

# Double, Double, Toil and Trouble

My Mind was a Cauldron.

By Rick R.

The topic of mental freedom occasionally comes up in our A.A. Step Study meetings. My mind was rife with negative self-esteem issues such as: Guilt, Shame, Regrets, Self-loathing, Fear, etc. As an alcoholic, I ran from life issues and responsibilities and the weight upon my mind, was ponderous. Alcohol gave me temporary relief from those issues but as the disease progressed it got worse and when I finally ran out of options, my desperation led me to the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) where I found the answers.

The story that exemplified freedom in my life happened to me in my twenty-second year of sobriety when I received a phone call from the current husband of my first wife. He was reading me the riot act about an incident which involved my son and his mother and at the time he erroneously thought that I was involved in it as well. I tried to be patient and not say anything to provoke him. After he ran out of things to throw into the verbal sparring ring, he finally took one final shot by saying, "Well, I have heard stories about you, and you are no Angel". My response to this was, "I have done a lot of things in my life that I am not proud of, but I am not ashamed of anything that I have done in the last twenty-two years." The conversation ended peacefully.

Freedom from guilt and shame was what I became aware of because of that conversation. Then as I started to look back at all the other negative things on the list of maladjustments, I realized that most of them have been reduced to the point of irrelevance. Practicing these principles in all my affairs, I do not make as many mistakes, and I never do anything to intentionally hurt anyone. We cannot change one single event that happened in the past, but we can learn from them, and we can certainly do better in the present with only an occasional stumble. One of the most important ingredients for me is being totally honest about my motives for things I do on any given day. They are pure and unselfish.

Living by principles takes most of the decision-making out of my hands. That, I think, is what they meant when they wrote the second step. We depend on help outside of ourselves. By getting in the habit of doing it that way the turmoil between my ears slowly diminished and somewhere along the way my head has cleared up and most of the conflicts have subsided. What a blessing it is to fall asleep each night without all the endless, garbled calculations repeating themselves over and over in my mind until I fell asleep from pure mental exhaustion. You cannot put a price on Peace of Mind, and a person like me could not have come as far as I have in that Department without the program and the dedicated people around me in the fellowship.

If I had to sum it all up, I would have to say that freedom from that Cauldron, that used to be my thinking, would be first on the list. After years of trial and error, I seem to have settled into a pattern of thinking which is based on *unselfish* principles that I have come to embrace, and which have taken most of the guesswork out of what I do. There are no more sleepless nights due to the rat race in my head. I know that I am doing the best I can, based on what I have learned in Alcoholics Anonymous. I am at peace with myself and with others, for the most part. What more could a person ask for? The Cauldron is no longer Bubbling between my ears, and to me, that is freedom.