



Being true to
OURSELVES

THE DAILY REPRIEVE MARCH/APRIL 2021

Illustration by Rubens LP

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of the Daily Reprieve!

Most of us have received tokens of sobriety in the form of a coin - which starts at 24 hours, 30 days, 2 years or even 30 years - each and every one of those has the inscription which reads 'To Thine Own Self Be True'.

These immortal words were spoken by Polonius in Hamlet, but us here at AA believes that it has an even deeper meaning for our people - because we have to practice a program which demands rigorous honesty, firstly to ourselves and then to others. The reason for this is perfectly stated on page 33 of the Big Book: "We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: 'Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.'"

By living this truth we can finally show up for ourselves, admit our powerlessness, see our own part in uncomfortable situations, make amends and carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Which in turn gives us a life most of us have never dreamed of.

This edition has a great array of articles, poems, humor and personal experiences which highlights how the truth has set (and will keep on setting) us free.

Enjoy the reading, until next time,
The Singapore newsletter team



Sparkles...

In order to speak about being true to myself, I first need to define what "myself" is.

That is what my journey in AA has given me, a developing sense of who I actually am. All of my life I have been a chameleon with no idea who I actually am at the core.

As a child my family moved constantly, up to 4 times a school year. In order to make friends and fit in I became whoever I needed to be in each new location. My mom changed my last name every time she remarried so when we moved we could have the facade of a normal, nuclear family.

When I began to date I transformed according to the wants and needs of my partners. I even went into the theater, completely legitimizing the act of pretending to be someone else! I honestly had no fucking idea who I actually was.

Since I have been in recovery I have been on a journey of self-discovery. I have been honestly identifying my character flaws as well as my strengths. I have been taught that self-esteem

comes from esteemable acts. I have begun to see my body differently - as something that I need to care for, love and nurture (healthy food, no bingeing and purging, gentle exercise, regular showers!), rather than avoid, manipulate and despise. I have begun to keep my living space more clean and tidy because that makes me feel good. I have begun to gravitate towards and attract people who are not toxic. I have developed a recovery routine that includes daily reading and writing, prayer, meditation, meetings, outreach and sponsoring.

Through these simple, consistent acts, I am beginning to uncover who the real me is.

And to my great surprise, I am actually learning to accept and love her. Little by little, I am getting there. And as I learn to love myself, I am able to be so much more present to those around me - family, friends, colleagues, students, fellows, even strangers!

So I guess the best way I can be true to myself is to just keep doing what I'm doing. It's like gently chiseling away at a thick cement covering over a sparkling gem. The more I work this program, the more the sparkles get to shine through.

by Marnie H.

What is the Plan?

Dry my hands on a towel like a priest
Try to serve in a selfless way
Trust a force runs through all living things
Try to listen to what others say

Take a breath, hold it in, sigh away
Try to lighten my head, slow it down
Make a smile to encourage my heart
As my tools of compassion I hone

Loving kindness to me and to you
Smile rising sends joy to my eyes
Resentments they niggle me still
But I try to destroy them with smiles

Be true to myself, what is that?
I don't have a clue who I am
I try to trust god to decide
What's meant for me - what is the plan?

~ Anon

Overcoming Fear Of The Future

How Step Two can restore sanity through faith in action

This new year brings hope that last year's dismal conditions will somehow evaporate; that the world will now become happy, joyous, and free—probably not!

The stage may be set for deep apprehension or even that great sobriety nemesis: FEAR! At the onset of this new year, I may well look ahead and make decisions (resolutions!) with prayer, good common sense, plus the use of my sponsor. However, irrational fear—that great friend of mental-obsession—will doubtless continue its attack mode. What to do?

Page 68 of the Big Book offers suggestions. To paraphrase: First, to realize that I cannot be rid of the powerful fear-devil with my good-keen-intellectual-mind, nor with willpower! Self cannot rid self of self with self—consequently I need help from a power greater than me. But how? The Big Book advises: "We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be." (p. 68) But how can I be as God would have me? How can I be different tomorrow than I am today? The answer is to live in the spirit of Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve. "Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us" (p. 84).

Bob S, Richmond, IN



Newcomer: "I've noticed that all the meetings here serve coffee, but not tea. Why?"

Old-timer: "Alcoholics have a hard time with tea."

Newcomer: "Any kind of tea?"

