

Better

By Anonymous

I had my first introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous when I was about twelve years old when my grandparents took me there for special events. My second encounter was in 1986. I was in the County Jail on charges for Assault and Battery on a Law Enforcement Officer. I was working for three attorneys at the time and had to call them and ask them to bail me out, which they did. I ended up doing some time on probation and hated every minute of it, but I was compliant and did what I had to do. I had to get that behind me so I could resume my drinking. After another short stint in the County Jail, I learned what not to do to stay out of the legal system. After several relapses and trips to Detox and the Psych Unit, I attempted to get sober again. I would last a year, or even three, but I always ended up drinking again. I thought I could handle it still.

The idea of living without drinking was incomprehensible. Drinking was never optional. The blackouts continued. The erratic and compulsive behaviors continued. I lost my family, friends, dog, home, job, vehicle, my judgment, self-respect, and most of my mind. During my last relapse ten years ago, I fell hard and ended up in a 12-hour blackout in the Emergency Room with a toxic level of alcohol in my blood. My son found me on the porch and called 911 thinking I was dead. That was my last experiment with alcohol. There was a law enforcement officer there, whom I later called to thank. After some inquiry, I learned that he smoked cigars. I wanted to go buy him one for being there to care about a drunk like me.

Soon after, I once again reluctantly went back to those 'damned old meetings.' A significant part of my recovery has been my first-born child, a son. When he was two-and-a-half years old, he had a febrile grand mal seizure in my arms on the way to the hospital. He underwent two brain surgeries. Thirteen years later, he has not had a seizure since. This same child also survived two major automobile accidents, one in which his nose went through the windshield while I was driving. My parents had to take him and raise him for years (after they had already raised their own five children and were looking forward to spending time together) at a time when I was too sick, too sorry, and unable to do so. If it were not for them, he would not be the man he is today. Despite the incredible challenges my son has faced and overcome, he is attending college and preparing for a career in Graphic Design. Upon graduation, he is planning to relocate to Savannah, Georgia.

My family also has forgiven me and welcomed me back into the fold and I was able to make peace with my dad before he passed away in May of last year. I am honoring him this day by having the courage to begin to tell my story. My recovery story is never complete without mentioning my PopPop. My grandmother told me he used to walk the floor with a bottle in his hand and cry because he could not quit drinking. He passed away with 33 years of sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous. And he was one of two men who brought AA into the Philadelphia prisons. After I sobered up after his funeral, I felt so bad and knew that he would have been disappointed with me. He would have told me to keep on going, to never give up the desire to be sober.

I know now, I can never make up for the past. I have a sponsor. I go to those 'damned old meetings' even when I don't feel like it. I go to my doctor's appointments—for both medical and mental health. I take my medicine. I work on following my program to the best of my ability. I am willing to do whatever is necessary to maintain what I have been so freely given. I once heard a practicing alcoholic say that people that go to 'those meetings' are a bunch of losers. I thought, "Yeah, we are a bunch of losers. We have lost the bondage of alcohol." I have a wonderful life today. I have my freedom and some stability. I live on five acres of land which I share with the deer, red fox, and other magnificent creatures and have been there for almost five years now. I have a garden which is my therapy and provides me with a lot of personal satisfaction. I am no longer full of fear and anxiety. I have some peace of mind today. I have good relationships with my family and friends and I have gained the admiration and respect of those professionals who have helped me so much along my way. I can give love and receive it.

The process of recovery has been long and sometimes very difficult and painful. I have deep gratitude for those dedicated souls who work with suffering alcoholics and addicts like me. Without their help, I really don't think I would have made it. Recovery is about meaningful relationships, satisfying work, good health, good spirits, and play. I have them all. I could not begin to have a better life until I got sober and I could not stay sober without building a better life. It takes time, patience, and hard work. It is possible, but it's a process and it's a miracle.

I Was Strong

By Collin Tully

I thought I was strong.
I thought I would be able tell someone they were going to die.
I thought I could provide relief.
I thought I was strong.
I told a mother she had cancer.
I told her there was nothing we could do surgically.
I thought I was strong.
I told her the reaction was normal.
I told her we were here to help.
I thought I was strong.
I was the only person to see her until the next day.
I was asked if it could be anything else.
I told her again.
Everything is pointing to cancer.
Everything she was feeling was normal.
I thought I was strong.
I was asked what I would do.
I had dreamed about these discussions.
I thought I could help more than others.
I thought I was strong.
I told her this can be a difficult thing, a difficult time.
She said it was.
She told me, it must be difficult for you too.
She said she saw it in my eyes the day before.
I thought I was strong.
She appreciated my lack of strength.

Away

By Eric Heppner

Float me away
For far southern shores
Dressed in white cotton
On a boat without oars
Bear me away
To where it never grows cold
To the air that is balmy
And the wind that is bold
Let's go away
To where the high heat is soothing
Where the dry sand conforms
And the palm fronds are moving
Stay away, far away
With the sound of the waves
Away from the noises
To calm lulling lathes
Slip away, slip away
Without a thought in the mind
To that place far away
Where living is kind

Angie Elkins M.T.

