

# The Men from the Boys

## A Happy and Peaceful Life

When a person has been around the A.A. program for any length of time they have, noticed certain different patterns of individual choices of, what is considered, recovery. That is the wonderful thing about A.A; each person chooses how he or she interprets what the spirit of the program is for them, and I would not have it any other way. These choices range from "I just don't drink today" to "I've found a spiritual way of life that has solved all of my problems", and everything in between. If all we wanted to do is to stop drinking alcohol, we could try that approach but for, most of us, we would not be happy and eventually, most of us would try the old game again. Rarely does an alcoholic succeed simply by abstaining from alcohol.

Step six, "*Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character*" may sound like God does all the work in this matter but if we read further in the 12&12 it says, "*But in no case does He render us white as snow and keep us that way without our cooperation. That is something we are supposed to be willing to work towards ourselves. He asks only that we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character.*" After identifying my defects of character and shortcomings in Step 4 and admitting them in step 5, it is now time, With God's guidance, to start the process of correcting them in Step 6 to enjoy a happy and peaceful life. This is where we separate the men from the boys (women from the girls). It is seeming easy for me to deal with the more obvious shortcomings such as, being a horse thief. All I would have to do was to stop stealing horses, or a bank robber, all I would have to do is to stop robbing banks. The more difficult things to correct are the more subtle character flaws, such as: lying, gossiping, cheating, neglecting, envying, procrastinating, and all those little glitches in my character that I think, go unnoticed by the outside world. These things do not go unnoticed by *my conscience* and if I want to clear that up, I must be willing to seek out the solutions to these problems.

Changing these negative habits does not come easy but it can be much easier when you recognize that it is our ego that stands in between us and the solution, and it turns out to be a struggle between our ego and our conscience. There is nothing physically hard about this. It is, however, mentally difficult. This is where we must muster up all the spiritual strength we can, and, one by one, work our way through all these superficial habits that weigh on our conscience. Once I resolve one of these issues, I find it important to draw a line in the sand and discipline myself to assure that I do not fall into or let myself be tempted into returning to these negative habits.

Practicing principles is a common phrase among AA members. It has been said that if a person lives by principles, 99% of his/her decisions are made for that person. What separates the men from the boys, (women from the girls) from my point of view is how well that person does when the going gets tough. Do they stick to their principles, or do they take the easy way out and fall back into their old, selfish habits? That, I think is the test of our spiritual condition.