

Alcoholism: A Disturbing Malady

Understanding the Alcoholic Thought Process

By Rick R.

Many of us, in Alcoholics Anonymous, have lost our families, our jobs, our friends, and even our health before we were desperate enough to deal with our problem. WHY? Asks the normal person, would anybody put the bottle before his wife, his children, and his career and just about everything else 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 all been through the same, or similar ordeals to some degree or another. They also know that, until this man has reached his bottom, it is unlikely that anything will get in the way of his drinking. The delusion (Faulty Perception) is still there. To him the thought of living without alcohol (white knuckling it) is terrifying. Try to look at it this way:

On a scale of 1 to 10 the normal person awakens each morning at an emotional level of 8. The alcoholic awakens at a level of 2. Neither knows the emotional level of the other. The normal one does not understand why the alcoholic is so silent/depressed/disgruntled/unhappy, etc. Everything seems fine to him. What is the problem? The alcoholic, on the other hand (being at a **2**) cannot 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, responsibilities, financial problems, 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 is 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 return to a **2** and he continues to get progressively worse until he loses more than he was willing to lose. That is when he begins to realize that he will probably never be able to drink successfully, and if he is ready to ask for help, he has a chance to salvage 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 I get to live, to a chemical that is closer to gasoline or lighter fluid than to the romantic way I used to perceive it. What a tragic thing that would be when the solution was laid at my feet. All I had to do was surrender.

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.