

## Step One: Understanding Alcoholism

### The Road of Happy Destiny

By Rick R.

How heart wrenching it is to see newcomers arrive at an AA meeting after losing families, friends, jobs, relationships, and hope, then to watch them struggle through relapse after relapse while they see others around them building happy and resourceful lives. What makes them different from the rest of us? Why is it that all their efforts to make a happy life for themselves continue to fail? My heart goes out to them, and I am always trying to find a way to articulate things, in simple terms that the so-called newcomer can understand. My problems started long before I ever touched a drop of alcohol. I always felt different from the other (normal) kids, but I did not know it at the time. I thought they all felt like I did, but they did not. It may have been as simple as how I reacted the first time I was humiliated in public, or when I was punished for doing something wrong and learned that it was easier to lie my way out of trouble and I went covert when I violated the rules. I will never know exactly why but I do know my mental makeup was different. Now, what can I do about it? On a scale of **1** to **10**, let us say that I wake up each morning at an emotional level of **2**, the normal person wakes up at an **8**. When I had my first drink, I went from a **2** to a **9**, and everything was right with the world. (So, I thought) The Normy takes a drink and goes from **8** to a **9**. **No big deal**. My world had not changed but *my perception* of it had changed and with the euphoria I felt, I thought I had found the solution to my problem. Later, I discovered that *it only temporarily masked the real problem*, which was much deeper, and when, after a while, *my tolerance for alcohol ran out*, I completely lost control and, in time, lost almost everything that was meaningful in my life. I had unknowingly hit bottom, and I had little choice but to try AA. "My name is Rick and I'm an alcoholic" *Knowing* that I was an alcoholic got me into the program, but *knowing it, did not solve my problem*. I started to have success in the program when I came to *understand* the cause and effects of my core issues, such as low self-esteem, fear, guilt, shame, neediness, unworthiness etc. and how they kept driving people away from me. I had to *understand that those symptoms were caused by my faulty self-perception*, and that my mind was lying to me. I had been at level **2**, since childhood, and that is my problem, and *alcoholism is the symptom of my problem*. If I woke up this morning with amnesia, I would be just like everyone else, because I would not be dragging my past around with me in my head. Much of my surface behaviors failed, mainly because I was overcompensating *for my feelings of inadequacy*. My solutions have been to establish a pattern of behavior that is unselfish in nature, consistent with the suggestions in the Big Book, and the 12&12, and *practice them without fanfare*. (Tough order, I know) But by doing this, *with patience*, in time, others noticed the change, and before too long I was receiving *more than my share of affirmations*. If you can *understand* that you are not responsible for being emotionally *diverted as a child* and for the *alcoholism* that resulted from it, you can move forward. You contracted a disease and, *with this understanding of its cause and effect*, you can draw a line in the sand, and start the recovery process today, and join us on the road of happy destiny. We will be waiting for you.