned to stuff down those big fears into our guts, we learned to act, and we learned to put on the mask of fearlessness. No-one would call us cry-baby again! Ever! We learned, even...to shut off our tears. Showing any kind of hurt emotional or physical would label us weak. So we turned our hurts to anger. Who could blame us...we didn't want to be labelled by everyone. Between our parents and our school-mates we were

really left with very few people if any in whom we could confide our true feelings so we could let them out.

Most of us women in addiction were sexually abused as children. We hid the feelings from that away as well...deep in our bowels lie the pain and hurt of a wounded, neglected, and abused child. We did not trust that our feelings were right therefore we could not trust our parents to tell them what happened...or maybe our parents are the culprits of the abuse. Either way we had no adult to confide with about the abuse and the feelings of self-loathing that resulted from it.

AND SO GOES THE STORY OF THE COMMON ADDICTS

EMOTIONS...expression of feelings was off the table so what would we do with all those feelings inside us that were ready & able to cause an explosion of wrath. We usually weren't cruel people we didn't want to take out our feelings on others so we beat ourselves up for being who we were.

We developed a voice in our head that screamed at us for things we said and did and things we didn't say and do. We became our own worst enemy.

The self-hate, the anxiety, and the depression that we felt had to stop!

SO WE MEDICATED! After-all the last thing we would do is confide in someone so they could turn around and use it against us!

Ohhhh how the drugs worked, ohhhh how they made us feel better...for a while anyway!

Robin Williams-an addict in recovery hung himself today. Why would anyone with all that money, in the program, sober for quite some time want to kill himself?

"Our liquor was but a symptom, so we had to get down to causes and conditions."

I have a friend who is a therapist and in 12 step recovery. He loves both programs. But he has quoted me shocking numbers of addicts/alcoholics in a 12 step program who have committed suicide. The statistics are staggering. What you will find behind the statistics is an ability to express and share negative feelings. My friend insists that all his sponces do regular fifth-steps in meetings by telling "WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW IT MADE ME FEEL." The solutions to anxiety and depression are simple

but not easy. You can find them on my website:
[HTTPS://WWW.RECOVERYFARMHOUSE.COM](https://www.recoveryfarmhouse.com)

"Although I search myself it's always someone else I see just allow a fragment of your life to wonder free." Elton John

So often by the time a newcomer reaches the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous they have learned not only how to detach from their feelings but also they have no idea who they really are. Our self-image was marred. We entered the rooms broken, disgusted, and full of self-reproach. We had a mind that was closed and a heart slammed shut with walls built so thick around it, that it required a Higher Power to chisel and thaw the huge iceberg that had formed to guard it from feeling life itself. We felt we had to protect ourselves from anymore hurt. We had no idea how to process our God given emotions or the abuse we might have suffered.

Have no fear a broken man is in the perfect position to build a fresh new self-image that glows with supernatural life and a Love that moves mountains! By our deep capacity for pain we have forged out a depth in our hearts that can replace the fear and pain with Love and understanding for ourselves and other addicts.

The steps are designed especially for the suffering addict no matter what the addiction is. When we start on our journey toward recovery we begin with the first three steps focusing on a Higher Power so our recovery will be sure and true. If we could change ourselves we would need a Higher Power. If we were able to control our drugs independently we would not have been beaten down by our addiction.

We bypass all our fear of God and replace it with the desperation only the dying can assert. When our Higher Power hears our heart reaching out in our third step prayer Grace and compassion flows into our life. We begin to change in a miraculous way.

Each time we make a decision to go to a meeting, get a sponsor, write our step work, eat a proper meal, we are changing our self-image. The more work we do on ourselves, the more writing, the more journaling and

service work we do the closer we get to becoming that person we can Love.

Self-hate is phased out and replaced with the image that our Higher Powers sees when It looks upon us. We soon realize that we are Loved unconditionally by our Higher Power of forgiveness and Grace.

We mustn't forget to bestow that same acceptance and Love on our fellows who still suffer from the disease of addiction.

Mathew 6:12 "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

“SELF-ESTEEM IS BUILT BY DOING ESTEEM-ABLE ACTS”

OUT OF THE PROBLEM INTO THE SOLUTION!

PROBLEM

*One thing sure that will put a human-being in defensive character-defect mode is having low self-worth. One thing sure that will cause us to put on a mask of deceit, beat ourselves up psychologically, and fear (not care) what people think of us is if we think we are **just not good enough as people**. A negative mind-set makes us think everyone else is better than us so therefore subconsciously we reason-out that we had better start some defensive maneuvers to fix the way we are looking at us. And these maneuvers are usually not the kind that really do work to raise our self-worth. Things like anger, criticism, lashing out, looking for the negatives in other people and lesser addictions. That’s how the “ego” usually copes with low self-worth in recovery and along the way we lose any chance of filling our lives with joy, Love, and true self-worth.*

Furthermore even if we have worked the steps several times we can still slip back into a low self-worth mindset because we had lived with that thinking for so long before we got sober. Our neural-pathways were set and even though we have built a recovery-bridge of healthy neural-pathways over the sick ones sometimes our thinking falls off the new bridge onto the one below and goes into a path of destructive and negative thought. Not to say we want to drink or drug...no, we no longer see drinking & drugging as a solution to anything. We have worked the steps but God did not render us defect-free nor does he take away our free-will.

