

Living Life One Day at a Time

A Design for Living That Really Works

I don't believe I've ever witnessed a person that came to Alcoholics Anonymous, of his own accord, with a desperate desire to stop drinking, and practiced the steps of the program as a way of life, that didn't get sober and stay that way. I've heard it said many times that it works for everyone that does it. Usually when a person has lost more than they were willing to lose or is about to lose more than they were willing to lose, they become desperate enough to question the path they are on and where it will end up for them. They may try going on the wagon several times before they become convinced enough to throw in the towel and come to A.A. to seek help. This usually happens when their desperation outweighs their denial. The awareness in the community about the disease of Alcoholism has greatly changed the different reasons that many of the people that come into the rooms today have relapse after relapse and, unfortunately, in the community, they often see that as the failure of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the A.A. program, it says that the only requirement or membership is a desire to stop drinking. We read this at the beginning of every meeting. In the late sixties and the early seventies, as the results of the decision to classify alcoholism a disease, Doctors and Judges began preempting problem drinkers by sending them to newly formed treatment centers funded by medical insurance and when they completed their stay at the center, most of them were given the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" and encouraged to go to A.A. meetings. When introduced to the program that way, a very small percentage of them stay sober without having relapses. They may eventually concede to the fact that they are Alcoholics after they relapse several more times and that is not a bad thing. There is a statement in the foreword to the second edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous, it states: Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way: 25% sobered up after some relapses. I think that 75% is a great rate of success. I think that Rehabilitation centers do save lives by treatment and by referring them to A.A. long before they have a desire to stop drinking but we can't compare them to the ones that drink and lose everything and walk in the doors desperate. I don't particularly like it when I hear people in the rehab industry making the statement that A.A. has an abysmal record of success but Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, and I may add that A.A. does not defend itself. We in the A.A. program know how strong the program is and we understand that when an alcoholic doesn't reach the point of desperation to want to stop drinking, they may need to relapse. To clarify this, I would like to refer to the First Step in the 12X12: To the doubter we could say, "Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't try some control drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism? This attitude brought immediate results. . . . Following every spree, he would say to himself, "Maybe those A.A.'s were right. . . ." After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us. John Barleycorn himself had become our best advocate. "Any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure." (BB pg. 101) What we can do is to show that person *a design for living that really works*. An old country boy, when asked: Why do we have so many relapses in A.A. and he replied: "Well, sometimes we pick the fruit before it's ripe." And I might add: Sometimes we pick the fruit before it's ripe, but we never discard it.