

A.A. is our

MAINSTAY

Stay with us

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Douglas here sets down a few thoughts which may be of benefit to slippees and all AA's who would avoid being slippees -

Which is the most important step? This is a question often asked and as often implied by statements that one or another step is the most important. This to my mind is merely idle conjecture. Out of twelve essential items, how can one be classed more important than the others when it is known that the omission of any one will nullify the rest. However, when the time element is considered in relation to any person, it will soon be realised that at a particular time, at a certain stage in an AA's development, some step does seem more important than the others. This may be because the AA is presently worried by that step or has received relief and enlightenment because of it.

It seems to me that, at all times, the great essential for all AA's is the honest desire to stop drinking. In the little paragraph on the back page the only requirement for membership is given as 'an honest desire to stop drinking'. Though to my mind, this is definitely implicit in the first three steps, it is not specifically stated because it is a prerequisite to all of the steps all of the time. This honest desire to stop drinking develops the motivating force leading to the practising of the Twelve Steps. The programme of self-honesty and the deepening faith in spiritual power produce emotional maturity carrying with it a serenity and contentment never before envisaged. Now, this happy state is not arrived at overnight. To achieve it is simple but not easy and to maintain it requires a continuity of practice of all the steps, with the implicit, ever-present 'desire to be quit of drinking'.

It seems to me that the early AA who slips obviously has not directed his life in the way set down from AA experience, and I seem to sense that the missing element is the honest desire to stop drinking and the consequent admission of defeat. The AA of longer standing who slips seems, at first, to be a different problem, but I say no. He, also, lacks the honest desire to stop drinking. And I do not believe that his slip was the result of a momentary temptation or mental aberration in the full flush of practising the programme. Oh, no! His slip comes of a slow reversal of his thought processes: he has got to get off the steps to slide; to allow the insidious rationalisation to creep back; to tell himself, as he so often did in the past, that he can handle liquor now. He has lost the honest desire to stop drinking.

It is inconceivable to me that the AA honestly practising the programme can slip at all, and it is my belief that, for the drunk with an honest desire to stop drinking, the AA recovery programme is infallible. This is true even of one who has lost all faith in everything. He has the wish to stop drinking but not the power and is hopeless. But AA offers HOPE. He can profess himself atheist, agnostic, what you will - he is faithless - but if, with an open mind, he applies to his own life the suggestions of AA experience, FAITH will come because the POWER is always there.

Now, in order to maintain that Faith and consciousness of the Power, the last three suggestions of the AA experience become of prime importance. Under AA

guidance, life is viewed on a twenty-four hour basis. Alright then, the first step in our personal cleaning out and straightening up process must be repeated daily and only after this honest and fearless personal inventory, this private confessional, are we in a position to gain further help from the Power through prayer and meditation.

We must always remember this - Man has the choice between Right and Wrong. If he choose Right, and earnestly directs all his being and self that way, the Power is there to surpass temptation and evil influence and to smooth tumult to serenity. If his choice is to Wrong, the Power will not avail, as it will not override Man's right of choice. Bear in mind the wording "Made a decision -". The choice is yours, but it must have the full power of your SELF behind it, with no reservations - its making must not be clouded by suggestions that it is on behalf of wife, husband, family, job - it must come deeply and solidly of SELF. It must be always I; I; I. 'I want to stop drinking' not 'My wife wants me to stop'. Imagine the weakness of a decision based on the latter, the breeding of self-pity and resentment, the slipping away from the programme and - BINGE!! Oh, no! This shouldn't happen. The great wish is to be able to say "I'm not drinking because I don't want to". The Power that brings this about is not mine, but the decision to be aligned with that Power is my own.

We in AA profess to believe several things: first - alcoholism is a disease; secondly - it is progressive; and thirdly - it cannot be cured. Practically every one of us has heard Ian say "I AM an alcoholic" not "I was". He maintains his honest desire to stop drinking bearing in mind the incurability of his disease. There is a too prevalent idea about that Ian, Scotty, George B., and others are men apart who have some strange power and cannot slip, with the implication that it is alright for lesser AA's to do so. This I know causes Ian some unease because it is not so. Theirs is the same Power that is available to all. They don't slip simply because they maintain their 'honest desire to stop drinking', they continue their decision to turn their will and their lives over to the care of the Higher Power, they continue to take personal inventory, they continue trying to improve their conscious contact with the Higher Power and they continue trying to carry the message of their recovery to others. It seems to me that the AA who slips has broken this continuity of practice and his mental attitude and reasoning has reverted towards his previous state, his decision to align himself with the Higher Power is gone and his 'honest desire to stop drinking' is gone. The result is obvious. As I said before, the Higher Power will not interfere with Man's free choice between Right and Wrong.