SOLUTIONS

So what can we do to boost our self-worth? Step twelve...chair a meeting as the “facilitator” not the controller. A facilitator serves the group not himself. We can share from our heart what God and AA has done for us with newcomers. If we share from our ego or to control others it will not work like sharing the naked and humble truth from our heart of hearts. We can do some work, clean the house, wash the car, get some tasks done that we have procrastinated about finishing for a long time.

We can do some Step Eleven meditation and prayer and be sure to speak to our Higher Power straight from our heart about our issues and give thanks.

Before we pray and meditate to God we should consider if we have left any amends undone. We should get right with our neighbors and then commune with our Higher Power.

We can confess in a meeting (step five) how we feel. We should say that we have been speaking to ourselves in an unkind way and that we have been driven under the common addictive delusion that if we beat our self up enough we will somehow get more good things done when really it's counterproductive to run ourselves down in our minds. Fifth step confessions like this cut false pride to the quick and leave the destructive ego lying on the floor of the room.

If we are well-off financially then we can give to a charity or one of those guys in the median standing with a "please help" sign. Especially if we usually judge those guys harshly, giving to them in spite of negative feelings toward them will cut the character defect of greed, & harsh judgments to the quick. Furthermore we do not have enough information to fairly judge anyone in such a way as condemnation dictates. We don't know what people have been through in their lives. They may be planted on the median by God just so people have the chance to give and in turn get blessed (Jesus was clear that it is more blessed to give than receive) (Acts 20:35) or alternatively to judge the homeless guys harshly and in turn be judged. (For whatever yardstick you use to judge your brother it in turn will be used to judge you.) Mt.7.2

Unfortunately allot of money has a way of making us feel secure, empowered, and better than those without it (not always of course) therefore we tend to want more just so we can get more or, keep those nice feelings we get when we increase our holdings. Jesus also said it's harder for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God than for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle. (Mt.19:24)

OUT OF THE PROBLEM INTO THE SOLUTION!

THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The "Spiritual Experience" is fully explained in the Big Book on page 567 it is described as providing; "A profound alteration to his reaction to life." The article also suggests that there are two varieties of experiences, one is a "white light experience" and the other is of the "educational variety".

Both experiences bring about a psychic change however; the spiritual experience of the educational variety comes by working the steps which we can pass on to other struggling alcoholics. Working the steps builds good character because every step requires exercising character building principles. In turn the steps should be implemented as a continuing way of life. Each step is a coping skill and a method to process emotional fallout.

The SE of the white light variety deposits good character in our souls instantly and enlightens us as well. The WLE has a way of putting the wreckage away from us somehow at least for a while without having to do that infamous fourth step. It does not teach us the painstaking workings of the 12 steps. Although the person who receives a "white light" will invariably make amends, pray, and automatically do other workings of the twelve steps without even being taught.

If a person receives a white light experience there is an evidence of a fresh new "Love" for mankind. They will stay sober however in either case spiritual maintenance is still required at some point to continue in a new and better way of life. Steps Ten through Twelve are vital in the spiritual maintenance of anyone in recovery regardless of their spiritual experiences.

It is unlikely that anyone receiving a white light experience will feel the need for quite some time anyway to work the steps or go to meetings. It more or less deposits the person on a pink cloud where inspiration comes easily and spontaneously. Bill Wilson wrote the original manuscript of the Big Book quickly and easily. It is described in "The book that started it all" (the original BB manuscript) that the editors had to tone down the religious aspects of the book so it could work for people of any religion. This is understandable because Bill Wilson was running on the anointing of God when he wrote the original BB.

"Why would anyone feel the need to work the 12 steps if they are riding a pink cloud of joy and experiencing the invigorating and supernatural revelations of their Higher Power? Bill Wilson had the divine duty of passing on a way for other addicts to receive a similar experience that he himself received in that hospital room when the White Light hit him. It is possible that the only reason God provides such an intense amount of His Spirit to anyone is so they can teach others. Otherwise you will just have to settle for the garden variety SE of the educational kind.

If we were to select which experience to have we should seek both by doing continual prayer and meditation and seeking outside spiritual resources such as church, nature, meditation, yoga, etc. Seek and you SHALL find.

In my experience addicts are more likely to receive a white light experience if they seek earnestly with their heart with an open and desperate mind.

Dreaming or Traveling? How about both? What if we humans have a soul? What if after we die our souls; absent of their carnality, sickness, and death simply takes a different form? Would that be re-incarnation in a heathen anti-Christian sense? Christians do often claim the belief that we are born of man for the first time ever to experience life m. Well that's a lot of questions.