Old-timer: "Sure. Like ... humility, sanity, honesty, integrity, responsibility, dependability"

Step Three

A Decision and a Prayer

For some years I assumed the decision of turning my will and life over to “God as I understood Him” took place when I prayed the well-known prayer on page 63. But in retrospect, I discovered that my decision had already been made!

The bottom paragraph of page 62 reminded me: “next we decided in this drama of life that God was going to be our director.” The decision was made before the prayer! The Big Book states that the astounding promises on page 63 begin to happen right away (before the prayer).

My sponsor allowed near-zero time between the decision and the prayer. Immediately following Step Two we prayed the Third step prayer together. Those promises began to manifest shortly thereafter and have continued to this day! I especially appreciate the promise of being reborn. This means to me that I can now see and act on the truth in drink. I have not had to drink alcohol since!

I like the saying: “I can’t. God can! I’ll ask Him to help me.” And I would like to add: NOW.

The Third Step decision, followed by a prayer-of-askance, does not provide a comprehensive assurance of continuing sobriety. A decision minus action is only an intention. Half measures availed us nothing.

Someone said: “God will help you with the steps, but He won’t do them for you.” We are told: “This was only a beginning.” Then we are told to launch out on a course of vigorous action. This, of course, would be to follow the clear-cut Twelve Step directions from our basic text. My sponsor was adamant concerning the Big Book timetable, not only with the first three, but as prescribed throughout all the steps. I was so lucky to be afforded a Big Book sponsor.

Thank you, God!
Bob S, Richmond, IN

*Forced into stillness
Fear of self instead reveals
So many colors.*



~ Marnie

Giving Back is the Foundation

My Forgiving, crying, voicing
Is the way to peace of mind
Honouring the pain and anger
Relief emerges you will find

Repressing pain brings sickness, sadness
My buried past depression made
Who buries pain lays hidden landmines
For he forgets where they are laid

I am five and fifty now
This man with wounded child lives
Forgiveness heal ancient wounds
Who heals well is he who gives.

~ Anon

My truest self

"My name is Anjali and I am an alcoholic."

I have been introducing myself this way in various meetings over the last 8 years. I couldn't say it at my first meeting. It felt like too much of a shock to the system. More than the alcohol, you ask? Yes, at the time, the ego was struggling to feed its shell. Anything that felt like an assault to the ego was avoided. But alcohol didn't really give a damn. In fact, it seemed to revel in smashing the ego. And so, by the second meeting, I began to say it, ego in smithereens.

That was 8 years ago. I got sober in Singapore and have been an active part of the program for most of these years. I have always had a sponsor, I have attended numerous meetings (90 in 90 in the first 90 days), have chaired meetings, have had sponsees and have worked those steps at least 5 times over the years. If you had asked me if I could tick every box of what anybody in AA should be doing, I would have double ticked, with a bright neon marker on all of them.

Until last year that is. I lost my job in Singapore, moved back to India to live with my mother, took a "well-deserved" sabbatical and decided to let Covid take the blame for it all. No doubt, Covid did play a number on the world. I don't mean to take away from its impact, but as an alcoholic I realise that ultimately, the responsibility of my recovery lies with me, no matter what is happening in the world outside.

So over the last few months, the number of zoom meetings dwindled, my connections felt weaker, I stopped praying, and I went into a morass of self pity. 8 years of doing the same stuff

and I was bored. Restless, irritable, discontent. But by now I had more "selves". One of these selves was a tough-strong-woman-with-good-recovery-who-said-all-the-right-things-at-meetings-and-who-wasn't-going-to-crack. I made sure I still ticked a few of the boxes - I kept in touch with my sponsor, chaired a weekly meeting, and started working the steps again. Not nearly enough, it turns out.

I got diagnosed with ADHD a couple of months ago. It seemed to explain so much of the 'isms. The scattered mind, the inability to focus for too long, the hyper energy, the struggles with relationships, even the alcoholism. When the doctor suggested medication, I talked to him about my alcoholism and my sponsor about the medication and overall I felt confident that I would be fine. I started taking the medication and for the first 2 months it seemed God sent. It was a really mild stimulant and I felt a very gentle calm after every dose.

