



# The Voice Within

**NHAA District 12 Newsletter    October 2014**

There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation. —Herbert Spencer



## **Recovery is not Scary**

Greetings fellow members of district 12. It is that time of year when fear takes us up to a holiday filled with scary themes, (Halloween), though recovery is not scary. There is a fear for not knowing what the future will be, though let us refer to what Herbert Spencer told us.

### **F.E.A.R.   False evidence appearing real**

This issue is dedicated to our steps, and I would like to thank our anonymous writer for his article. The theme for the next issue is tips for staying sober during the holiday season. Don't be surprised if a member from the Voice Within Committee approaches you for a suggestion, for the goal is to share our experience so we can all enjoy another day of recovery.

## **Keeping my head where my feet are**

*An Anonymous Member of the Manchester Original Group*

When I first got sober, the “chatter” started in my head. Here’s just a partial list of the helpful pearls of wisdom dispensed by the committee between my ears: What am I going to do with all my free time now? Am I just going to be this boring God person who goes to meetings and spends time in libraries or quiet meditation?

And so on, and so on, and so on...

The funny thing with all my “concerns”? They were all based on “what if” rather than “what is”. The list of things I don’t know about life would fill volumes of encyclopedias. Here’s one thing I think I’ve learned, though: the vast majority – maybe all – of my fears and misgivings about recovery, and life in general, have centered either on morbid reflection or – even more frequently – fearful projection, or what I like to call “anticipatory dread”. When I can just be where I am, all’s right with me and the world.

I remember when I was newly returned to AA, fresh from what I pray was my last drinking spree. I had assured my sponsor that I was willing to go to any length to get sober, and I thought I meant it. Still, I found myself dragging my feet with my Fourth Step. One day, we were talking about my fourth step. The conversation went something like this:

(Sponsor): “So how are you coming with your Fourth Step?”

(Me): “Oh, you know – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.”

(S): “Very funny. Seriously – are you making progress?”

(M): “Not really. I’m stuck.”

(S): “What are you stuck on?” (At this point, I hemmed and hawed and talked around the issue. But my sponsor was persistent. He finally got me to come clean).

(M): “I’m afraid to do the fourth step.”

(S): “What in the Fourth Step are you afraid of?”

(M): “There are a couple things I’ve done that I can never tell anyone.” (Here’s where my sponsor earned another notch on his AA legend belt)

(S): “You’re not afraid of the Fourth Step. You’re afraid of the *Fifth Step*! And not only that, you’re afraid of the *last part* of the Fifth Step. That step says, “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs”. All you’re doing in the fourth step is writing the inventory. And before you tell another human being in the Fifth Step, you first admit it to God and yourself. Why don’t you write your Fourth Step, then do the first two parts of the Fifth Step (admit your wrongs to your Higher Power and yourself). Then, if you’re still afraid to share it with another human being, we can talk about it.”

My sponsor was right, of course. By keeping my head where my feet were (Step 4), I was able to complete my 4<sup>th</sup> step and move onto the 5<sup>th</sup> step without further delay.

This happened over three decades ago. The lesson stays with me to this day. When I keep my head where my feet are, recovery (and life in general) is not scary. Anticipatory dread is what my disease wants, but I want to live happy, joyous and free – just for today.

### **Getting in Step With the Steps**

IN Appendix II, PP 4, Line 3 of the Big Book we read: "Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time." A little more than three years were required to get down to cases on Steps Four, Five, Eight and Nine. Let's have a look:

Step Four. The list of character defects reads like a thesaurus with every part of speech except adjectives bearing a connotation of opprobrium omitted.

Step Five. The first two parts have been relatively easy but when it comes to the third, these questions always pop up: "Whoinhell wants to listen to all my shortcomings? Do I have to relate about all the watermelons I stole as a kid? How about some other forbidden fruits that were filched along the way?" Frankly, it is going to take a little time to reach a decision as how best to go about selecting someone on whom to inflict my confession and just what shall be confessed.

Step Eight. A list has been made with space left open for additions.

Step Nine. One of the amends-making experiences had a humorous side. After several starts and backings-away, enough courage finally was mustered to walk into the boss's office. The following ensued:

"Got a couple of minutes, chief?" "Sure, sit down." (*Business of handing him a folder with the 12 Steps printed thereon.*)

"Read numbers Eight and Nine on there and I'll tell you why I'm here." He read them and looked at me with a "Whatthehelldoesthisscrewballhaveonhismindnow" expression on his face.

"Well, I'm here to offer verbal apologies for all past depredations, and. . ." He cut in short:

"That's all water over the wheel. . .there's been a helluva change in you. . .you've done a swell job and we all recognize it. . ." I cut in short. "I didn't have a damn thing to do with it, it was. . ."

"Well, let's say it has been done." "Okeh, and I'm mighty grateful for all your patience and kindness." He roared: *You're grateful? Hell, I'm the guy to be grateful. Thank God we can live with you around here again.*"

As anyone can gather, the job wasn't nearly as tough as anticipated. Undoubtedly when I finally get around to the third part of Step Five, it will prove just as simple. Until that time comes, however, I plan to continue to heed the admonition, "Easy does it" and not to crowd things. Lord knows, I didn't get into the shape I was in when I came to AA in five minutes and it is going to take a whale of a lot of five-minute periods to rid my stubborn self of the armor of resentment, selfishness, self-pity, fear, et al, et us, ad infinitum.

There comes to mind the lines:

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small. . ."To which my wife adds:

"And considering the stuff they have to grind, it's a wonder they grind at all."

Again, that's "I'm."

D.K. San Francisco.

## Announcements

- How long have you been sober? You can get an exact time of your days, hours, minutes and seconds at the AA Grapevine web site.
- Please refer to our website for updated information on all events, at [www.aadistrict12.org](http://www.aadistrict12.org)

## Humor

The Surgeon General latest product Advisory: Liquor bottles will now carry the phrase, "Warning: Alcohol can make members of the opposite sex appear far more attractive than they actually are"

When it came to step 9, making direct amends to people I offended, I asked my sponsor if I couldn't just take the easy way out and send these people a letter. He replied, "Did you offend them by letter"?



All issues of The Voice Within are sponsored through the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition.

Length and Format: The newsletter may publish works of different lengths, from snappy one-liners and one-paragraph anecdotes, to full page articles (500-1000 word count). Text or attachments sent by e-mail should be submitted in word. Handwritten text can be delivered to myself, or your GSR, who can deliver them to the next district meeting. Articles are reviewed, selected, and edited by the editorial team. The contents appropriateness is at the sole discretion of the newsletter committee.

Deadline for the December issue is November 25th.

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