It is possible to experience lucid dreaming. If we can lucid dream we can project how we look and where we want to go next. We should not astral travel to hostile places or for personal gain, vanity, ego, pride. would cause a corruption in our pure god essence.

I will not debate with wrath:

Although my own false pride would have me do just that. Wrath knows no logic, rage knows no compassion nor can it be reasoned with....natural anger can be managed with the tools and a little self-honesty. The accuser of the brethren that old crusty angel of lies (the disease) will come alive in me if I allow it. The tongue a small organ yet strong enough to wield the power of life and death, Love and hate in its grasp. A man can conquer ten cities but who can tame the tongue?" I wrote this a few years ago as a status in another secret group. I find personally that doing step 11 at length instills in me the self-restraint necessary to stand quietly through the manipulation of my mother or other emotional triggers. She throws out the fishing line and hook to bait me into telling her how to live her life or what choices to make and then she never does what I suggest anyway. I end up with a feeling of struggle and strain in my heart and frustration...inevitably I get an emotional hang-over. Verbal struggles don't always come in the form of sarcasm, insults, name-calling and lies. . Sometimes my struggles are fears within my own mind or me trying to be the director. SOLUTION: Step Eleven and self-restraint of keyboard & tongue. It is not my place to tell other adults how they should act or to make their choices for them. If they are not breaking a law or harming someone literally physically then it's none of my business to control other people's interactions with one another.

EACH PERSON HAS THE RIGHT TO REACH THEIR OWN LEVEL OF INCOMPETENCE!
Each person must learn their own lessons...we are all at different places in our recovery...on different levels even however, we are all of equal value as human souls with hearts that need to Love and be Loved. Lori E

“Play It Through” “Choose YOU’RE Battles”

Here are two very good recovery survival skills that they teach in rehabs and 12 Step Programs alike. The first; “Play it through” means that before we pick up that drink, drug, cake, scratch-off, addictive sexual encounter or harmful relationship behavior we start with the happy thought of getting what we want...our forbidden fruit. But we don’t stop there since we know ourselves well enough to be in recovery we can play out the harmful consequences of our actions in our mind like a horrible b movie. We watch as the phenomena of craving takes over our will. We stand still as we watch our hard earned money dwindle down the drain. We observe as our children cry and scream “I want my mommy!” or “I am hungry”. We are sickened by the guilt feelings that we know will consume us followed by the sabotage of the self-esteem we worked so hard to build, we watch as it crashes. We stand in horror and shame while our new found friends look at us picking up yet another white key-tag or chip.

Ok now what do we do? That was a horrible gut wrenching movie and we are now grateful we did not drink. Next we move a muscle change a thought. We call someone, we go to a meeting, we work on our ninth step amends and write a letter to our children...not about how we will never hurt them again or never drink again, and we have not earned their trust, YET. But instead we acknowledge our wrongs, we tell them we are so, so, sorry with NO BUTS after it. We journal the intense feelings that are coming up in us that are the reason we wanted to drink and drug to begin with.

We are in recovery, we don’t let anybody tell us we should not feel pain or remorse we have survived Hell and there is no wrong feeling in our hearts because they are from our experience. Actions are the only things that can be labeled right or wrong. We have hurt people we love and we are sick about it. The solutions are in the steps, we need not only the people that will call us on our BS we also need those that will allow us to feel our pain, talk about it, express it well with feeling, then let it go. We need someone we can tell anything to who will listen without judgment.

We are on the road to a new life! We know what drugging will bring us, yes we know it well. However we have no idea what wonderful and exciting blessings sobriety has in store for us. We do not know the future but we do know that we are not going to drink today and we have learned another useful tool.

As for the lesson: “Choose your battles”, we can make a battle out of anything anybody says or does or we can choose to just let it go. We ask ourselves; HOW IMPORTANT IS IT? We then laugh at ourselves because we remember rule #62 which is; “Don’t take yourself so seriously.”

Our recovery life is a journey in which we have way more choices than we thought we did. We are learning that we can choose to not pick up a battle to fight because right now we don’t have time for that bullshit. Instead we are picking up a new life, we are chosen, we have survived hell, we are more important than we know, we have spiritual gifts, it is time to

*explore those gifts and step in to who we really are! WE NO LONGER FEAR OUR FEELING
TO THE POINT THAT WE LET THEM RULE US! WE ARE NOT ALONE.*

STEP TWO

“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Sure it's easy for many to believe that there is a God out there and that He or She is powerful, good, and fully capable of restoring any human to sanity. However believing that God WILL restore us to sanity is another matter especially to a guilt-laced heart and mind. When we are full of the emotions drummed up from the wreckage of our past most will feel like they do not deserve to be restored to sanity. It is common for newly sober addicts to feel unworthy of such miraculous spiritual gifts as sobriety, healing, or white light experiences. Why would God Love me when I feel like I am undeserving of any good thing? How can I accept that I will be given relief from the obsession when I have regularly punished myself with drug and alcohol abuse for so long?

We need not worry about all these natural fears. If God had an addict mind we would all be in serious trouble but He/She/It does not.

