



Newsletter

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S A N D H I L L S I N T E R G R O U P

The **CHANGE** Issue



NOTHING LASTS FOREVER
THE STEPS TO HOPE — THE LAST TIME
HONEST, OPEN-MINDED AND WILLING

Nothing Lasts Forever

And this too will come to an end

For my things are being packed and stored away
For me to unpack them on another day

It is a difficult decision for me to choose
But, if I stay I might drink the booze

It is a life lesson learned on my part
As I dug through the pieces why I fell apart
For God has opened forgiveness in my heart

For people who don't understand what I have been through
I just asked God and he gave me the cue

I do not hang on to resentments for they bring me to a dark place
I do not want to live with disgrace

My broken heart will heal stronger than ever
All the life's ups and downs I will endeavor

For God wants me to be the person you see
To be happy, have joy and to be free

The toxic person whom I choose to leave behind
One day I pray that he will be kind



As I heal from this experience in my life
I accept that I will no longer be his wife

With the strength of God, myself and AA
I know I will be ok

By working these 12 steps thru and thru
My heart will mend together as good as new

As I continue to work on myself to be the best person I can be
For some of my defects will be lifted from me

As I continue my journey in sobriety and a healthier way of living
I will return the gift of giving

Thanks for letting me share this poem with you
For to get it out I am no longer blue

— Colleen G.



The Steps to Hope

It begins in a darkness where even hope does not exist. It must be brought in by another. Carried in like a distant lantern through an impenetrable wood. Tiny almost imperceptible flashes of light moving erratically through a tangle of black obstruction. Very slowly it grows closer, larger, and brighter until it emerges vivid and distinct. It is hope, a possibility of some change toward something better, and it is here now only because someone has brought it.

I am told to examine it. As I do so, I begin to see, there is a way to go, there is a way out. But first I must know and I must be sure of what it is. With Step One I must admit I am powerless and that my life has become unmanageable. I must do this to get my life back. I realize I have tried before and have failed and that I cannot do this alone. I need help.

Steps Two and Three tell me I need a relationship with a power greater than myself. Some of us call this God, some of us call it a better idea, and some a higher standard for living than the one I have been using. Regardless of what I call It, it will walk beside me through the rest of my life to give me guidance when I seek it and strength when I need it. It will help me and it will immediately become relevant.

Steps Four and Five require that I dig up all the bones of my past and display them in the open for me to see that they are real and I must share them with another person so that burying them again will be to no avail. And then that higher power makes me be to no avail. And then that higher power makes me recognize my shame and seek forgiveness for my past.

The Bible tells me that I can be forgiven if I do two things. First, show true remorse, and second, never repeat the act. Steps Six and Seven help to relieve me of the shortcomings that inspired my bad behavior. Once those defects of character are identified and redressed I will be ready to consider how and when to make amends for the damage done. In the mean time, I need only remain focused on moving forward by not slipping back into my old behaviors.

When I am ready, Steps Eight and Nine require I repair the damage my behaviors have brought about. To accomplish this I must go beyond apologies and foot the bills however necessary to the satisfactions of both myself and the injured parties. Only then can I truly put that part of my past behind me and then step firmly into the present.

From that vantage point I must keep constant vigilance for the return of my short comings and when detected immediately and firmly redress them. This is Step Ten which must be worked not only on a daily basis but moment to moment when possible. Staying in the moment is its reward not its painful chore. With this practiced religiously I will become suitably fit to begin an honest relationship with my higher power.

Through prayer and meditation. A communion with God. Opening a channel to my higher power. Developing a relationship with that power greater than myself. Finding the knowledge of his will for me. Receiving the strength to carry that out. Step Eleven is Receiving the strength to carry that out. Step Eleven is a partnership of divine proportion. We walk together.

In Step Twelve all I need do is carry a ray of hope to another alcoholic. Just a spark in the black emptiness of his despair will lift his eyes. His heart will leap knowing he is not alone. He will know he has a chance. He need only believe and become willing to try. He can find peace. But first I must deliver to him the hope that will get him started upon his path. I will begin by telling him my story.

Michael L.



Hope
CHANGES EVERYTHING

The Last Time

One Friday in mid January I came home from work and my girlfriend wasn't home. I had had a great day. We had made great progress on a really difficult project at work. It was a sunny day and I decided to have a drink and relax until my girlfriend and her son got home. I fixed the drink and went outside to enjoy the end of the day.

Before long I was on my third drink and my day was lousy. The job was a pit I never got credit for the work I did. My girlfriend's son was always wrecking my stuff; and where was my girlfriend anyway.

Suddenly I realized that I didn't have the TV or the radio on, no one was home. I had been having a great day when I got home. The only thing that had changed was I had a couple of drinks.

I dumped the last of the drink down the drain and went for a drive to think this through. I realized that I was drinking because my dad drank and he was always the winner. It was my turn to be the winner. I WAS DRINKING FOR THE WRONG REASONS.