The trouble started when I went to my best friend's wedding. I am generally of a cheerful disposition in public. And I had great fun at the wedding. I am extremely careful about my sobriety and don't even eat any food, chocolates, desserts with any kind of alcohol, always checking multiple times. And so even at this wedding, I felt sober. Except, what I didn't realize was that I wasn't emotionally sober. I had been feeling really scared about what I am going to do professionally, was feeling worthless, and to top it all my best friend had found love, and I hadn't. I was still stuck in some old patterns and no matter how hard I seem to be trying, I don't seem to be finding the love I so badly desire.

Anyway, these feelings were lurking in there somewhere. And I hadn't really been talking about them. I was barely conscious of them myself. I had been busy trying to numb them through

staying busy, social and charming. My social media feed is testimony to this.

The wedding was wonderful. I was genuinely happy for my bestie. He and I had been single together for the longest time and now he had found his love. Even if there was a twinge of envy, I hid it well. I only wanted to be more present at the wedding. And so I decided to take double the dose just so I could feel more "alert" while the world around me drank away. It felt fine, I was happy and having fun. What could go wrong?

Turns out a lot. A few days later I overdosed on the medication. And thankfully because of the years of AA messaging, I called my sponsor just in time. Hearing her voice was the only thing that cut through the armour at the time. Friends took me to the hospital and I spent 2 nights in the ICU. Alive. But scared shitless. It could've been alcohol, I could've been dead.

But I knew lying in that bed that my HP wasn't done with me. I had more work to do, I had to live a fuller life, I had to help some more alcoholics. I had to laugh a lot more(at myself more than anyone else!), I had to eat more wonderful food, dance a little, sing a lot, meet more people, find love, be there for my friends and family, walk hand in hand with more sponsees, ring my sponsor, follow her advice(or not!), work the steps again, be of service to some organisation that needs me, and share my experience, strength and hope at another meeting. The sun, the wind, those pretty lilies I love, and the earth beneath my feet, they all seemed to say- "Not yet you silly woman, not yet."

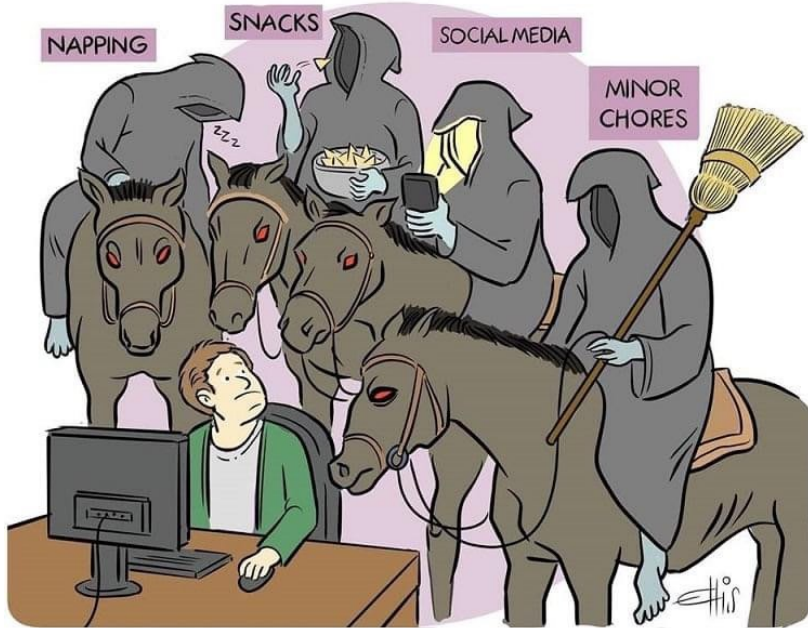
There is much to do, much to live for. And I am grateful that I have been given the chance to do so. I attended my first meeting after that ordeal this morning, and it felt good to say-

"My name is Anjali and I am an alcoholic."

There, it rolls off my tongue like butter now. And it feels like my truest self.

Love,
Anjali

THE FOUR HORSEMEN
OF PROCRASTINATION



No False Moves

In my 2nd year of sobriety, I was dating a girl who had a 2.5 year old boy. With no children of my own, I “adopted” this boy and did the things his absent father would have certainly done. Everything from potty training to swim lessons and even his first major family vacation were part of this “father-son” experience. As his mother and I were not married or even engaged, it may have been unwise for me to take such an active role. Regardless, his mother felt it was important he had a strong male figure in his life, even if it was for a limited-time only.

