

## Accept the Things We Cannot Change

95% is OK with me.

By Rick R.

About 90% of the AA meetings that I attend close with the Serenity Prayer. *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference, amen.* There are a lot of words synonymous with Serenity and they all amount to what I would call Peace of Mind. On page 417 in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book)* it says "And, Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.) Bingo!! So why has it taken me so long to settle on this simple sentence? The desire to drink alcohol was lifted from me from my very first meeting in AA and it has never returned. Prior to that, from the moment I woke up each morning until I got my first drink, I was an emotional wreck. The absence of that mental obsession with drinking freed me up and I was highly influenced by the collective message of the meetings that I attended. Over a long period of time, I started to recognize the cause and effect of my defects and shortcomings, and I began to address these issues with the help of the members of my group that seemed to have the answers for me. Dealing with the wreckage of the past and being in an environment where we talked about these issues made my journey much easier than I thought it would be. I had to deal with a failed marriage, child support, parenting issues, legal matters, and an assortment of life issues that stem from my neglect and irresponsibility. One of the things that often goes unnoticed about the process of clearing up the wreckage of the past is that while doing this I had stopped making those mistakes that caused all my grief. As a result of practicing the principles I have learned in the AA program I have regained the respect of my first wife and have been married for over 54 years to my current wife. I got it right the second time around, but I did not dismiss my need to correct the damage done in my first marriage.

Having said all of that, where do I address the acceptance statement? It would be easy for me to rest on my laurels, as they say, but I am never finished when it comes to examining my motives or how I act today. If I were finished, why would I still attend AA meetings? Over the years in the program, I noticed some habits that we Alcoholics seem to continue to discuss before and after a meeting such as the traffic on the freeway, the red-light systems, not enough parking at the market, the inconvenience of a rainstorm, politics, and religion, criticizing other people places and things. etc. For some reason, talking about all these inconveniences seems to be my way of distracting attention away from my own thinking and behavior. To put it in simple terms, there is a percentage of people driving on the freeway that are going faster than the speed limit, a percentage that will go slower than the speed limit others may cut me off, and that is never going to change. I cannot talk politics and religion over and over and I am never going to change that other person. I have two choices when I am traveling on the freeway. My first choice is to take it and my second choice is to leave it and take the back Rd"; But wait the speed limit is too slow on the back Rd, maybe I will take the freeway. All the issues that I have struggled with I have pro and con percentages and that is never going to change in this lifetime. Today I accept the things I cannot change and as a result I am at peace 95% of the time and that is good enough for me.