



The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter

February 2014

Let us resist the proud assumption that since God has enabled us to do well in one area we are destined to be a channel of saving grace for everybody.

Bill Wilson, AA Comes of Age, page 232

This current issue is focused on isolation. I-so-late, to separate from a group or whole and set apart. (American Heritage Dictionary). During the winter months, when it seems like the sun only comes out to see us once a week for a few hours, it is easy to become depressed, lonely, and isolate. These are key dangers that we all must be aware of, and stay away from them for they could lead to a trigger, with isolation being the key to keeping us away from our meetings.

The word isolation occurs five times in the 12 & 12. Step five references it twice. On page 57, it tells us a reward we will receive from step five, "we shall get rid of that terrible sense of isolation we've always had." Later on the same page it is written "We thought the isolation problem had been solved, but we soon discovered that while we were not alone any more in a social sense, we still suffered many of the old pangs of anxious apartness. On page 62, step five ends with a beautiful paragraph, stating "This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety.

On page 82, step 8 ends telling us "it is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God. The fifth occurrence is on page 116, (step 12), "But when self-will had driven everybody away and our isolation had become complete, it caused us to play the big shot in cheap barrooms and then fare forth alone on the street to depend upon the charity of passersby.

Let us not fall victim of this negative action, and we don't have to be by simply picking up the phone, and going to meetings. Please think about people you know, and reach out to them if they are isolating. Yours in service, Richard S.

Toxic Isolation vs. Healthy Solitude

by Larry K.

The impulse toward the destructive self-indulgence of isolating ourselves is something recovering alcoholics must always guard against. Deliberately keeping ourselves always to ourselves quickly reduces us to a dangerous condition of self-pity which leads to our favorite fallback position: blaming others for everything that is wrong in our lives. This in turn leads to a depression that deepens. More often than not, what comes next is that old favorite and potentially-lethal pleasure: sulking at home with a bottle or two or three or ten. The great singer-songwriter, Joni Mitchell, offers an important insight into this all-too-human psychological phenomenon in a lyric from her classic album, *Hejira*: *There's comfort in melancholy*.

There certainly is – but not the kind of comfort that can help a recovering alcoholic. A pattern of deliberate isolation generously laced with self pity is one that will almost always lead us back to disaster. It is worth noting here that the Arabic word “hejira” means *flight*. And one of our primary reasons for drinking alcoholically is to flee from ourselves and from the hard work of living a real life.

When we alcoholics are deeply in the grip of our disease, we are in a state of self-loathing; we hate being in our own skin. This agonizing predicament can only be remedied by going to meetings and diligently doing the twelve steps. Pretty much all of us are in a critical state of self-loathing at the time when sheer desperation finally drives us into the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Many alcoholics seek out others to drink with; we love the noisy, boozy oblivion of bars. Many of us, however, love to drink at home, alone. It is always simpler and easier to drink alone. There is no one else present to judge or nag us; and there is no social situation that might implicitly compel us to share our booze and/or our drugs. Being alone can be very comfortable for an active alcoholic. This lazy state of being invariably pulls us backward instead of forward. A friend in recovery recently told me that she was getting rid of her sofa because that was where she had spent nearly all of her drunken evenings alone. This is a symbolic gesture, but a very important one. The woman in question is now socializing much more and planning to buy a comfortable reading chair, since she intends to read good books during those evenings that she had formerly spent being alone and “out of it” on the couch.

When we ultimately accept that we must give up drinking, the road back to being a healthy social being is a long and difficult one. Some of us have to acquire social skills that we never had in the first place. Paradoxically, healthy solitude plays an important role in this process. Solitude gives us time for prayer, meditation and reflection; these are all activities the program of AA teaches us to do on a regular, even daily, basis.

We also need a certain amount of solitude to work on the steps, and to get to know our authentic selves – which have been taken away from us (or hidden from us) by the disease of alcoholism. Step Four – the act of writing out a “thorough and fearless” moral inventory – requires a good deal of time alone. This is the case even if we are meeting with our sponsors at frequent intervals to consult on each stage of this all-important written document.

One thing that helps me greatly with my solitary meditation is listening to great music. Great music always brings me closer to the God of my understanding. When I listen to Beethoven's ninth symphony, I am keenly aware that the great composer, for all his innate genius, did not produce this sublime music alone. Whether he knew it or not at the time when he was composing this marvelous piece, Beethoven was communing with his Deity. Listening to great music or simply music that we love (not the music we chugged shots to) is just one positive thing we can do to enhance our environment when we wish to enter a positive state of solitary contemplation.

A long walk in a beautiful place during pleasant weather is always a good idea. For the recovering alcoholic who happens to have a nice garden, sitting quietly in that garden while reading the Big Book is an excellent and pleasant way to embrace and enhance solitude. Being physically close to a serene and much-loved pet helps as well.

Last but not least, we need solitude to keep a daily journal. Writing regularly in such a journal is a very powerful way to strengthen our sobriety while also helping us to get to know our new sober selves – the happy and loving persons we never dreamed we could be.



Announcements

The Happy Hour West will be holding their 29th anniversary on Thursday, March 23rd. Guest speakers will share from 5:30 to 6:30, followed by a buffet.

There are two groups that meet at the New Horizons Shelter, that could use support.

Monday----Listen and Learn, 7:30-8:30 P.M.

Saturday---Living-Loving-Sharing, 8:00-9:00 P.M.

April 11th-13th, 2014: 48th annual NH AA Area Convention: Sobriety Rocks
Courtyard Marriott, Nashua, NH

It is not too early to start looking into reserving your room for the 80th AA International Convention, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, July 2nd-5th, 2015. The theme will be "80 years-Happy-Joyous-Free".

As of this printing, there are openings at the district for an alternate DCM, and a PICPC chair person. All interested candidates are asked to contact the search committee chair, (Laura S.), at district12searchcom@gmail.com.

The next publication is going to talk about the difference between a must, and a suggestion. Please refer to the enclosed details to submit your article to me.

This issue of **The Voice Within** was sponsored through the 7th Tradition

Submitting Articles

Length and format: The newsletter may publish work of different lengths, from snappy one-liners and one-paragraph anecdotes to full-page articles (word count 500 max) **Text** sent by e-mail should be submitted in the body of the message or as attached files, saved in "Word," Handwritten text should be written clearly on one side of the paper. Include your phone number please. **Comments? Email us your comments on any articles, topics, etc.**

Articles are reviewed, selected, and edited by the editorial team. The contents appropriateness is at the sole discretion of the Newsletter Committee.

Absolute Deadline to be considered for April 2014 issue is March 25, 2014

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