

Alcoholism: The Chalkboard of Life

Cleaning the Slate of Negativity

Most of us were born with a clean slate. From the very first day of our lives, we started to experience different emotions and those feelings had much to do with the way we evolved into who we are today. Instinctively we responded to the different threats and joys that we were faced with, and these were the things that established our strengths and weaknesses. That is true for most of us, but not all of us. I believe, our problems can be traced back to that conditioning we experienced as we formed our mental and spiritual makeup. The perception we have of ourselves may be likened to a chalkboard containing every experience of our lives. If we can look at it and be satisfied that we had a good track record, we would probably be comfortable with it and lead a normal life. If, however, we find ourselves on the negative side of the ledger for most of our lives, we may develop abnormal feelings of guilt and shame, and that may just be the reason alcohol gave us that buzz from our very first drink. In the beginning we get a temporary relief that tells us that we are fine, but it only lasts until we wake up the next morning and find ourselves in an even deeper pit. We reach for the bottle, and again it gives us that temporary relief, and we repeat this process over and over until desperation drives us to Alcoholics Anonymous, where we are encouraged to go through a process that can restore us to a, somewhat, normal life. Step five, for me, was the gateway to how I was going to live the rest of my life. Fortunately, for me, I took a leap of faith and disclosed all those, so called, "*tormenting ghosts of yesterday*," (12&12 pg.55) and I realize that the decision to do this was the hinge pin for my thoroughness, with the rest of the steps. Had I not cleaned the slate at that time I just don't see how I could have followed the spirit of truth and honesty, with myself and others that would have resulted in the peace of mind that I enjoy today. My inventory had to deal with shameful habits which had to be changed by the process suggested in steps six and seven. That was the easy part of step five. However, *those tormenting ghosts of yesterday* were another story. These were not habits, but deeds that I had done as an adolescent kid that seemed unforgivable. *No one should ever know; I would take them to the grave with me.* Mustering the strength to take that risk may have been the most crucial step forward I have ever made. My brain had been lying to me, after all; how bad could a thirteen-year-old kid be? That one decision is what I credit with giving me my life back and if I had not done it, I don't see how I could have given a good effort to the rest of the steps from behind that facade that I used to call life. I often hear members of the program that seem to resist looking deeper into their regrets and seem to build a wall of reasons why they don't need to, and I wonder if they might be caught up in the same dilemma that I was in when I took my fifth step. I wish I could reassure them that it is not worth the mental torment that it puts us through and that it may be a good idea to revisit that step and clean the slate. We cannot live alone with them; we need to talk to someone about them. (Even A.A. Oldtimers, sober for years, often pay dearly for skipping this step. 12&12 pg. 56) If, you are that person, I encourage you to try to garner the strength to take that risk, and clean the slate; after all, we only live once. Let us not waste the opportunity to live a happy and peaceful life.