

# Understanding Step One

Sometimes We Pick the Fruit Before its Ripe

By Rick R.

I wish I could say that everyone that enters the doors of AA has an equal shot at getting sober and staying that way for the rest of their lives but, depending on the different reasons why each individual decides to give AA a chance, coupled with the degree of desperation that caused that person to delve into what the program has to offer, we get a variety of different results. When I arrived at my first meeting, I was desperately looking for what I thought was a solution to an impossible situation. I was defeated and absolutely demoralized. Within minutes of being exposed to the sober members of that group I was convinced that I had found the solution to my hopeless condition and the desire to drink was removed from me on the spot and has never returned. That was on Oct. 15, 1969. I wish every new member could have that type of experience, but we know that many of us are not that receptive in the beginning. Most of the members of that early group were over forty years old and I was only 28 yrs. old but I was the exception at that time. Meetings were much smaller since there were no rehab facilities intervening in the alcoholic's drinking escapades, so they did not start hitting their bottom till their forties or fifties and it had something to do with midlife crisis or was that just a coincidence. What I do see that is different from my experience is the blurred line when comes to the first requirement for AA membership: "a desire to stop drinking." If employer told me that I had to stop drinking, considering the relief I got from the bottle, I doubt that I would have been as receptive to getting sober, and if I had, I am sure I would have relapses as much as any of those who, unfortunately, struggle with staying sober. It appears that many of the AA members of today have seen a high percentage of relapses and they attribute that as an abysmal success ratio in AA, but they assume that just because they were sent to AA, from a rehab facility that they should be lumped in with those, like me, who had a desire to stop drinking and came in looking for answers. These relapses are the natural result when the desire to drink is stronger than the desire to stay sober.

In the Foreword to the second edition of the Big Book it says: Of alcoholics who came to AA, and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way: 25% sobered up after some relapses. I often ask a newcomer what caused them to give AA a visit and most of them say that the main reasons were DUI's, Work related requirements, and spouse's ultimatums. Occasionally someone says, "I just ran out of ideas, and I need help". The latter is usually the one in ten that stays sober without relapse. I also believe that if you counted only the ones that came in searching for answers, the same ratio as in the foreword to the Big Book would still apply. Seventy five percent is not bad. The good news is that many of the members that are here as the result of intervention or other motivations often become what they refer to as the "educational variety" often get sober years before they would have had they not been intervened upon. We treat these newcomers with empathy, compassion and understanding. The awareness in the community has taken away much of the stigma (not all) of being cursed with the disease of alcoholism and where we had meetings totaling ten or twelve members, we now have twenty to forty members attending. Sometimes the fruit gets picked before it is ripe, but it is never discarded.