

Correctable Habits and Unforgettable Deeds

Have you ever done something you regretted?

By Rick R.

If the sixth and seventh steps are hard to sink your teeth into, as it was for me, it could be that we rushed into the fourth and fifth steps before we were strong enough to come completely clean. This often happens when a person is on shaky ground. As things start to settle down and we have come to terms with steps two and three, it is time to address the first action steps and do the fourth step inventory with the guidance of a sponsor or an experienced and trusted member of the program. This part of the program is concerned with discovery and accountability by documenting past behaviors and the defects of character that were the root cause of those behaviors. Once we discover these things, we take ownership of those thoughts and behaviors by admitting them to God, to ourselves, and to another human being; usually a sponsor, leaving out nothing. This is a tall order, and this is where we are at a point where many of us decide whether we are going to thoroughly expose our deepest secrets or are we not strong enough to take that very important risk. Habits are not too difficult to change but, the regrettable deeds of the past, that do not fall into the "habit" category (tormenting ghosts of yesterday) cannot be changed but they can be neutralized by this process. How many people do you know that have never done something, in their life, that they really regret? There are many wonderful people on this planet but there are relatively few saints. No one is perfect. If an A.A. member who has been around for awhile, finds him or/herself willing to carry these regrets to the grave with them, they may never take a drink again, but it is unlikely that they ever enjoy the peace of mind that the program promises, simply because those secret regrets will, most likely, block them from doing anything that might expose those secrets and it's unlikely that they can give due diligence to the remaining steps of the program and deal only with the more superficial issues, which would be unfortunate. If, however, a person in this position were to explain to the person that he/she takes the fifth step with that these things do exist, but they do not feel strong enough to relate them to another person at this time, this would open the door to doing the rest of the steps, and as they do become stronger, they can revisit those matters. When all the other issues are addressed, you will be much more willing to rid yourself of those tormenting ghosts of yesterday. Denying them will keep a person at constant risk of relapse. We only live once and no one would ever fault a person for admitting that they were not strong enough to be that foreword with these issues and not quite prepared to rush into them but denying that they exist is a personal choice that only you can make and if you make the right choice, the rewards will be endless.