

An Education in the Art of Living

Sharing our Experience, Strength, and Hope

By Rick R.

For the newcomer, the first 164 pages of the Big Book contain the framework of how to overcome the disaster of a life consumed by Alcoholism. As I drank myself into the corner of life and ran out of options, I desperately searched for answer, and something told me to try Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and there I found People who had overcome most of the troubling issues of life. Each chapter in the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) has a certain subject, and they try to explain specific areas of our lives where we could improve our thoughts and behaviors. It seems that if we did what they suggested in those 164 pages everything would be fine with us alcoholics; but wait! Next, they published The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) to give more amplifying information as to how to incorporate the steps into our daily lives. As I continued to progress in the program it caused me to seek a vastly more serious understanding of the depth of this disease and how serious my symptoms were. The first 164 pages just scratched the surface, but they gave me a challenge as to what degree of commitment I would pursue as I began to uncover defect after defect in a Thousand Facets of my sick mentality. Fear, insecurity, and my EGO dogged my every step and as I become strong enough to overcome my Ego driven approach to these issues my Conscience started getting a foothold and it motivated me to dig deeper yet and pursue a life based on unselfish Principles and to abandon the faulty thinking of the past. As I continued to grow, I had to come to terms with the understanding of a Power greater than myself and I was encouraged to read a book by Emmet Fox entitled "The Sermon on the Mount" considered to be the inspiration that the founders of the AA program incorporated into the Spiritual Solution to the doubters like me, and it removed all those doubts. Next, I had to learn how to become a good Husband, Father, Friend, Coworker, and so on. As we share our experiences with each other we are in the state of learning how to solve those Thousand Facets of our sick mentality. My wife came home from an Al Anon meeting, in my early years of sobriety, all excited about the topic of "Examining our Motives. That one little statement changed my entire way of thinking about my behavioral problems. Selfishness---Self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. (BB pg.62) If selfishness is the root, (motive) then unselfishness is the obvious solution. That simple understanding set, in place, a habit of living by unselfish motives and as a result, I am not ashamed of anything I do today, I have a clear conscience, and it is so much easier than I thought it would be. It does not say generous, it just says unselfish. DUH! The world is full of supporting information concerning all the facets of the different mental troubles the alcoholic is faced with when seeking answers. When we use the word, Love, I thought it was a feeling, but I found a version of Love in a book by Scott Peck's, The Road less Traveled that defines Love as: Caring for and Nurturing another Person's Soul. It is an *action* word, and I can Love everyone even if they do not love me back by wanting the best for them and offering my help. Using these examples is my way of encouraging everyone who finds it difficult to experience the quiet satisfaction that they expect to receive from the program, to find the answers by looking deeper into the subject and seek out the answers that help you to set, in place those unselfish Principles and Habits which lead to, as an old friend refers to as, Peace of Mind and a Quiet Heart.