

Neglect, The Elephant in the Room

Continuous Credibility Leads to Integrity

By Rick R.

When we are satisfied that we have given steps one through five our best effort and have identified the most glaring defects of character and shortcomings, it is now time to affect the changes in the most obvious of our faulty thoughts and the behaviors that stem from those thoughts by addressing them in *steps six and seven*. To be successful in this endeavor, we must first get honest with ourselves and begin to *establish some credibility* and by that, I mean *always doing the things we say we are going to do*. We bring most of the basic flaws out in the open as we become aware of them. Then, if we are sure that we are committed to the program, we will want to set in place, principles to live by that cut off our own escape when we stumble and want to revert to that old way of thinking. Most of us do this with the help of a sponsor or a mentor, if you like, and go by the book as best we can. I did what I thought was a thorough job of it, then one day, about thirty years ago, I was trying to park my car in a somewhat crowded parking lot and as I found the spot, I wanted there was a shopping cart blocking my way. I got out of my car and moved the cart aside, then parked my car. I then got that shopping cart and pushed it back to the store entrance, then went about my business. From that day on, when parking at any market, I search for a stray shopping cart and take it back to the store just to make up for all the times I shoved one into the flower bed and drove away. After telling that story at meetings over the years, I hear people telling how it is uncomfortable for them to leave the cart adrift in the parking lot, and we all get a big laugh out of it. Neglect, I can tell, the word *neglect* is only mentioned two times in the Big Book (pg. 97 and pg. 129) and two times in the 12&12. (pg. 81 and pg. 151) And seldom, if ever, has it been the topic of a meeting that I can recall. It is like the proverbial *elephant in the room*. As I started to catch myself shirking my responsibilities it became obvious to me that if I wanted to regain some form of self-respect and dignity, I was going to have to put the word *Neglect* on my list of shortcomings and *question my integrity*. Do I do what is right even when there is no one watching? If credibility is *always doing what I say I am going to do, then Integrity, to me, is a whole bunch of credibility*. To cut off my own escape I do routine things every day, that cost me nothing and the result of that is a clear conscience. If I am doing the little things that I should, I find it much easier to give the big things that same sort of attention. I never throw trash out of the car window, I pick up after myself, I never walk away from my bed in the morning without making it, and I liken that to being an unspoken prayer saying, I will be responsible, I will be orderly, I will be neat, and I will not be neglectful, I will be respectful, I will stay on the unselfish side of the ledger in all of my decisions, I sometimes revisit those pages in the Big Book and the 12&12 and I try my best not to ignore *the elephant in the room*.