As life went, problems between his mother and I began to surface; these largely had to do with fundamental differences in values. It soon became clear that these values differences, which were not insignificant, could not be overcome and I would soon have to end the relationship. Any breakup even under the best circumstances is very difficult but when you add a child to the mix, it becomes even more difficult. I did what we do in Alcoholics Anonymous: I called my sponsor. Upon meeting with my sponsor, he had me outline the truth of the matter. My sponsor knew well that I had, and have, a bad case of people-pleasing-ism. My default certainly would be to avoid truth in order to make the counterparty feel better, if only momentarily.

Our exercise was for me to state what was true about the relationship, true about my sobriety and true about the values differences we were facing. Writing those facts down on paper I was able to see even more clearly that while very painful, the right thing to do was to end the relationship. I was also counselled by my sponsor to avoid acting arrogant with thoughts such as “if I breakup the child will suffer without me” and “I will not breakup because I don’t want to hurt the woman”. The rationale for these

statements of arrogance was, he said, “who are you to believe you could have such an outsized impact on a person’s life?!” I retreated home after that session to pray and ask for courage and wisdom, for courage and wisdom were at the top of my God-wish list. In all truth, more than anything I was absolutely terrified of what I had to do.

While hunkering down in prayer and meditation, there was one comment from my sponsor that kept coming back to me over, and over and it was this - “No false moves: nobody gets hurt.” He likened it to old cop movies where the policeman faces the perpetrator and says “Nobody move: nobody gets hurt.” His meaning was this: it was essential that throughout I remained true to myself, avoided manipulation, steered clear of emotional blackmail and refrained from apologies about certain things I knew to be untrue.

As I drove down the highway to deliver the breakup message, I had an overwhelming sense of peace come over me. Indeed this was among the greatest presences of God I have ever experienced. By the time I arrived at her home, I was able to courageously complete my task without much of the feared drama. It wasn’t all smooth sailing from there, but I was able to sleep at night knowing that I operated truthfully to myself, to her and to God.

Being a serial people-pleaser, the statement “to thine own self be true” has been a golden nugget. The AA program and these truths have delivered me from not just bad relationships, but also given me a higher level of God-consciousness and a life of sobriety I didn’t know was possible.

~ Rich H

Rewards of Step Four

I faced Step Four with some trepidation, but my sponsor did not allow time for irrational fear to take over. He had me begin “Spontaneous writing” immediately after we prayed the Third Step Prayer. I was instructed to ask God to help me write down where I had been selfish, dishonest, resentful, or afraid. This process lasted about a week. At our next meeting we used this list to follow (Read and do) the clear-cut Step Four directions from the Big Book. This session took only an hour or so—there was no reason for my previous apprehension.

When finished, I was amazed by the many unsuspected “rewards” I had received! I had learned how to face and be rid of resentment and irrational fear. What Great Rewards! I also learned (admitted) where I had harmed others through my selfishness, and how my dishonesty was more prevalent than I realized. Also, I had a list of persons I had harmed for upcoming Steps Eight and Nine.

I had asked God to relieve me of the “bondage of self” in Step Three but had little knowledge of what that bondage was, but Step Four provided the answer! Not only had I truthful information to share with my sponsor in Step Five, but I then possessed a list of character defects and shortcomings to ask God to remove in Steps Six and Seven! These rewards were not only helpful in my daily living but also paved the path to the many powerful AA promises. The main of which is on page 85: “The problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.”

The “problem” was, of course, the mental obsession, not the physical allergy. This release from desire to drink alcohol has been with me for many years, thanks to the rewards of Step Four.

~ Bob S.

Balcony Zen

Being true to myself can come through practising meditation. So I sat on the balcony and watched the world, with The Beatles was playing in the background, so I wrote this:

Sunbird sipping from a blossom cup
Painted wings upon a butterfly
Here am I
Contemplating birds and trees and butterflies and life

Sunbird sitting in a blossom tree
Lizard on a branch with lively eye
Here am I
Watching like a cat you know I wish I had a tail

Sunbird fly
Sunbird fly
Into the shade of the long green leaves

Sunbird fly
Sunbird fly
Into the boughs of serenity

[birdsong]

Sunbird sipping from a blossom cup
Glossy beetle black as empty eyes
Here am I
Summing up this moment in a melancholy rhyme
Cutting from my day a slice of meditation time.

If sponsoring yourself was a picture! 🙄😬



I Went Line Dancing Last Night!