I went home and dumped all of the liquor in the house down the drain. I had heard about the DTs but had no idea what I was in for. I was really tired so I went into the bedroom to take a nap. I didn't come out for four days. I cried hard most of the time. I called my boss and told him I quit. I just couldn't take it anymore. He asked, "take what?" I told him, "any of it." He suggested that I use some of my vacation.

The following Friday was payday so I went to the plant to get my check. I took it to the bank to cash it. I waited in the drive up line for my turn. When I got to the window I started crying. I was so embarrassed that I drove through without cashing the check. I got back in line and gave it another try.

Monday I returned to work. Nobody said a word about my absence. For the next couple of weeks I went from one project to another. At each one I evaluated the opportunity to commit suicide by industrial accident. I figured that way I would get out of my life, my kids would get the workman's comp and no one would know what a coward I was.

One morning I was summoned to the front office. I was told to give Hank (the county sheriff) a call. Hank and I occasionally went fishing or hunting together, but he never called me at work. I gave him a call and he asked if I could come out and talk with him after work. I asked if I needed a lawyer. His answer was, "I don't know John do you NEED a lawyer?"

I made a list of all of the things they might have found out about. When I got there they had a list that was longer than mine. I denied everything, one thing at a time. They let me go! Shoot I didn't believe my lies there

is no way they believed them. I was going to go to jail for a long time. My Dad had spent time in the pen and had told me stories about it. I couldn't do it. So... I stopped by a friend's house and scored some seconal pills. My plan was to finish my project the next day at work and stop by the liquor store on the way home. I would take all of the sleeping pills with some whiskey then go to sleep and just never wake up.

When I got home the house was empty. I went into my bathroom and made a pile of the pills. I poured the whiskey in a glass. All I had to do was wash the pills down with the booze. I COULDN'T DO IT. I didn't have the nerve! I didn't really want to die. I just wanted things to change. In desperation I got down on my knees and prayed. I didn't ask God to get me out of this. I just asked for his help. I promised to do whatever he wanted if he would just show me how. I meant it! If what he wanted was for me to carry his word into the prisons then I would. I just wanted to change things.



After the prayer I was overwhelmed with fatigue. I curled up on the bed where I had planned on dying and fell to sleep. I only slept for about a quarter of an hour but woke feeling refreshed like I had slept a whole night. I knew what I needed to do. I called the Sheriff and told them I wanted to turn myself in. Hank asked "for what?" I told him we had talked for several hours last night I was sure he could find something. He told me "John, this is Hank talking not the sheriff, we have nothing. If you just keep quiet this will all go away. I told him I couldn't do that and if he would let me come in I would give him what he needed to charge me.

This is how I did my first 5th step with a Sheriff. Not recommended in the Big Book. They locked me up. It was a holiday weekend so I did not get to see a judge till Monday. I was released on personal recognizance till trial; on the condition that I do nothing illegal and that I attend counseling.

When I got to my house I found that my girlfriend and her son had moved out of the house while I was in jail. I found a counselor and he said he needed for me to be sober. If he was going to help me. He suggested AA. I told him I didn't need AA I wasn't an alcoholic. I had a six pack in the fridge and had not even been tempted. He asked, "have you ever gone to an AA meeting?" I answered, "no." He said "You go to two meeting a week for 6 weeks then we can make a decision as to whether or not you are getting anything out of it." I agreed

and went home. I made a list of the meeting times in my city. I immediately noticed the conflict. AA meetings were right when the reruns of Gilligan's island or Lavern and Shirley were showing. I didn't see how I was going to make this work.

When Friday came I realized that to stay true to my word, I was going to have to go to a meeting both Friday and Saturday. I got home from work and did not even turn the TV on. I was waiting for the meeting time when my phone rang. It was one of my friends. He asked what I was doing that night. Without hesitation I answered, "nothing. What have you got in mind?"

His reply was, "I have to go to an AA meeting. You want to go with me?" It seemed like God was conspiring against me. I declined his offer to ride together. I told him I would meet him there. I immediately went to a friend's house and got three joints and went to my first AA meeting stoned. Everyone who spoke that night told a part of my story... I thought my friend had set me up. Then I heard a young girl tell a part of my story that I had never told anyone. I realized I had found a place I belonged.

I went home that night and smoked another half of a joint. I went to a speakers meeting the next day, stoned again. I didn't understand why no one wanted to sit near me (I must have reeked of pot).

When I got up Sunday morning I had half of a joint left. As soon as I was up and dressed I put the thing in my mouth to light it up. I lit the lighter and before I could put the flame to the roach the doorbell rang. I pictured the sheriff on my door step. I had promised to do nothing illegal and here I was going back the what I always did.

I threw the roach in the junk drawer and shuffled the content (cops would never find that). On my way to the door I opened as many windows as I could to air the place out.

It was one of my ex's friends. I told him "Joe, Janie doesn't live here anymore". He said that he knew. He had bumped into her downtown and she had told him the whole story. He said he didn't know me well but figured I would be lonely and need a friend.