The Grace of God is often defined as “undeserved merit”. Meaning, to be bestowed with a gift we do not deserve or earn. God's Grace need only be accepted by doing the next right thing. We make our decision with strong Hope that it will come to pass and when it does and we are restored to sanity...our faith is strengthened tenfold.

We look around the rooms; we hear the testimonies of how multitudes of addicts and alcoholics have been delivered from addictions by a miraculous psychic change. Can we accept such a wonderful gift or must we go on punishing ourselves for our imperfections in hope that somehow our destructive self-chastisement will turn us good?

The addict mind is a complex one however we do not have to work out all the particulars regarding step Two. Step Two is a spiritual action not a carnal one to be reasoned out. Addictions are spiritual maladies that need spiritual solutions. We don't need to ask why or how it works we just need to do the work!

The dark and spiritual, cunning, baffling, and powerful malady of addiction calls for a spiritual solution that our carnal minds do not understand...YET they will become so clear to us once we receive our psychic change.

WISDOM

Disclosure: I am a writer, I right about spiritual helps to do the right thing for myself emotionally, physically and spiritually. I am a woman in recovery from drug abuse, emotional neglect and a traumatic life. However the moral principles that I base my beliefs on are not mine originally they have been written about for centuries. I am human, I wish I could live up to these principled standards ALWAYS but I fall short for this I answer to my own conscience and God.

Please do not set the standard of thought that every teacher must adhere at all times to every bit of knowledge that they teach otherwise they are labelled hypocrite; sponsors included. For every teacher falters on their use of knowledge as does every student. As my sponsor used to say repeatedly; "Can you hear & learn the wise and crucial counsel from your sponsor even when your sponsor is not doing it themselves?"

Setting goals

We are embarking on a journey of recovery butt

The goals I need to set in recovery should be based on recovering from addictions. I need to set physical goals for eating and exercise as a prerequisite. My goals are to learn work and live the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. By these goals any further goals can be addressed. Next I need to think about employment and the getting of money to live on. Jobs will come to us if we put it in God's hands (third step) and do the footwork.

The next goal-type is so necessary to stay sober and sane. (Step two) We consider our goals that are and will be personal fulfilling; Fulfillment is so important for our heart and soul. Fulfillment gives us a reason to be inspired to live. The goals I need to set in recovery should agree with my heart as good. Things like goal oriented writing, physical achievements, education, Outdoor activities such as bird watching, digging artifacts, boating, sports, creativity of any kind like knitting, sewing, building, designing, collecting.

There are many things to be considered when embarking on a new life full of Love, fulfillment and change.

IF GOD BE FOR US WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

Let's face it sometimes circumstances can seem very bleak in our lives. Financially, medically, relationship-wise, food, shelter, sometimes life gets pretty darn scary.

They say in AA with confidence that "God will not give us more than we can handle". Well that cliché is highly debatable and biblically it actually applies to temptation. In all honesty I can say this; God has always, always supplied the needs of me and those around me. He has always taken care of those I do know in a way we can handle if we just keep getting up and doing the next right thing if we don't give up and continue to do our part.

I wish I could tell you all that life won't be difficult. That disease won't over take us. That we won't be homeless or without food but I can't. I have seen too much illness and homelessness to promise that. However I do know that when I turn things over to God, tell Him my difficulties and put my own fears in the God box for Him to remove and relieve, He has never ever let me down.

We are human and will get sick, have accidents, grow old and die that is out lot. When we accept that we can look at the day as a gift and say... What will I do with this body, this health, this wonderfully blessed day that God has given me? What will I do for my loved ones? Will I shower them with the Love of God and self that I have today or will I let this day pass by as well as its opportunities for joy, peace and basking in the sun?

I wonder at times if people just don't ask for the help of a Higher Power and I reason out that's why they are left wanting and alone. It is a great mystery to me whom God chooses to have all their needs met and why.

Personally I am not taking any chances. I will continue to ask my Higher Powers help and He will help me. I know He will meet my needs because He always has in the past. He has also shown me that He Loves me by far more than any human is capable of. Seek God with your heart my friend and you will find Him.

If God clothes and feeds the birds of the field that are of lesser value than us how much more shall He help us? Although He will meet our needs in His own way if we just ask. I believe this with my whole heart. So pray!

Mathew 6:28-30

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

81

ABOUT RELIGION

Romans 8:29 & 30

"For whom he did FOREKNOW, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Some people including myself believe that we sat with Jesus in eternity (Heaven) and mapped out our human experiences before we were born into our human bodies. The Spirit does not age. Spirit is not flesh. Jesus stated in Matthew 19:26 that, "With God ALL things are possible."

Mathew 19:26

"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God ALL things are possible."

Nevertheless some humans even though they claim to be Christian bible believers ignore their own bibles (that they rarely read) and deny supernatural concepts as being utterly impossible. Man stamps his own limitations on the face of his beliefs and calls it spirituality. I believe Jesus who said, according to the word that there are no limits where God is concerned!