For any AA who slips or for the recent drunk struggling to find sobriety, let him search his mind to find out if he has really convinced himself that he wants to stop drinking without reservations - to gauge the quality and strength of this desire. For it is the motivating force that determines the assiduity with which he applies the AA experience - that infallible path to contact with the Power which alone can bring the alcoholic to that state he wants - to not want to drink.

Douglas.

AN ALCOHOLICS PRAYER.

Grant me, O Lord, this day free from alcohol;
Make me one who will be strong enough to know when he is weak;
And brave enough to face himself when he is afraid;
One who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat,
And humble and gentle in victory.
Make me one whose wishbone is not where his backbone should be;
One who realises that to know himself is the foundation of all true knowledge;
Lead me not in the faith of ease and comfort,
But under the stress of difficulties and challenge;
There let me learn to stand up in the storm;
There let me taste compassion for any who fail;
Make me one whose heart is clean, whose goal is high;
One who strives to master himself ere he presumes to guide another;
Who has learned how to laugh, yet never forgets how to weep.
Give me humility that I may always remember the simplicity of true greatness;
The open mind of true wisdom; the meekness of true strength.
Then I shall dare whisper "I have not lived this day in vain".

via The Lifeline.

STEPS FOUR AND ELEVEN.

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves".

Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker, a psychiatrist, in his book "The Will to Live" says: "We must learn to understand and respect the elementary forces within us if we wish to understand what makes illness. Love, hate, fear, guilt, pride, vengeance are the values by which we are moved". Cicero said: "There is something so penetrating in the shaft of envy that even men of wisdom and worth find its wound a painful one".

If we have the instinct to live foremost in our minds then our emotions fill us with dynamic power to deal successfully with the problems of living, but if the instinct to die is foremost - if we have lost our interest in life - then our emotions block our intelligence, paralyse our will and hypnotise our consciousness.

The need for a way out, for escape, sacrifice or self-punishment, drives us to single out some organ of our body to destroy us by illness. According to our emotional standard of values, we make the choice for a determined suicide or a half-hearted one, or for merely a gesture. The emotions have their own compelling logical results. If we lose our interest in life or reality the high command of the destructive instinct in us determines a sickness which will destroy us. It seems as though the alcoholic, in his endeavour to escape, has chosen the brain as the organ to destroy him. The drinking alcoholic, when comparatively sober, cannot bear his own thoughts; hence a life of fantasy or oblivion.

The making of a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, therefore, becomes very important to us as a housecleaning process. We must change our whole habit of thinking. For 25 to 30 years we have indulged in 'Stinking Thinking' with its consequential and detrimental emotional results. We cannot change this process in two minutes, two days, two weeks, two months, or even two years in some cases. Hence it is essential that we work daily on our moral inventory and "continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it". This necessitates constant vigilance and action in the control of our thoughts.

Scotty, Central Group, Auckland.

MY+DAILY MORAL INVENTORY.

OBJECT: - To cultivate the Will to Live, the Will to Create -
not to destroy.

Liabilities.

(Destructive - tending to Nervous
Tension and Confused Thoughts)

Suppress -

Self pity
Self justification
Self importance
Self condemnation
Dishonesty
Impatience
Hate
Resentment
False pride
Jealousy & Envy
Selfishness
Laziness
Procrastination
Insincerity
Negative Thinking
Vulgar, Immoral, Trashy Thinking
Suspicion
Criticising
Intolerance
Fear
Lying

Eliminate the Negative:

Morbid about Yesterday
Worrying about Tomorrow

Assets.

(Creative - tending to Tranquility
and Serenity)

Create -

Self-forgetfulness
Humility
Modesty
Self Valuation
Honesty
Patience
Love
Forgiveness
Simplicity
Good Wishes
Generosity
Activity
Promptness
Straightforwardness
Positive Thinking
High-minded, Spiritual, Clean Thinking
Trust
Look for the good
Tolerance
Faith
Truth.

Accentuate the Positive:

Action Today
Creating Today for use Tomorrow.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in

The Twelve Steps

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE A.A. 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