

Pride - Humility - Shame

The Golden Rule of Life

Most alcoholics come to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) with their own interpretation of many of the words we hear bandied about in the meetings and I am no exception. Words like Love, Honesty, Spirituality, Unselfishness, and Humility, for a few. I fumbled around with the program as best I could with my faulty, misguided, egocentric way of thinking, but I was never satisfied until I had resolved every one of those issues, as best I could, and it turns out that most of my new ideas are almost the opposite to my old way of thinking. Love, for our purpose, means *caring for and nurturing* another person, and not necessarily that version we see on the movie screen. Honesty, to me, means *Devoid of all motives to deceive* and not just the act of not telling lies. Spirituality and Unselfishness would require a much deeper explanation and for this essay I want to address, the often talked about and just as often unresolved word, Humility. The final piece of the puzzle came to me when in my 22nd year of sobriety, I was on the phone with a man who was trying to engage me in an argument, and when he realized, I was not going to bite, he fired his last volley by saying: "Well, I have heard stories about you, and you're no angel." I thought about it for a few seconds and replied, "I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not Proud of, but I'm not Ashamed of anything that I've done in the past 22 years. The phone call ended peacefully.

Several years later, in a step study meeting on step seven the topic was Humility as it usually is when we study step seven. I remembered that phone call and realized that Pride was not the opposite of Humility that *Pride was the opposite of Shame* and that *Humility fell Quietly in the middle of the two*. I concluded that I should not be proud of, or ashamed of the things I do and that I should be in the middle somewhere. This applies to my receiving as well as my giving. Aristotle referred to this as "The Golden Mean." To me this means finding the *Mean between the extremes* and exercising it until it becomes second-natured.

I have known some humble people, in and outside of the program, and they have some things in common: They seldom bring attention to themselves, they never criticize others, they are always comforting, and they are always an asset and never a liability. Humble people do the things they were taught as a child. They treat others with respect. I learned the Golden Rule in church, but I was never strong enough to live by it. If you are not sure what you are supposed to be doing, Read the Saint Francis Prayer in the 11th Step in the 12&12 or try practicing The Golden Rule. That should be a good start. When I found Alcoholics Anonymous, I was reintroduced to these values and helped to rein in my ego, and today I am at peace with myself and with others. With respect to my decision making and my behavior, I find that the program, and most other philosophies of life, are based on *unselfish principles* and if I am sure that the *motives*, for what I do, are *selfless*, I have nothing to be ashamed of, but; does this mean that I have something to be proud of in these cases? It then occurred to me that *unless I personally created the principle* that I based my decision on, I can take no credit for that decision. For the life of me, I cannot remember one principle that I created myself, however, all my decisions are based on unselfish principles, and I feel good on the inside these days, and furthermore, I am not proud of anything, No Awards or Metals necessary, thank you.