

The Evolution of Alcoholism

The Jigsaw Process

By Rick R.

There's no way of knowing how the life of a newborn child is going to turn out, and if there was, we could simply make the adjustments to its environment, education, and other similar needs, as it evolved into adulthood. Providing a safe, loving, and nurturing home life is a good start but even that, is no guarantee of success. In the formative years we develop instinctive drives to protect ourselves from perceived dangers, and how we control these instincts usually is the measure of how well balanced we turn out emotionally. So much of the A.A. program involves the understanding of these instinctive drives and our willingness and our ability to come to terms with these natural impulses when they far exceed their intended purpose.

Each year during the winter months my wife puts out a jigsaw puzzle and as the days go by, we find times we sit around the table and chat and spend time together. As we dump the puzzle out of the box, we first turn all the pieces right side up and spread them out. As we do this, we find some pieces with straight edges that form the perimeter, and they are easy to figure out. The easiest pieces to decipher are the four corners and that is where we start. These pieces form the framework of the puzzle. Next, we find pieces that have numbers on them or other common characteristics such as colors or patterns that make it easy to fit them together. Others have different shades that can be compared to each other and reveal the general location of where it will fit in and soon everything starts to develop. When we get to the blue-sky part of the picture, things slow down a bit and these pieces are less obvious, but the puzzle isn't finished until all the pieces are in place and that may be the day, we shuffle off this mortal coil.

To me, all of this is similar to the way the pieces of Alcoholics Anonymous are pictured in my mind. The *desires to stop drinking* and to *come to meetings* are like the cornerstones that start the whole process moving. Next, *getting a sponsor, beginning to take the steps, getting into service, and helping others* and so on, are some of the *framework pieces* that are obvious to most of us. Next, we start to recognize some of the more obvious defects of character that need to be addressed and they are numerous if we are strong enough to admit it. If we are not, the picture will never be complete. As we continue to clear up these issues (wreckage of the past) and put them behind us, it would be easy to rest on our laurels and be satisfied with half measures. If, however, we are diligent about continuing this process of examining our motives for everything we do, until it becomes second nature, our life will become a rewarding adventure and all those negative emotions are replaced daily with feelings of wellbeing. This is the blue skies portion of the puzzle, as I see it, and the part that many of us often miss, simply because of indifference and we may miss out on the freedom and peace of mind we seek.

If you are the one of those that finds themselves in that malaise, let me encourage you to consider revisiting those items that you skipped over and let your conscience rather than your EGO win this battle. It may be the best decision you have made since you made the decision to come to AA. Those misguided instincts that fueled those faulty behaviors have had their way far too long. Let's get those pieces of the puzzle into place and see where it takes us. I guarantee that you won't regret it.