

# Fear of a Moral Inventory

## Those Tormenting Ghosts of Yesterday

By Rick R.

Over the years, I have watched the differing patterns of AA members and the degree of the importance of Thoroughness applied to the steps as opposed to simply abstaining from alcohol. With all the empathy and compassion in my heart I try to be available to everyone with an explanation of what I perceive to be the biggest *Stumbling Block* that stands in the way of the unfortunate ones that never seem to reach the degree of *Happiness and Peace of Mind* that the program offers. When I am approached by someone who is struggling with this issue my first question would be, "Have you completed a thorough Fourth and Fifth step" and if they are honest about it, we have a chance to revisit that part of the program and *Neutralize those Tormenting Ghosts of Yesterday*. I was *that guy* in my first attempt at taking the steps and rather than dealing with it, I just went to meetings and told funny stories until an event in my life caused me to *take a second look at the inventory process*. I am so glad that I got it right the second time around, for if I had not, I can see no possible way that I could have followed up with the remaining steps of the program. Most alcoholics are not proud of their past behaviors and live in a constant state of *guilt and shame*. They believe that they were responsible for those behaviors and that is where the *alcohol became the solution* to their problem until it stopped working. There is a difference between *Responsibility and Accountability*. Most alcoholics believe that they are responsible for becoming an alcoholic and that is the *Biggest Misconception* concerning this subject, unless, at childbirth, you had the capacity to understand alcoholism and the ability to decide that you wanted to become an alcoholic. From birth, until we took our first drink, we were conditioned to the degree that alcohol affected us differently than it did for the normal person. Our minds were diseased, and we had no choice in the matter. The behaviors that followed were the symptoms of the disease. Once we are aware of this perception and become willing to be accountable for those behaviors and make restitution for wrongs done, who could fault us for that? As we continue the steps of the program, we start by recognizing those old habits and they are not too difficult to change. We begin that process as soon as we start attending meetings and hear others share their experience, we deal with the obvious things upfront and if we continue to examine our motives, in time the load gets lighter. Now comes the Stumbling Blocks I referred to earlier, *Those Tormenting Ghosts of Yesterday*. *There is a big difference between a Habit and a Deed*. Habits can be changed, in time, as we establish a new track record and we become an entirely different person in character. Deeds are a different matter. *We cannot change history*. I am sure that we all have done things that we would hope that they remain a secret forever, but when they measure up to the term "Tormenting Ghosts" we need to deal with them if we wish to have some degree of Happiness and Peace of Mind. We cannot change our history, but we can change our Perception of those deeds as *Symptoms of the disease of Alcoholism* and were part of the conditioning and often things that happened even before we ever took a drink and as painful as they may be, if we spend the rest of our lives living by those unselfish principles and habits, in time, our actions will far outweigh our guilt and shame. We only live once, and no one is without them. It would be a shame to let something that happened years ago keep us in pain because of a symptom of a disease. They are not what we Perceived them to be, and we can bring them to a natural conclusion.