It Was A Roadside Sobriety Test, Karen.



Me:

Facebook: hey remember when you were a full blown alcoholic spiraling out of control?

Me: you really don't have to do this

Facebook: lol, here's a memory from 2013

Being True to Yourself

Being true to yourself has two different meanings - the one before AA and the one after

Before AA, being true to myself was getting a drink down me and listening to the voice in my head. The one that was spoken by the face in the mirror I couldn't look at. This voice would tell me that I was better than those fools (everyone else). It would tell me that my creativity was genius but they couldn't see, and that I knew the best thing to do but they were jealous and wouldn't listen (they felt threatened by my talent). Being true to myself meant being above everyone else, those fools, they knew nothing of the lightness of being I was getting from this hit, they couldn't know my higher state, the real me was digging tunes better than they ever knew, was king of the world!.. When I wasn't like this, I was feeling guilty, I was angry, hungover, hiding things, planning a drink, well that simply wasn't the real me.

After AA, I'm not even sure there should be a me to be true to. I want to work on my humility so that there is no me, no internal monologue. If I am to be true to myself then that is just another way of saying be true to AA, be true to my higher power, be true to sobriety, be true in service. If I do this then I guess I am being true to myself, but this is not a selfish thing, and I certainly do not think I am superior to anyone else (well I try not to....we are not perfect, me and myself!)

If I am true to myself now then that truth refers to being honest with myself and others, being someone you can trust, who will try to put others before myself, within reason.

Being true to myself

This year has been a big old lesson on this. I thought being true to myself meant that I had to 'live up' to societal expectations of 'getting' stuff, things and people in my life. I think I thought that was what living was all about.

Through AA, the 12 steps and reasoning things out with my sponsor and fellows what I'm coming to believe is that being true to myself is simply that. Being me, autonomously me. Admitting my thoughts, my feelings (even the ones I carry so much shame about feeling like anger, hate, and ungratefulness) and accepting that I AM feeling them.

When I allow them to come, I seem to be reminded that this is the disease of alcoholism, and I'm powerless over that. Came for the drinking and stayed for the thinking! In taking this action it gives me the freedom to BE me and to allow others to give me what I really need when I'm feeling those things, which is love.

Sometimes buckets and buckets of it. And you know, even when I've doubted it, it's always come from fellows in AA, all over the world.

I'm also starting to develop the courage to do things I want to do in my life, even if those choices may upset others. This is so tough sometimes! But when I take that right action the feelings of self esteem and freedom are built (which I think is what it means when it says we will 'outgrow fear') - and sometimes it takes a long time to outgrow things... I'm grateful I don't have to do that alone!

Today, being true to myself is about showing up for me, allowing my wants and needs to be voiced and accepting that they don't need to be met by just one person. I can pray for the willingness to love myself (even those parts I think aren't worthy of love!) and I can pray for my higher power's help to trust them, and to trust that I am worthy of living my life today and filling the space I was gifted on this planet.

To thine own self be true.

~ Anon

Being True to Ourselves

WOW! What a title. On the back of the AA Anniversary Coin, it reads TO THY OWN SELF BE TRUE.

Why I love this slogan being an Alcoholic: All my life, I was a liar. Never True... Never Honest... in fact, I believe, I was born an alcoholic because I was feeling this way when drinking milk with Hershey's Chocolate Syrup! Even as a young kid, I manipulated people for things I wanted.

After my Mother divorced my Father, and Dad left the house, my Mom started to have boyfriends over to our house. My birthday is in October and by the time Christmas rolled around, I had a BeBe Air Gun, a Bicycle and Lionel Electric Trains as presents from my Father and Mom's boyfriends, who were all vying for my attention.

Playing my Father's affection, for me, against Mom's boyfriends was a game, a hustle. I was just a kid, an only child, and my family's first grandson. I had it all ... I was on a roll. More, More, More.. sound familiar? This is so alcoholic. A spoiled brat; selfish and self centered. My Mom always said, "I don't know where Anthony gets this from. He has Champagne-taste and a beer-bottle pocketbook".

At this young age I was becoming a Bull Shit Artist, and a good one. The dilemma of many alcoholics is that we are so good, we believe our own bullshit. The NY AA Old Timers always said, 'THE ONLY STRANGER I EVER MET IN AA WAS MYSELF'. Bingo! When I walked into my 1st AA Home Group Meeting, We Care, Roosevelt, Long Island, NY, they knew who I was. Me being a notorious People Pleaser. I had no clue who or what I was. I didn't know

whether to wind my ass or scratch my watch. TO THY OWN SELF BE TRUE was as foreign to me as speaking Russian.