Take every religion known to man, put them in a pot stir it up there is truth in every religion though many of them claim that theirs is the ONLY WAY TO GOD. I believe that the only one true religion out there is Faith, Hope, Love and Charity; this is the one true religion.

Romans 8:24

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

To those who keep telling me my faith and hope are wrong and I am not "saved" please get out of my face with your rules and regulations, your legalisms and limitations...you think you know who is "saved" by your religious rules and your do's and don'ts? Then you have stamped your own carnality onto your faith and have limited the workings of God in your own life.



HUMAN NATURE & SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS

The Big Book teaches us that alcoholism is a spiritual malady therefore it requires a spiritual solution. We are sometimes incapable of understanding why the 12 steps work and how they are a solution to our devastating malady.

1st Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The things of the Spirit must be understood by the Spirit rather than our carnal and natural understanding. If we want to broaden our Spirit man we can pray for understanding, and knowledge. Do we know the difference between our Spirit mind and our natural mind? The natural man is selfish and closed minded at times. The natural man often cares only for himself. The Spirit man gives and Loves freely. The Spirit man is open-minded to the ideals of the Spirit. The Spirit man lets his heart call out to God in spite of his ego and pride. Pride says never show weakness or admits a wrong.

The Spirit man says repent! The Spirit man takes the time to do the self-examination necessary to begin showing true humility. The Spirit man has faith that God will supply his needs and all the needs of his family. The carnal mind does not trust God therefore prompts us to struggle and take matters of security into our own hands (of which we fail utterly) even if we have to lie, cheat, and steal, to be secure in our minds. Granted not all humans lie cheat and steal however the carnal man will manipulate and deceive to get what it feels it needs when struggling for survival.

Lastly we can't deposit the Spirit of Love into our own hearts it must come through Christ Jesus...through God, by our Higher Power regardless of the label we have put on that Higher Power.

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY and perfectionism

What does that mean anyway? Emotional sobriety in a nut shell means “We have taken responsibility for our all our actions and all our feelings, we are the only ones who can make a right or wrong choice for us. We show respect for ourselves and others.” We no longer rationalize and justify our wrong actions (harming ourselves or others).

However we addicts tend to either be in complete denial of our responsibilities (blame) or we are way too hard on ourselves. Yes, we slide from one extreme to the other.

When I was in my addiction and high I could do no wrong, I was the queen beautiful and I knew it all! When I came down and ran out of dope I hated myself. There was absolutely no good to be found in me I thought. I was dirt! If we are sober and starting the twelve steps we are already making huge headway concerning right choices and taking responsibility for ourselves.

If we slip up a bit and fall into some addict behaviors we mustn't beat ourselves up. In the program it is completely natural and most common for us to take two steps forward and one step back. All the wise counselors I have met in AA say they did just that and still sometimes do. We need not let perfectionism pollute our self-worth by telling us we haven't made any progress!

Action: We take a look at our accomplishments, have we attended meetings? Have we gotten a sponsor? Are we working? Are we working on the steps? Are we taking responsibility for our children whenever possible? Do we pray? Do we meditate?

We pat ourselves on the back for our work toward recovery. Yes it is by the grace of God that we are sober however, we are in the business of building new self-worth. Going over our good works helps build our self-esteem and the good-pride in a job well done! Remember only false humility pretends it has no part in its own recovery. Today I won't let perfectionism tell me I have made no progress.

“INDECISION” Page 86 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

“In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, and intuitive thought or decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.”

Why was it so hard to make a decision when I was newly sober? One huge reason is because I was afraid of the outcome of my own choices. My decision could turn out bad or wrong and then I would be bad and wrong. And why not, I made so many wrong choices in life I was used to the badgering and consequences of my selfish actions. Obviously the “bad” and “wrong” label was stamped on me at an early age therefore it is at the core of my “fear of people” issues. One of my valuable survival skills when drinking and drugging was to let others make my choices for me. When I hand over power to someone by asking them...“what should I do” I am offering them ego-feeding material. Furthermore if the decision turns out “wrong” I can quickly blame that person for the outcome. This is why a sponsor should always answer objectively when a sponsee tries to hand over their power of choice by responding with “it is your decision but we can go over your options and I can suggest to you what may be the best choice.”

Why does the Ninth Step promise us that “fear of people will leave us” and how does it leave us? Between our connection with God and our customary twelve step work our confidence and self-esteem are rebuilt and we no longer fear making personal choices. We need no longer fear “bad” outcomes because life is a journey, we are only human and we have been created to make mistakes and to rely on a Higher Power. We are and will never be perfect while human.

When we make right choices and do the next right thing we receive positive consequences which are confidence and true pride the good kind.

When I hand over power to a person it is a manipulation skill that keeps them coming back. It feels good to rule over someone and make their choices for them. However when that kind of power is snatched back...ouch! The person feels empty and lacking and usually they don’t react well. How do I snatch power back? By going against the advice given or just pushing the advisor right out of the picture all together by walking away.

