

## ▲ A Disease of Perception

When My Desperation Outweighed My Denial - *By Rick R.*

Alcoholism is often referred to as a disease of perception. And, oh, how I find that statement to be true!

Like most Alcoholics, early in my drinking days, I did not have a problem. I was single and had no one to answer to, and it was perfectly normal to go directly from work to the barroom and spend the evening pouring alcohol down my throat.

It was fun, and I did a lot of foolish things in those days. As my tolerance for alcohol grew, I developed a pattern of drinking where I could

open a bar at 6:00 a.m. and close it at 2:00 a.m. You could not tell that I had been drinking unless you smelled the alcohol on my breath. I reached the pinnacle, but that lasted only for a while.

Next, I developed a pattern of forgetting what happened the night before (blackout drinking) and when people started telling me about things I did during blackouts, it was not flattering. Normal drinkers do not have those kinds of experiences.

Then came the DUIs, the nights in jail, the wrecked cars, the broken



## March Fund Drive

Why Give?

We're a self-supporting non-profit that depends entirely on donations to keep the doors open. Without you, we would be unable to provide the services that are so vital to the suffering alcoholic and recovering AA community.

If Alcoholics Anonymous has helped you, please consider making a donation of \$5, \$20, \$50 or whatever you can to protect and sustain the A.A. Cleveland District Office.

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MARCH

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Help the Suffering and Recovering Alcoholic.

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knuckles, marriage, divorce and...I could go on forever.

When I was in the throes of this disease, I was living by the dictates of my ego to bolster my pride. And it was telling me that I did not have a problem. But normal drinkers must not wake each morning to face the "hideous Four Horsemen, Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, and Despair," as the Big Book puts it. (p. 151.)

For me, at that time, alcohol seemed to be the solution to my problems and to abandon it would be more horrifying. My perception was that, if I quit drinking, I would spend the rest of my life waking up in that emotional pit. I did everything in my power to deny my condition.

The progression of the malady varies in each individual due to environmental issues. Some people can drink into their 60s and 70s before they come to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yet as the progression wore on, one by one, I was running out of options. Drinking could no longer mask the deception of it all, and I was backed into the corner of life. What could I do?

On October 15, 1969, my desperation outweighed my denial. I dialed the telephone operator and asked for the number of Alcoholics Anonymous. She gave me the number of a local AA club in a little house about six miles from my apartment. I showed up there to be greeted by three people sitting on a bench in the front yard. Within ten minutes of talking to them, and seeing the compassion and empathy in their eyes, I laid down in the grass, covered my eyes with my forearm and thought to myself, "Thank God, this nightmare is over!" And it was.

Ever since that moment, I have never drunk, nor wanted to drink, alcohol.

I was 28 years old at the time. Most of the members of that group were older than 40. They referred to me as the fortunate one, and I was.

From that moment on, I have done a 180 degree turn in my thinking and embraced the program of AA in its entirety, which has evolved into a life of peace and serenity that I could not have imagined when I showed up on that lawn in 1969. Right now, as I am trying to explain this miracle, I am wiping tears of joy from my eyes just thinking about it. Go figure.

## ▲ The Rite of Writing

In 1986 I was alone for a few days in a cheap hotel in Detroit. I'd been betrayed and was despondent, distrustful, and depressed. Looking through my luggage I realized I'd forgotten to pack, of all things, a toothbrush. No problem, I thought. There was a drugstore on the corner. But upon entering it, I learned that Michigan drugstores double as liquor stores.

I was 1½ years sober but not yet far enough into the last few of the 12 Steps. So, I found myself staring at a wall of old friends and asking myself that too-often fatal question, "Who's to know?" I contemplated drinking for a couple days, sobering up, and not telling anyone about it.

My quit quandary was broken by someone loudly arguing with the pharmacist about refilling a mood-altering drug before the refill date. This brought me back to reality. I grabbed a toothbrush, paid quickly, and got out of there.

A week later I thought Cleveland's Central Bulletin might be interested in this story, so I wrote it up. The editor, Imogene Z., told me she loved it and she published it. In that process, the Central Bulletin became our Central Bulletin, or even my Central Bulletin.

Years later I wrote a couple of articles for the AA Grapevine and got two of the nicest, sweetest letters of rejection that it has been my pleasure to receive. The articles I submitted were on a service topic, and I knew Grapevine articles were mostly about Recovery topics, so I was not too surprised.

My third article was on recovery. It was not only published but was the one article in that issue which the editors chose to have an actor read and to make available as an MP3. And thus, the Grapevine became my Grapevine.

Years later, the publication asked me for another copyright release. I thanked them but said I hadn't sent them an article recently. They replied with the title of the second rejected article and said they wanted to add it to the "web exclusives"—articles published online but not printed. Part of the rejection had said, "We will keep this on file." It was true!

Throughout my service commitments, I've had small parts in many other AA publications. And each one makes me feel a part of it and AA. These are opportunities you should not miss. Not good at spelling or grammar? That's fine. We have great editors. Where might you start? Perhaps start like I did—The Central Bulletin.

By Bob M.

### ▲ Step Three Decision

I think of the first three Steps in AA as: I can't. (Step One). God can! (Step Two). I have decided to ask Him to help me. (Step Three).

I no longer consider that saying the Third Step Prayer was when I decided to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. It is obvious that my decision to do so had to come before.

My decision to ask for God's help was made, according to the Big Book, at the bottom paragraph on page 62: "Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was to be our Director." The asking took place when I prayed the Third Step Prayer on page 63. But my decision was well thought out before asking God for help through that prayer.

### ▲ Rule 62

GEORGE, YOU ONCE TOLD ME YOU WOULD NEVER BE CAUGHT DEAD DRINKING COFFEE OUT OF A HAPPY FACE MUG.



AND I MEANT IT GLORIA.  
THIS IS TEQUILA.

I believe this distinction is important because we are told: "We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him." Time to think well between the decision and the prayer is important.

It would be tempting to haphazardly repeat this watershed prayer, denying the process of its needed substance and weight. Personally, having several months of sobriety before this sequence, I had already made a sincere decision before praying this prayer with a sponsor.

We are told: "The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation." (p. 63) My sponsor had me read each sentence of the prayer separately and use my own words to explain what it meant to me.

When finished, we both prayed the Third Step Prayer verbatim. I was immediately launched into the following Steps and have not had to drink since.

By Bob S.

### ▲ About This Year's Fund Drive

Due to the high amount of group changes caused by the pandemic, we will not be mailing pledge form packets to groups this year. If you want one, please call or stop by the office. You can also print these documents by going to [aacle.org](http://aacle.org) > For Members.

Please announce the Fund Drive at your group throughout the month. And, if you need to extend into April, please do so.

Make a pledge by calling (216) 241-7387 Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or at any time by going to [aacle.org](http://aacle.org) > Donate. Credit and debit cards accepted.

Most importantly, we thank you for your continued support. The Cleveland AA Community has always been most generous over the years.

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Group Newsletter Inside

## March 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 12 Step Workshop
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 Women's Recovery Retreat
27	28 Peace in the Valley 1 <sup>st</sup> Anniversary	29	30	31		

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