

Adopting a New Value System

A Life Based on Proven A.A. Principles

By Rick R.

I spent most of my adolescent years attempting to get the *attention* and the *approval* of the people around me, and it seldom worked out the way I planned it. The harder I tried, the worse it got. Why didn't they appreciate my *wit and wisdom*? The more I was rejected the more bizarre I behaved, and this began a misguided approach to my *decision making*. I had formulated my own concept of right and wrong and did things to be unique, but I never got the respect I was seeking. I seldom did anything that I could lay claim to for myself except for those *misguided escapades*. This was true before I ever drank a drop of alcohol, and even more so throughout my drinking days. When I entered AA, I *identified* with just about everything I had read and heard, and I began to recognize where I went wrong in my youth. I realized that I had no *direction in my life*, no *moral compass* to speak of, and that the failure in my personal relations manifested itself in *low self-esteem* (self-loathing). I felt inferior, unworthy, disrespected, isolated, unappreciated, disliked, etc. etc. I was going to have to depend on something outside of myself to govern my judgment and my decision making. One of the first default positions I would take to surrender to these new realities was to concede to the fact that *my brain does not process information properly*, and that I was going to have to trust in something more reliable. *Principles, what a concept!* There are people who believe that if we all lived by one simple principle, we would not need any other laws on this planet, and that principle is *The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you*. That was a good starting point, although I found it *easier said than done*, it did give me perspective and understanding of how I could begin adopting a value system where I did not have to originate my own rules.

While reading a book on economics, the author stated that "*a man who lives by principles has 99% of his decisions already made for him*". With that in mind, I began to establish a system of principles that are consistent with the AA program, and, I might add, with most of the other successful philosophies of life. I would read the *St. Francis Prayer in The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12)* daily. *I attend a step study meeting weekly to reinforce these principles*. I try to make sure that I am not modifying these standards to evade the tougher actions.

One day, I was carping and complaining about another member of our group, to one of my mentors at that time, and he suggested that I try to *place principles before personalities*. I responded, yes, but I do not agree with his principles. He then said, it was not *his principles* that we are talking about, but that it was *my principles*. He then informed me that we cannot be selective about who and when we apply these values. I must treat everyone with respect, and that goes for *the smallest, innocent child to the most errant rogue that I might encounter*. I know that it seems like an impossible task, but I assure you that if you start with the child and work your way to the rogue, it will get easier, if you do not cave into your ego. One day at a time I practice these new-found principles over and over until they become common-place and these new principles and values have served me well.