It also says on page 88 that “faith without works is dead.” Therefore we should be sure to have some Step Twelve action going on even if it’s not in the capacity of AA. Not everyone fits into AA the traditional version of the twelfth step, by **chairing meetings, becoming an officer & active in business meetings, making coffee, speaking in institutions, speaker meetings, joining the activities committee etc.** there are many ways to share the message outside of AA.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principals in all our affairs”.

However if we choose to not do traditional twelfth step work we may be in danger of missing out on valuable personal growth, maturity, self-esteem, confidence, and emotional sobriety that happens when we do the things outlined in yellow above.

Learning to take responsibility for our actions and building confidence takes work. Fear of people will leave us IF we work the steps. One thing sure if we don’t put ourselves in uncomfortable and vulnerable positions by working step 12 we will not gain the confidence that no longer fears people and makes independent choices.

STEP 12: Courage & willingness means doing the next right thing when I just want to go home and hide in my bed. It means telling my story at detox when I am nervous as a cat. It means chairing a meeting when my hands shake, courage is making coffee when I fear that everyone at the meeting will tell me it tastes horrible, courage is doing a fifth step when every fiber of my being says “keep it secret”, courage is asking someone to sponsor me when I am afraid of being told “no”, it is sharing my secrets when I fear betrayal, it means making a friend when I fear I will just be abandoned again, it means putting pen to paper when I feel like it will all be a waste of my time. Without these kinds of courageous actions and the willingness that goes against our core fears we might not grow in the miraculous and amazing ways that are promised in Step Nine “fear of people will leave us”, furthermore we may not stay sober at all.

THE SAME MAN WILL DRINK AGAIN.

SELF ESTEEM IS BUILT BY TAKING ESTEEM-ABLE ACTION

PROBLEM

One thing sure that will put a human-being in defensive character-defect mode is having low self-worth. One thing sure that will cause us to put on a mask of deceit, beat ourselves up psychologically, and fear (not care) what people think of us is if we think we are just not good enough as people. A negative mind-set makes us think everyone else is better than us so therefore subconsciously we reason-out that we had better start some defensive maneuvers to fix the way we are looking at us. And these maneuvers are usually not the kind that really do work to raise our self-worth. Things like anger, criticism, lashing out, looking for the negatives in other people and lesser addictions. That's how the "ego" usually copes with low self-worth in recovery and along the way we lose any chance of filling our lives with joy, Love, and true self-worth.

Furthermore even if we have worked the steps several times we can still slip back into a low self-worth mindset because we had lived with that thinking for so long before we got sober. Our neural-pathways were set and even though we have built a recovery-bridge of healthy neural-pathways over the sick ones sometimes our thinking falls off the new bridge onto the one below and goes into a path of destructive and negative thought. Not to say we want to drink or drug...no, we no longer see drinking & drugging as a solution to anything. We have worked the steps but God did not render us defect-free nor does he take away our free-will.

SOLUTIONS

So what can we do to boost our self-worth? Step twelve...chair a meeting as the "facilitator" not the controller. A facilitator serves the group not himself. We can share from our heart what God and AA has done for us with newcomers. If we share from our ego or to control others it will not work like sharing the naked and humble truth from our heart of hearts. We can do some work, clean the house, wash the car, get some tasks done that we have procrastinated about finishing for a long time.

We can do some Step Eleven meditation and prayer and be sure to speak to our Higher Power straight from our heart about our issues and give thanks.

Before we pray and meditate to God we should consider if we have left any amends undone. We should get right with our neighbors and then commune with our Higher Power.

We can confess in a meeting (step five) how we feel. We should say that we have been speaking to ourselves in an unkind way and that we have been driven under the common addictive delusion that if we beat our self up enough we will somehow get more good things done when really it's counterproductive to run ourselves down in our minds. Fifth step confessions like this cut false pride to the quick and leave the destructive ego lying on the floor of the room.

If we are well-off financially then we can give to a charity or one of those guys in the median standing with a "please help" sign. Especially if we usually judge those guys harshly, giving to them in spite of negative feelings toward them will cut the character defect of greed, & harsh judgments to the quick. Furthermore we do not have enough information to fairly judge anyone in such a way as condemnation dictates. We don't know what people have been through in their lives. They may be planted on the median by God just so people have the chance to give and in turn get blessed (Jesus was clear that it is more blessed to give than receive) (Acts 20:35) or alternatively to judge the homeless guys harshly and in turn be judged. (For whatever yardstick you use to judge your brother it in turn will be used to judge you.) Mt.7.2

Unfortunately allot of money has a way of making us feel secure, empowered, and better than those without it (not always of course) therefore we tend to want more just so we can get more or, keep those nice feelings we get when we increase our holdings. Jesus also said it's harder for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God than for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle. (Mt.19:24)

OUT OF THE PROBLEM INTO THE SOLUTION!

THE TOTALLY CONTRAVERSIAL TOPIC OF: TAKING MEDS WHILE IN TWELVE STEP RECOVERY.

FINDING THE PERFECT BALANCE THAT LIES SOMEWHERE BETWEEN “MARTYR” & DOPE FEIND.

