

They Are Not at Fault

Low Self Esteem

By Rick R.

I am always listening to the different ways that members of the A.A. program try to articulate their perception of their day-to-day problems and what causes them and what can be done about them. I experienced the same type of confusion in my early days and it has taken me a very long time to convince myself to trust the A.A. process and to be totally honest with myself about those issues and I can honestly say that they got it right when they suggested that we “thoroughly follow this path” and that is what I do, to the best of my understanding. It was very hard to let down my egocentric guard in the beginning and even after many years in the program I still had to be very vigilant about my motives for every decision I make.

About twenty years ago, while listening to some members being critical of one of the newer members of the group, I heard this loud popping sound. That was my head coming out of my “*you know what*”. They were accusing him of the same things that I recognized in myself when I was new to the program, and it gave me a new respect for how I treat other people. A friend of mine once said that “*most forms of criticism and character assassination stem from low self-esteem*”. Recognizing these things in myself, and not letting my EGO convince me that I’m superior to anyone has been the most profound leap in my spiritual development that I have experienced in all my years in Alcoholics Anonymous.

They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. (Big Book pg.58). If I want people to accept me, knowing that I am flawed myself, then how can I stand in the judgment of anyone else simply because that person has not been as fortunate as I have and has not yet been able to let down his guard? Those critics themselves also deserve my understanding as well for they are just displaying symptoms of alcoholism by being judgmental. We have all been conditioned to defend our turf this way. I have learned that, if I want forgiveness for my flaws, then I will have to be accepting of those other people and have the strength to look beneath the surface and try to understand the things that trouble that person and replace my criticism with empathy and compassion.

As I practice this little exercise on everyone that seems to act outside of the norms of acceptable behavior, I remove one more of those little mental conflicts that used to keep me awake at night. If, when I was new in the program, I could have understood this simple principle and the peace of mind that has ensued as the result, I would have cut to the chase and never looked back, but it wasn’t that simple. I had to unlearn all the faulty behaviors that I employed and replace them with unselfish, proven principles while my EGO fought me every step of the way. I’m happy to report that this approach has put my EGO in the back seat and my conscience rides right up front with me and I am looking forward to my next late sobriety revelation.