Glasco was the Secretary at Roosevelt. I used to drink with him when we pinched coins together on the Block to buy a pint of liquor from the Liquor Store on Nassau Road. Glasco had disappeared from the corner. We thought Glasco had died or gone to jail - we hadn't seen him in years. Glasco got sober by joining the Roosevelt AA Group 5 previous years to me arriving there. He did it the old fashioned way - he walked into AA off the streets.

I got to AA via Detox Hospital & Rhinebeck Rehab upstate New York. The Old Timers called us the 30 day Wonder Boys.. Some of us got there to get their Judges Court Cards signed... Winton, an elderly gentleman was there. He knew my Mom & Dad when they were girlfriend & boyfriend. Then there was Donald J., one grade ahead of me in high school - I never liked him. He was a bully to me. As I walked into the meeting hall Donald screams out, here he comes, Mr. Top Shelf - We've been waiting for you! I reply, what in the hell are you talking about Donald? I drank Thunderbird, Night Train & Mad Dog 2020 so proudly. I also drank Bourbon, my favorite, Vodka, Gin, & Scotch (which I hate to this day). I think Scotch is the nastiest booze I could drink. But in my lifetime, I drank enough Scotch to float a Battleship. So much for my Hate. Needless to say, Donald J. gave me my first AA Resentment. How dare he call me out of my name; Top Shelf. I can't make this stuff up.

It was here, where my roots were, growing up in Freeport, Long Island, NY, that I became True To My Own Self - at Roosevelt We

Care Group. On one street, Grove Street in Freeport Village. There was Grove Street Middle school where I attended from 6 years old to 9. At the end of Grove Street sat Freeport Detox Hospital where I ended up at age 40 years, as a patient and Alumni from Rhinebeck Rehab Upstate New York. A block from that Hospital sat a Church I found in Nassau County AA Meeting Guide. I went to my first AA meeting @ 7pm on a Wednesday listed in that guide. My whole life began on that Street. From Grade School to an adult Detoxing from Alcohol to my 1ST AA meeting. ALL my experiences on Grove Street.

Lavern W. was the speaker. He was a huge Black man with a loud forceful voice. He looked like Theolonious Monk, the Jazz piano player. He was originally from Chicago, IL. 8 years sober... a god to me. This was an anniversary meeting. A meeting I never heard of. At smoking break time I went up to Laverne and told him I like his share and this was my first AA meeting. I just got home out of Rehab today. Where do you live? I said in Freeport. Laverne said good. I live in Freeport. He drove me home. Now he knows where I lived. He came by at 7pm for the next 2 days taking me to AA meetings. Now it is Friday night and he asked me what was I doing tomorrow? My smart ass said I work in Manhattan and off on the weekends. He said good, go to Roosevelt WE Care Saturday 10.30 meeting on Centennial Ave. I did, catching the Bus there, and Laverne became my 1st Sponsor and Roosevelt WE Care became my 1st Home Group.

Thanks to Zoom, with me living in San Francisco, CA for 35 years, I can still attend Roosevelt WE Care 10.30 Saturday Morning Meeting. This group is still enabling me to continue To Thy Own Self Be True. If it works, Don't Fix It. Many people ask me, how did I get to be an old timer? I tell them what was told to me when I asked this question: Don't Drink. Even if your ass falls off, you pick

your ass up, put it in a plastic bag, drag it to a meeting and learn to sit another way. Don't Drink Between Meetings, and Don't Die.

And one day, a day at a time, you too will become an AA old Timer. And always shake the hand of a newcomer. Because one day she or he might be your Sponsor. AA is a 24-hour program and whoever got up earliest this morning has the longest Sobriety.

TonyT/San Francisco, CA - Last drink, April 4, 1979.

Being True to Ourselves...

The reality of those words probably hit me in the face when I attempted a step four for the first time and had to follow through on a step five with my sponsor. In those early days I thought by getting to step 12 my drinking problem would be solved and my fabulous new life would begin. So when presenting my step four to my sponsor imagine the despair I felt when he calmly asked how much of this is really true? I can remember going back over that first attempt and realised a lot was BS clouded by the way I saw and felt at the time.