AA put out a pamphlet on medications in recovery. In a nutshell it's easy to anticipate AA's stance or rather a group of AA's members and their stance on taking medications while in recovery. However there are many drug-addict/alcoholics in AA who have medical needs. It's obvious to me that the alcohol-addicts who wrote this pamphlet and the Big Book don't have the experience of hard core drug addicts neither do they have a well-rounded view of doctors and their common practices. CLEARLY BY MY OWN EXPERIENCE AND THOSE CLOSE TO ME DOCTORS DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE THE PATIENTS BEST INTEREST AT HEART.

But anyway below is a partial snapshot of the AA pamphlet called “THE AA MEMBER: MEDICATIONS & OTHER DRUGS” which, mind you is full of good advice....under certain circumstances such as when the doctor is neither prejudiced against addicts because of some ruthless crack-head that ruthlessly hurt or betrayed him (or something of that nature) or the doctor is not the typical “treat the symptoms with lots of drugs and don't concern yourself with a solution to the ailment” type doctor. Really? Does everybody just automatically take the doctors prognosis as gospel? Seems like the people I have met in AA have absolutely no inclination what-so-ever to question a doctor's advice....I find that odd. In my subconscious I am wondering what's behind that kind of blind faith in a human.

Truly writers of this pamphlet and the Big Book obviously haven't been watching the commercials that inform us about the many lawsuits over hanus prescription drugs advertised by lawyers everywhere. Nor are they taking into account the kick-backs that doctors get for prescribing certain harmful and questionable drugs. Don't get me wrong like I said “good advice” but only under the circumstance that you have a truly good man or woman as a doctor.

We must as addicts in recovery find our own boundaries where meds are concerned and this is not an easy task it will take time and counsel. We cannot depend on our doctors in many cases for the best “next right thing” to do. We must be true to ourselves where meds are concerned and find the perfect balance that lies somewhere between martyr and dope fiend because both are self-destructive. At some point we should as people learn

to let ourselves off the hook and not be so rigid with ourselves and others. At the same time we don't want to become so lax that we are not connected to what fulfills us.

Abstinence from prescriptions is not always best in fact it can be dangerous. Many if not most people in AA are on anti-depressants. Anti-depressant will quit working. Doctors have to continually switch people around from drug to drug, change dosages, and try different combinations. Whatever works. And hey I mean that it's not for me to judge. Next there's the pain issue. If you're a narcotics addict and pain drugs are your drug of choice best draw the line at surgery. Especially early on in recovery. Meaning don't take them unless you have severe pain.

The addict mind prior to a psychic change better yet a total mental transformation is incapable of thinking like a normal person regarding drugs therefore if you have to have surgery in your first five years or so don't expect to not hear the voices of obsession in your head when you bring home those Percocet's for post-operative pain. You can take them as directed but most likely they will talk to you in between doses...they did me. That doesn't mean I relapsed it meant I was triggered by them. A thought does not constitute a relapse. I was going by the book with my meds and doing the right thing while at the same time the addict in me had her voice as well. Things are not always just one way they can be both.

What about suboxone & methadone? Well if an addict gets on these drugs early on and uses them temporarily to "adjust" emotionally to sobriety that could be a good thing. I have seen these drugs help people transition into sobriety slowly and successfully. I know some people who did it that way and have been sober a very long time. They got off both drugs within a year. If they were to stay on them past say a year chances are they would not have worked through their emotional issues and will relapse. The drugs may work for a while to suppress painful emotions but when they stop working the addict will either honker down, work the 12 steps, get some therapy and start to really recover or they will just go up, up, up, on the dosage until other drugs like cocaine, alcohol etc, start to look like a solution.

Remember if alcohol is only a symptom of a deeper problem then finding and alleviating that problem is the solution. Usually that problem is grave emotional disorder.

The important thing is to learn how to live and work the steps often and at least when we need it and to establish an ongoing relationship with God. If drugs interfere with that process or cause unmanageability then that constitutes a slip. If a psychic change doesn't take place "the same man will drink again". People who get on pain meds which cause no unmanageability have not relapsed have they? My advice...if you have a serious pain issue say you broke your leg or severed a limb personally I wouldn't tell the doctor I am an addict your liable to go home with a bottle of asprin. It's a matter of throwing the dice I have had it go both ways. My pain doctor knows my story and he has asked me lots of questions about recovery life, it interests him. If I am in pain he works with me. I have also had the opposite happen when I was treated like I was an inmate in a prison by the meanest jail guard there the doctor. I told one doctor I was an addict and she quickly cut my seizure medication in half over-night. Not a good idea it could have killed me. So prayer and common sense play into it.

THE PAMPHLET

- No A.A. member should "play doctor"; all medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician.*
- Active participation in the A.A. program of recovery is a major safeguard against alcoholic relapse.*
- Be completely honest with your doctor and yourself about the way you take your medicine. Let your doctor know if you skip doses or take more medicine than prescribed.*
- Explain to your doctor that you no longer drink alcohol and you are trying a new way of life in recovery.*
- Let your doctor know at once if you have a*

desire to take more medicine or if you have side effects that make you feel worse.