Joe said, "The minute you said you were sorry God forgave you." I figured Sunday morning, God forgave me, either Jehovah's Witness or Mormon. He was right I was lonely. I invited him in anyway.

We talked for about an hour then Joe said he had to leave. I thanked him for coming and asked him which church he was with, (I still had not figured it out). He said he wasn't with a church. He just figured I might need a friend.

I answered "Yah, but what church do you go to?"

"I am not a church person," he replied.

I said, "Yah, but when you go to church which church do you go to?"

He sighed and said "Presbyterian or Methodist depending on which in-laws are visiting. Look John I don't often go to church. Nobody sent me. I just think you are alright and might need a friend." I watched his back as he walked down the side walk to his car.

He could have answered he was Bahai and it all would have been a coincidence. But the fact that he was not involved with any religion, and that I had the joint in my mouth when the doorbell rang. To me it was God slapping my face. He was saying, "you said you would do anything."

I went back into the house and found that roach in the junk drawer. I ran it through the garbage disposal. I wish I could tell you that all my troubles were over but they were not. I needed to learn how to live Sober. I was afraid that life was going to be boring without the booze. Was I in for a surprise!

— John R.



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Barry P., colored pencil on paper, 1985

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Honest, Open-minded and Willing

It is an age-old axiom in the AA program that these qualities are crucial in sustaining continued sobriety. Yet, how does one transform from dishonesty, close-mindedness and refusal to act easily? Transition and transformations don't generally appear to occur overnight. Founder Bill W. reported an immediate and God-given transformation as the onset of his sobriety. Yet for most, this transition is of "the educational variety."

Such was the case for me. There was no lightning bolt experience. There was no burning bush descending to eye level from the sky. Charlton Heston did not descend from the mountain top with twelve Roman numerals on a stone tablet.

Honesty (to a fair degree) did it not come easily to me. I had long since made the determination that lying would only be necessary when the truth would have served me much better. If my lips were moving, there was many times a manipulative bent to the words that were spoken.

It was a great comfort to learn that the word "honest" was removed from the 12 traditions concerning the requirement for membership. This was done because it was deemed unrealistic to presume that newly recovering alcoholics were incapable of instantaneously becoming honest. One of my favorite little adages heard at meetings is this: "To be perfectly honest, I'm not perfectly honest." When a member dotes on with a soliloquy about his or her inordinate level of honesty, then Shakespeare comes to mind. "Methinks thou protesteth too much."

Open-mindedness is a quality which does not come easily to me. The sentence in the big book concerning "being the director of the play" readily comes to mind. It literally took a good bit of time to recognize that there were, and are, rational reasons to disagree with my opinion. I have come to understand that members would cling to the patterns of activity which have held them in good stead. What I "know" is quite simply what I was taught. None of the actions and concepts taught were self-originated. Hence, there are many ways to "skin the

cat." It is far easier to be happy and content with what works for people than to grouse about different courses of action. After all, if I am comfortable with my own actions and concepts; there is no reason to be affronted by the nuances of others, "live and let live."

Willingness is impossible to impart yet the easiest thing to spot. If I want to see my own level of willingness, I simply look at what is actually being done. As an active drunk, I was always "gonna do" or "thinking about." One of the most frequently asked questions by Old Timers has been, "What are you willing to do?" I always wanted to ask, "Well, what do you think?" They already knew the answer to that question due to the fact that I was begging for relief in the first place.

Of course the stock and trade answer to the above query was always the same. "I'll do anything!" I replied. As one Old Timer wisely observed, "Brent, has the definition of the word anything changed lately?"

Each of us certainly has a perspective on which of these three traits has played the most important role in our sobriety. My personal experience was that willingness was the one of the greatest importance. It was possible to improve my level of honesty over time. One day open-mindedness might even become a dominant trait. However, staying on the rocky road of not asking God for help, nor following suggestions did not work out too well for me.

— Brent G.



“Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remember how far you have come. Remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won, and all the fears you have overcome.”

— unknown

News

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SE Regional Forum- November 16-18, 2018
Sterling, Virginia

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The Sandhills Intergroup is a central office established to aid groups and meetings in Moore County carry the AA message to alcoholics who still suffer.

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JOIN Intergroup! We meet the first Saturday of each month at 9:00 am in the Wilder Building. *All AA'ers welcome!*

Visit our website to listen to speakers from meetings in Moore County, more added weekly!

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Questions or comments email us at:

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Area 51 | District 52

Area 51 represents North Carolina.

District 52 comprises Moore, Hoke, Richmond, Lee and Scotland counties.

www.AANC52.org

District 52 business meeting schedule:

October 7, 2018 - 2-4pm 504 Wilder Ave, Aberdeen

December 2, 2018 - 2-4pm 504 Wilder Ave, Aberdeen

February 3, 2019 - 2-4pm 504 Wilder Ave, Aberdeen

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