

Focusing on Too Much Too Soon

The Gift of Gradual Understanding

By Rick R.

I'm not convinced that anything I write in this article will mean much to the newer members of the program simply because they have very little comprehension of the depth that they will have to delve into matters, concerning their mental and emotional makeup, to restore them to the life that is promised to those that thoroughly follow this path. There is a good reason why alcohol is only mentioned in the first half of Step One and life issues are what make up the remainder of the Twelve Steps. Until that person is desperate enough to surrender completely and has an honest desire to stop drinking, it's a cinch he won't have the capacity to thoroughly follow this path. The heartbreaking thing about this dilemma is that many of those that are rushed into the process of taking the steps before they are desperate will do the half measures approach and that is why we see so many relapses, especially in younger members. This all sounds like I think that this is a bad thing but to me it is not. The fact that someone or something intervened in their life and exposed them to the program, even before they were ready, gives them a chance to stop most of the destructive behavior that would have occurred had they been ignored by their loved ones, and the cat is out of the bag, and it can never be put back into it. He/she may have many relapses but on the other hand, many alcoholics never get exposed to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) at all and that is a tragedy. I have been observing this pattern for over for fifty years and I can't become a *parent* to a new member or to those of us that still think that protecting the new person from drinking is their role. If a person is serious about the true message of the program of A.A. I might suggest that they do a little more research and prove me wrong. The following is an approach that I think conforms to what the founders would approve of: When I see a new face arrive at our meeting I first introduce myself and ask if they have been here before. If the answer is no, I get him/her a cup of coffee and invite him/her to find a comfortable seat and listen to the different sharing that goes on. They usually are surprised at what they hear and feel comfortable with the way they were greeted. I suggest that they come back and observe what goes on at the meetings. (No preaching) Once that person shows an interest in what we do to deal with their drinking problem and I have a chance to set them on the A.A. path before they get misdirected. Next, I refer them to three short excerpts from the Big Book and the 12&12 and help them to understand what we can do to help them. I first have them read from the bottom of Page 100 in the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) through page 103. Next, I have them read Pages 30, 31, and the first paragraph of page 32. Lastly I have them read the third and fourth page of step one in the 12&12. Especially where it states that: "When one alcoholic planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady that person could never be the same again". This, I believe is the message that the program suggests in order that there be no misunderstandings about what we can and can't do for those that seek help. Once this understanding is accepted, then you have a very good chance of being an asset and not a liability. Potential sponsors may also find these excerpts helpful.