- *Be sensitive to warnings about changes in your behavior when you start a new medication or when your dose is changed.*

- *If you feel that your doctor does not understand your problems, consider making an appointment with a physician who has experience in the treatment of alcoholism.*

- *Give your doctor copies of this pamphlet.*

EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES

Two important rules-of-thumb; if they gossip about other people to you then they gossip about you to others. Number two, "Know people by who they show you they are not by who they tell you they are."

What is an "emotional vampire?" An emotional vampire doesn't know that they are sucking strength and peace from those around them. They simply have an inherent ability to push your emotional buttons and trigger in you the emotion of struggle and control accompanied by anger, intolerance and a general negative excitement of sorts. Or put plainly they easily rile-you-up by there behaviors. Yes this sound dangerously close to the "blame-game" however this is something different. Once we are aware that certain people have this affect on us we can avoid them...not invite them into our homes. Now if everyone pisses you off and your labeling the whole world as an emotional vampire then you may be lacking the ability to take responsibility for your or my own feelings.

Other people CAN CHANGE THE COARSE OF OUR LIVES. I asked my partner "why is it that I seem to absorb the people that I hang around." When I spend time with my sister, as neurotic and confused as she is I part her company with a negative attitude and often-times I am critical of her. Weather we get along with, like, or dislike our neighbors we always take something away from our interaction with them. Perhaps that is partly one of the spiritual answers to "why" the 12 step programs work. We as humans need one another to spiritually & emotionally feed, nurture and stimulate us. We are as one, every man woman and child on this earth is our brother & sister.

Ya, ya, ya but where is the wisdom in this well-founded theory that we are all one? The wisdom is we can open our minds to channel-in the direction which we should go to find which humans we should spend time with and which ones we really should decline from seeing this includes our soul's eternal-mate. Time & chance figure into many aspects of our reality, don't believe them for a minute when they echo in your ears "THERE ARE NO COINCIDENCES." Really? So if every little thing that happens on the face of this big earth is planned out by the creator all is "providence" and there is not one chance or happenstance instance then we are all robots

anyway so we may as well hang up our hats and go to sleep in the back seat of the car...and stay asleep. No, as the great & wise "Preacher" King Solomon said in Ecclesiastes: "Time & chance play a part in everything!"

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

The kinds of people to avoid are the negative, soul sucking emotional vampires that will never be filled no matter how many victims they suck into their lair. But really these are just sick people, the complainers, the antagonizers, the creators of Kayos! Those that will stab us in the back as soon as we get half-way turned around. These are the ones that although they are a great distraction from our own pain we will have to detox from them once we break away from them.

We may feel an emotional hangover because of the way that they draw out our own lower, more negative nature. This is not a blame tactic, we are always responsible for our own actions including choosing our company. In simple English they tempt us to act out in some character defect...usually gossip so we have to work harder when we are around them to keep our side of the street clean.

BUT WAIT! Let's talk about these more Loving less fearful people that seldom engage in kayos and the manufacturing of misery. When we spend time with these people they encourage us. We open up to them because we feel comfortable talking to them, they don't seek to find the wrong in everything we share. We share our worries and they are understanding and quick to remind us that we are good people. "Encouragement" is not a four letter word even if it seems that way in certain cultures. When we walk away from these people we feel

strengthened, we feel validated, we ask ourselves when we don't see these people more often. As providence has it I believe God puts certain people in our lives so we have half a chance to survive. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PERSON IN YOUR LIFE LIKE THIS THEN IT'S TIME TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND GO TO A MEETING.

This Too Shall Pass

Things get difficult sometimes. After we have been sober for a few years we no longer feed on Kayos. We no longer need catastrophes, disasters, and general negative distractions as a solution to our inner pain. When we work the steps honestly and thoroughly we release the guilt & shame that tortures our emotional condition. When we work step twelve we learn to communicate in a respectful way with others. We don't have to keep waiting for the other shoe to drop. We have learned to love peace

Long story short at two years sober if we have done the work we will prefer peace of mind and the peace of God over problems and upset. And in our new sober life we live & work to get the things we need to be comfortable. Unfortunately sometimes disaster occurs even though we are doing all the right things. Uncomfortable things happen and it strikes fear in our hearts.

Stuff is beyond our control. Life happens, life on life's terms is hard at times. During difficult time we can usually say "this too shall pass" knowing that negative life changing events are only temporary.

Faith is easier said than done. Building faith is not easy. We tell ourselves that God has our back and this disaster will work out for the better. We hope that somehow our disaster will make life easier in the long run. We visualize that we will grow emotionally and spiritually from our struggles.

We band together with our loved one's when disaster strikes. Taking our stress out on those closest to us must be a thing of the past. We show understanding and empathy toward our loved ones during their trouble instead of attacking each other. We grant our partners grace and forgive them if they do project their problems onto us as if we were the cause of their plight. We must not be driven by fear! We are there for one another and if we stick together disaster strengthens our bonds.