

Attraction Rather Than Promotion

We Do Not Peddle Our A. A.

I came from a family of ten kids, six boys and four girls. Four of the boys and two of the girls developed into Problem drinkers. In my first couple of years of sobriety, I was so excited about what I had discovered in A.A., and as misguided as I was, I tried everything to get their attention. I Brought literature to them, I dragged each of them, one at a time, to a meeting with me, but instead of attracting them to the program, it seems to me that they heard just enough at the meetings to rationalize why it did not apply to them. It seemed like giving them an inoculation shot against A.A. In 1989, my nephew committed suicide by a gunshot wound to the head at the age of 37, Two months later; my brother hung himself in a hotel room with an electric cord at the age of 51, and a niece who hung herself in their garage, all deeply in the throes of alcoholism. One of my sisters (We can call her Alice) lived in Illinois and worked nights at a liquor store which she closed at midnight. Two years into my sobriety, my wife and I drove across country and visited her for three days as we were passing through on our way to Pittsburgh. At the time, I had laryngitis and could not talk very much. She would come home after midnight with a quart of gin, and she would drink until dawn, sleep during the day, then return to work and start the cycle over again. She was impressed by the change she had seen in me and was equally amazed at how my wife and I treated each other, and she commented that she wanted what she saw in us. Before we left, I circled the number of A.A. in her phone book and we continued, on our way. About three months after we returned to Los Angeles, I received a phone call from my younger sister who lived near me. During the conversation she said "Hey, did you know that Alice doesn't drink anymore"? I said, really? And she said, "No, she goes to that A.A.A." How cute, I thought. I immediately called Alice and she was talking the good talk and I knew she was in good hands. She has been sober, for over 50 years. My best 12 step call ever. I sometimes wonder if I could have had better results with my other family members if I had not tried to pressure them into quitting drinking, and just became a good example of what A.A. did for me and kept my mouth shut so they would not have had to eat crow when they became ready. I could say I had good intentions when I was early in sobriety, but I also had selfish intentions inside. I wanted to be the one responsible for their recovery, and that is not how I do my part these days. I have learned that no one can pick the day that the practicing alcoholic gets that gift of desperation, but I also know that it often happens right before he/she is ready to lose something he/she is unwilling to lose, or right after he/she has just lost something he/she was unwilling to lose, and if that situation arises, I want this program to be an attractive solution to their problem. And if they know that I am not an A.A. evangelist or one of those nuts from the nut house trying to sell him a bill of goods they may be more open to it. A Wise lady in my home group had a habit of saying," We don't peddle our A.A." and I try to apply that motto these days.