

UNDERSTANDING THE OBSESSION

When carrying the message to those who are normal drinkers, understanding the compulsion of alcoholic drinking is baffling. Many people “in recovery” also have a difficult time understanding it. Professionals who treat alcoholics, well meaning as they are, sometimes focus on the symptoms of the problem and not enough on the root causes. They often measure their success based upon the length of time a person abstains from alcohol. At first blush, this seems to be working. The alcoholic may be introduced to the Rehab Support environment and is somewhat intrigued, and often willing to play along for awhile if it means getting the wife/boss/judge off his back.

Things go ok for awhile, but what often happens is, the pink cloud goes away. He starts to find fault with the process and starts to point out why he is different. Being sober for a month or two he then declares that **he can stay on sober his own**. His family doesn't have a good defense for the crafty alcoholic's argument. He goes home, back to work, and everything goes well for awhile. Very seldom does a man get to that stage and stays sober for any length of time **on his willpower alone**. Soon he tries some controlled drinking.

Soon starts the heart-breaking disappointments, the deceptions, the lies, the denial, the closet drinking, and the blaming of others for his problems. The family and loved ones try everything to convince him to stop drinking, but the lure of the bottle is too strong, and he fails again and again. After years of tears and agonizing over what she can do, his wife is finally faced with the reality that it's never going to get better. She musters up the strength to pack her things, takes the kids, and leaves him knowing that she will be misunderstood, and sometimes vilified by **his** family. The pain for her has been unbearable. Her prospects for the future are uncertain, but she knows that she can't go back to what they had. There's no reprieve. She's gone.

WHY? Asks the normal person, would anybody put the bottle before his wife, his children, and everything in his life. Well, the alcoholics who have recovered from this malady, and have been restored to a somewhat normal life, often understand how the practicing alcoholic could do such a thing in the face of everything he has to lose, mainly because they have been through the same, or similar ordeals to some degree or another. They also know that, until this man has reached his bottom, it's unlikely that anything will get in the way of his drinking. The delusion (FAULTY PERCEPTION) is still there. The thought of living without alcohol is terrifying.

On a scale of **1** to **10** the normal person awakens in the morning at an emotional level of **8** while the alcoholic awakens at a level of **2**. Neither knows the emotional level of the other. The normal one doesn't understand why the alcoholic is so silent/depressed/disgruntled/unhappy,

etc. everything seems fine to him. What's the problem? The alcoholic, on the other hand (being at a **2**) can't understand why the normal guy is so up-beat, after all, the world is a cold and hostile place to him. There are wars, the economy, sickness, not much to look forward to. What's the use? He feels he is looking up from the bottom of a deep pit. (**2**)

When the alcoholic is in that pit and takes a drink, he goes from a **2** to an **8 1/2** and halfway through his second drink he feels normal and everything is right with the world, no problem here! On the other hand, when a normal drinker takes a drink, he goes from an **8** to an **8 1/2**, it's nice but he wouldn't give up his life for it, and the next day, he's back to work. This is normal. The emotional level of an alcoholic will always be at a **2** unless he changes his perception of the world around him and decides to make the change in his attitude and behavior concerning his inability to control his life. The answers for me were in the AA program where I had a profound **change of perception**, or a (**Spiritual awakening**) if you like. The delusion that I could drink like a normal person was smashed. I know that if I neglect the evidence that I've experienced before and after I came to AA, I risk doing irreparable damage to myself and others, and worse than that, I risk **wasting the only life God gave me**. What a tragic thing that would be when the solution was laid at my feet. All I had to do was surrender. It's important to have the ability to relate the nature of this merciless obsession to the alcoholic, and to all others involved with the alcoholic when they ask.

As the result of following this path, I am at an **8** almost every day of my life. A bad day for me is a **7**. If I stop growing spiritually, I will start to go back down the scale again and as I approach a **5** or a **4**, a drink might start looking good to me and it would be only a matter of time before I'd be back at the old game again. Knowing this, I am vigilante about my priorities, and I stay in the safe (spiritual) zone. That is so much better than the alternative.

Rick R.