

# Getting Off on the Right Foot

## A New Beginning

By Rick R.

The world outside of Alcoholics Anonymous has little understanding of what goes on in A.A. meetings. In the last 40 years or so, we have been inundated with problem drinkers who were sent into rehab programs and sometimes come to us with a new perspective on what the Alcoholics Anonymous program is all about. Rehab programs are focused on the alcohol and the A.A. program is focused on re-learning how to live life.

The first step in the book: Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) is only four pages long and at the lower half of the third page it says: To the doubters we could say, "Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism? This attitude brought immediate and practical results. It was then discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again. Following every spree, he would say to himself, "Maybe those A.A.'s were right. . ." After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us. John Barleycorn himself had been our best advocate." I would also recommend going into the Big Book, (Alcoholics Anonymous) chapter three at the bottom of page 31 "We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take you long to decide if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of the jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

For more information about dealing with new comers and sometimes with their families, I would suggest reading from the middle of page 100-103 in the Big Book especially the paragraph containing the Greenland Icecap. This will give you a sound approach when interacting with doubters and with believers and you will be able to establish credibility with everyone in the program.

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. Half Measures avail us nothing. I believe that the message that the fore-going approach accomplishes that we are not able to do anything for him/her if they think that there is any possibility that they drink successfully. After someone has a relapse and comes back into the rooms, the first question I ask Him or Her is "How did it work out for you? We get a little chuckle out of it, and we may have just removed the idea that drinking will ever work for them again and they get a new perspective about practicing the A.A. program.