

The Enabling Process Can go on Forever.

If I Thought it Would Help

By Rick R.

As a practicing alcoholic, I became *very crafty* when it came to manipulating the people who loved me. I made promise after promise to change the way I did things, but I always *disappointed them*, which only made things worse for them and for me, as I see it now. What they did not know then was that most of the time, when they gave in trying to meet my requests, *they were not helping me*. Well meaning as they were, they were, in fact, *enabling me*, and that only *perpetuated my problem*. When I was turned down, I just went to the next one on my list, until I found someone that could not say no.

After I entered Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and got deeper into the program I had to address my behavioral problems of the past and make restitution to those people, I realized how difficult it was for a loved one to say *NO* to a child or a friend when they appeal to them the way we do. Then, came the acid test for me.

I received a collect phone call from a divorced relative, (mother of two daughters ages 11 and 13) asking me for, what was, a goodly amount of money at that time. I was aware of her use of drugs and her priorities about her children. At first, she did not want to say why she needed the money, but after I insisted, she said that she was in jail and need to get bailed out. Visions of my past came back, and I was now on the receiving end of *the enabling process*. Writing the check would have been the *easy thing* to do, but as I now understand, *not the right thing*. I asked her why she called me instead of her friends. She replied, "yours was the only number I could find". I thought about it for moment then said, "*IF I THOUGHT IT WOULD HELP*, I would be all over it but, I know your track record and I know that if I bail you out, *you will be running again, and your girls need you right now*". That was the best thing I could do for her at that time and I have never regretted it, and neither has she. She has nothing but respect for me today for having the strength to say *NO* when that was the right answer. She has been sober for about 30 years.

Every so often a new person shows up at a meeting and is complaining about the bad break that came about that brought them to the program and when I get a chance to talk to them on a personal level the first question, I ask them is: "If that had not happened would you be here right now?" and their usual response is, "Probably not".

The *right decision* is not always the most popular one and I may be misunderstood when I make it, but in *good conscience* I do try to muster up the strength to make it. Writing the check would have been the *easy way* and I may have been applauded for doing it but, for me, it would have been the more *selfish* thing to do. That single act may have been the turning point in her life, but no one can predict the outcome of any decision we make. As I look back on it now. If no one ever said *NO* to me, I may never have changed and could have reached the point of no return and ended badly. Sometimes I must risk the disapproval of those that do not understand me. I, however, must make sure that my *motives are unselfish*.