

# The Guilt and Shame of Alcoholism

## The Peace and Happiness of Right Living

By Rick R.

Coming from a life of poverty in Pittsburgh in the early 1940s, I was conditioned by the environment that I was raised in. I did a lot of things I was not proud of as a youth. Had I known the consequences of those actions I might never have developed into an alcoholic but there was no way of changing the history of my youthful behavior. I could blame it on my family environment, but then, who would my family get to blame their problems on? Coming from a family of 10 Siblings, divorced parents, on welfare, and the absence of positive role models was not an easy thing to overcome. Most of my family drank excessively and by the age of 15, I was drinking right along with them which only broadened my sense of fear and insecurity that returned upon waking each morning. I had the feeling that I would have to fend for myself if I were going to survive and at the young age of 17, I enlisted in the U. S. Navy and was removed from the undisciplined surroundings at home to a safe and disciplined environment aboard ship where all my needs were met so long as I was able of performing my duties. I advanced in Rate rapidly, and I could continue my drinking habits in the off hours. The life of the fleet sailor would have been fine with me, but that all changed when I became a husband and a father. My marriage lasted only 11 months and I came home from the sea to an empty unit in Navy Housing and gone was my wife, my son, my car, and my dignity. I continued drinking heavily for two more years and went through a divorce by correspondence, all over the Pacific. I started missing morning muster on board the ship and with the fear of losing my navy career, I woke up one morning, called Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and found my first meeting. I arrived and was greeted by three empathetic members and within two minutes the obsession with drinking was gone and has never returned. Up to that moment in time I thought that I was responsible for all the shameful deeds of my past but as I got more familiar with the program, I came to understand that I was inflicted with the disease of Alcoholism long before I was capable of understanding it. As I got more familiar with the program, I found that I was not responsible for contracting that disease, but I was accountable for my behaviors and that I could be restored to a somewhat normal life if I was willing to revisit those selfish deeds and behaviors of the past and make restitution to those I harmed. This did not happen overnight. It took years of evolution just to understand this process and to reprogram my mind, adopting the habit of examining the motives for everything I do in my life and to practice unselfish principles concerning all my behavioral patterns. I liken it to a rock tumbler effect. Slowly but surely all the rough edges are worn away and I became the person I have always wanted to be. The main obstacle that stood in the way of my progress was recognizing when my EGO was running the show, as it often was, and living by the dictates of my Conscience in all my decision making. Over a long period of time, living by these unselfish principles became second nature and as the result, most of my decisions are already made for me and these principles are not flexible. I do these things without fanfare as to not bring attention to myself and the result has been a life of peace and happiness that never could have happened had I not desperately surrendered to the wonderful program of Alcoholics Anonymous.