Desperation is a Great Motivator

Sincerity is a Great Healer

By Rick R.

Recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) affects people in many ways. The first and most obvious is their ability to abstain from the use of alcohol for without that there can be no recovery. Next is the willingness to abandon the idea that they can do this on their own and to seek the help of something outside of their own failed way of thinking. Third is the act of surrendering and "buying in" completely (so to speak}. At this point, the recovery process may differ depending on your age, gender, economic situation, marital status, legal woes, and other side issues. It is not our role to judge anyone who comes to A. A. seeking help nor is it our job to bail them out of their current situation out of sympathy. That does not mean that we cannot buy a meal for a hungry soul or give them a few bucks for gas. We are recovering alcoholics and our role is to listen and to try to understand what they need from us consistent with the principles we have learned and relate our experiences with them. Younger arrivals usually are duel addicted and the average long-term alcoholic that has not experienced the drug culture lifestyle may have a difficult time identifying with them. Recovered addicts usually share about their Rip Off mentality as a user, while the average common variety alcoholic talks about guilt and shame and the need to pay their bar-tab. A high percentage of our membership arrive in their forties in the middle of, or on the cusp of the threat of a divorce, and without experienced feed-back, make bad decisions where, in some cases, they could have salvaged their marriage and saved the children the damage caused by divorce. My main question when greeting a newcomer at a meeting is usually "What brings you to A.A.?" Usually, their response comes in the form of a complaint about the situation they are in, (divorce papers, Dui, Fired from job) etc. My next question is, (If that hadn't happened, would you be here today?" Their response is usually, "Probably not." I then explain that my first wife could have filed for divorce ten times before she was desperate enough to do it and, had she not, I would, still be out there circling the drain or worse. For two years I tried to convince her to take me back, but it did not happen. Desperation brought me to the door of A.A. where I began the life I live today. This type of perspective usually gets their attention, and they often turn out to be more accepting of the need to change. Next, I will share the experience that worked for me. It may come in a sincere statement such as," I know that I have been wrong about what a husband/father's responsibilities are and that I am an alcoholic and I believe that I've found the solution to my drinking problem. You have suffered from all of this, and I have learned greatly from the mistakes I have made, and I intend to do my best to make it right. Whatever the outcome is, I want to minimize the trauma to the children as we move forward." This type of sincerity sometimes takes the pressure off and gives her some breathing room and in some cases, opens the door to salvaging the marriage. My question is: Can you live up to these proposed actions?

Another area where sincerity and ownership of past mistakes has an unexpected outcome is in the courtroom. Judges have heard every flimsy excuse in the world and can see right through all the BS of a con artists, and they are not fooled by them. Believe me when I say that I have witnessed more than my share of these two approaches to resolving the damages of alcoholic behavior, and the sincere approach far outweighs the con job, most of the time, and you cannot fake sincerity.