My life up until then was built on a multitude of lies and self-deceptions and in reflection all these years later in the programme I still have some grey areas of things and events that I am not at all sure really happened, These were the lies I told myself and then fabricated them somehow to the outside world. My sponsor said many times that it would be our secrets behind any relapse that would be the real cause. I had difficulty with that then and still today where I found some stones that I left unturned. I became really good at covering up things and hiding the truth by developing a whole fantasy life story, but at the end of the day they soon catch up with you. Now I understand why I have to keep re-doing all the steps!

The key, or rather one of the many, is self-acceptance, and I keep changing the lock here rather than moving on. I have never got on with the real me, sometimes I am comfortable and other times I am toxic to myself - very Mr Jekyll and Hyde. So, little wonder the truth gets lost in the translation. My saving grace was that I landed up sharing a house with my sponsor and it was during this period that I learnt how to tell the truth for the first time in my

life. We often hear people say "To thine own self be true". Thank goodness for this one day at a time programme, and that's all I have to do today - be honest. The cunning, baffling power of this disease often trips me up, and although picking up a drink is far from my thoughts, I am quick to pick up on old habits (or stinking thinking as I call it).

Speaking my truth to my sponsor was probably the most liberating thing ever, and now I get to do that on a daily basis with my higher power and of course when I get to meetings. I am probably not the best example of an AA member and as much as I get right I get wrong as well but it remains my truth.

Love T.

Finding My Authentic Self

The sojourn through my active alcoholism was a dark and nihilistic time. I had become an anxious and angry woman, a chronic people pleaser and a martyr--self-centered, self-indulgent, and self-sabotaging. When I put down the drink, slowly--through working the Steps--I began to change; little by little the layers of my dysfunctional false self began to fall away.

Step 7 and 11 have been fundamental in me getting closer to my true self. Through prayer and meditation, God begins to remove the parts of my false self that no longer serve me, him or others.

Through Step 4 I learn about the symptoms of the spiritual malady--my restlessness, irritability and discontentedness. These are indicators of my disturbance and when I am disturbed I know that there is something wrong with me and I have work to do.

When I do the work I get more discovery, more growth, more cool stuff to learn, more interesting challenges to navigate, more happiness, more joy, more peace, more love. My actions and thought-life are either making me more spiritually sick or more spiritually well.

The program is an education, a fascinating learning process. Before I came into the rooms I didn't have spiritual principles, much less any integrity. Perhaps the greatest education of my life has been from this program: to learn what spiritual principles are, and begin to understand that I can actually adhere to them, once I've put down the drink. It's also been the most self-esteem building work I've ever done.

Having and living by spiritual principles is my Higher Power (it is literally like having a superpower). They are the compass to which I base my actions on; not perfectly, but as long as I bring a level of willingness to do the work honestly and tell my sponsor or someone what's going on, God begins to remove the defects and old ideas. From there I begin to experience freedom from the constraints of shame, guilt and anxiety. The lighter and more serene I feel the more I know that I am living according to my true self.

~ Margaret

Fully Recovered Alcoholic

What does that mean?

I am a fully recovered alcoholic. This means if I throw God and AA under the bus tomorrow morning, I could be “boiled as an owl” by midnight. This is because I am helpless and hopeless over drink, save for the grace of God and AA. You may think: “What an oxymoron! How can an alcoholic be hopeless and helpless, yet claim to be recovered?”

Well, one happy ingredient of my recovered status is that “if I should drink” has not occurred to me for many years—it seems to have been removed from my emotional vocabulary! But for a better detailed description, here are a few promises from pages 84 & 85 of the Big Book:

We will seldom be interested in liquor.

If tempted, we recoil from it as if from a hot flame.

We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part.

We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation.

We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed (This means the mental obsession—not the physical allergy). It does not exist for us.

Not so fast, there is a prerequisite! “That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.” How? By living in the spirit of Steps 10, 11, & 12.

Non-Big Book readers might state: “If I were recovered, I’d start drinking again.” This is logical thinking using the normal definition of the word “recovered.” However, those who have studied the Big Book can easily see the folly in that sort of thinking because they understand the allergy/obsession syndrome. The Big Book uses the recovered word in a special and technical sense that readers can easily understand.

I often use the phrase “release from the mental obsession” at meetings to avoid controversy.

~ Bob S