



▲ The Next Frontier—Emotional Sobriety

A Glimmer of What Adult Love Really Is - *By Bill W., January 1958*

Below you will find the substance of a revealing letter which Bill wrote several years ago to a close friend who also had troublesome depressions. Bill asks us to note that this letter should occasion no concern as both Bill and his friend are today "in the clear" - Ed.

I think that many oldsters who have put our Alcoholics Anonymous "booze cure" to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance, urges quite appropriate to age seventeen, prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven and fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I've taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover, finally, that all along I have had the cart before the horse. Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong I have been, but still finding myself unable to get off the emotional merry go-

A.A. History

January 26, 1971
Bill W.'s obituary on front page of The New York Times

"just another guy named Bill who can't handle booze"



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round.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy and good living? Well, that's not only the neurotic's problem, it's the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all of our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious, from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream, be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden "Mr. Hyde" becomes our main task.

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones, folks like you and me, commencing to get results. Last autumn, depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief that I've had with depressions, it wasn't a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself "Why can't the 12 Steps work to release depression?" By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer... "it's better to comfort than to be comforted." Here was the formula, all right, but why didn't it work?

Suddenly, I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence, almost absolute dependence, on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed upon any act of circumstance whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis did. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself to God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victim-

ized by false dependencies.

For my dependence meant demand—a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words "absolute dependence" may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can't flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependence and its consequent demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love: we may then be able to gain emotional sobriety.

Of course, I haven't offered you a really new idea --- only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own hexes at depth. Nowadays, my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine."

▲ Desperation Is a Great Motivator

Sincerity Is a Great Healer, By Rick R.

Recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous affects people in many ways. The first and most obvious is their ability to abstain from the use of alcohol, for without that there can be no recovery. Next is the willingness to abandon the idea that they can do this on their own and to seek the help of something outside of their own failed way of thinking. Third is the act of surrendering and "buying into" the program completely (so to speak).

At this point, the recovery process may differ, depending on your age, your gender, your economic situation, your marital status, your legal woes, and other side issues.

It is not our role to judge anyone who comes to AA seeking help, nor is it our job to bail them out of their current situation out of sympathy. That does not mean that we cannot buy a meal for a hungry soul or give them a few bucks for gas.

We are recovering alcoholics. Our role is to listen and to try to understand what they need from us consistent with the

principles we have learned and to relate our experiences with them.

The average long-term alcoholic, who has not experienced the lifestyle of drug culture, may have a difficult time identifying with dual-addicted newer arrivals. Recovered addicts usually share about their Rip Off mentality as a user, while the average common variety alcoholic talks about the guilt and shame and the need to pay bar-tab. Many members arrive in the middle, or on the cusp, of the threat of a divorce, and without experienced feed-back, make bad decisions where, in some cases, they could have salvaged their marriage and saved the children the damage caused by divorce.

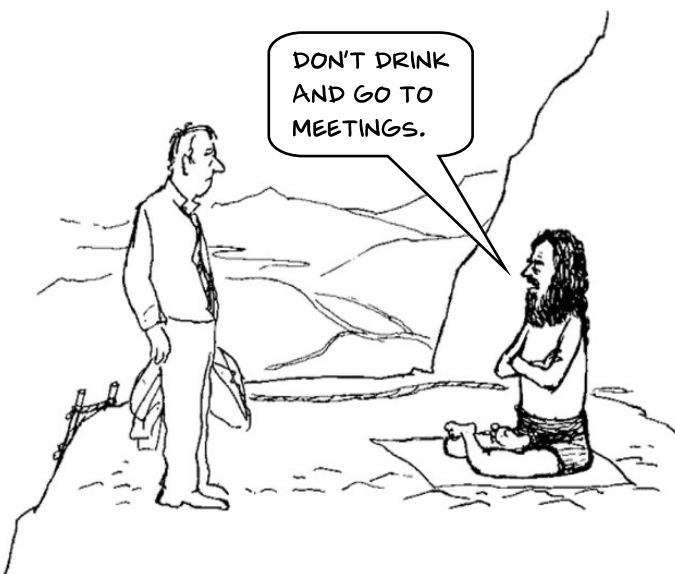
My main question when greeting a newcomer at a meeting is usually "What brings you to AA?" Usually, their response comes in the form of a complaint about the situation they are in: divorce papers, DUI, fired from job etc. My next question is, "If that hadn't happened, would you be here today?" Their response is usually, "Probably not."

Then I explain that my first wife could have filed for divorce ten times before she became desperate enough to do it. And, had she not, I would still be out there circling the drain, or worse. For two years, I tried to convince her to take me back, but it did not happen.

Desperation brought me to the door of AA where I began the life I live today. This type of perspective usually get the attention of newcomers, and they often turn out to be more accepting of the need to change.

Next, I share the experience that worked or me. It may come in a sincere statement such as, "I know that I am an

▲ Rule 62



alcoholic, and I believe that I've found the solution to my drinking problem. I have been wrong about what a husband/father's responsibilities are, and I have learned much from the mistakes I have made. You have suffered from all of this, and I intend to do my best to make it right. Whatever the outcome is, I want to minimize the trauma to the children as we move forward."

This type of sincerity sometimes takes the pressure off and gives her some breathing room, and in some cases, opens the door to salvaging the marriage. My question is: Can you live up to these proposed actions?

Another area where sincerity and ownership of past mistakes have an unexpected outcome is in the courtroom. Judges have heard every flimsy excuse in the world. They see right through all the BS of con artists and are not fooled.

Believe me when I say that I have witnessed more than my share of these two approaches to resolving the damages of alcoholic behavior. The sincere approach far outweighs the con job most of the time. You cannot fake sincerity.

▲ Advisory Committee Meeting

We need you at our next Advisory Committee Meeting:

Wednesday, January 26 at 7:00 PM on Zoom

Meeting ID: 967 1266 5882

Passcode: 844449

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to review the policies of the Cleveland District Office. This is your office, please support us. Please elect an Advisory Committee Representative from your Group at a Group conscience meeting to attend the Advisory Committee Meetings.

▲ Quote

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"If you want what you've never had, you must do what you've never done."

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For details or to add an event, call us at (216) 241-7387 or go online aacle.org/events. Deadline is the 15th of each month for next issue.