

Like the Layers of an Onion

No One can be Turned Away

By Rick R.

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. (Trad. Three 12&12) After many years of sobriety and practicing the AA principles to the best of my ability, I am amazed at what I see in the meetings that I attend. It was one of the most important developments in my later years of sobriety. Removing my judgmentalism of other people in AA, that have a desire to stop drinking. I have come to understand that tradition, but it did not happen immediately. I was overwhelmed with personal problems that eventually culminated into my surrender and came to AA searching for answers. I am so grateful that they did not turn me away because I had problems.

The AA Program is so much deeper than I ever could have imagined when I first entered it. Over time, I recognize the depth of each issue that we face when we come clean with ourselves and with the world around us. It is sometimes likened to the layers of an onion. The surface skin begins to fall away quickly as we address the drinking part of our disease. Each layer is preparatory to the next. As we recognize and begin to discard the negative side of our thoughts and behaviors, we begin to understand that our thinking is where the problems lie, and our behaviors are the symptoms of that faulty thinking when our natural instincts far exceed their intended purpose.

In my early days of sobriety my mentors suggested that if I plan to attend a certain number of meetings per week, one of them should be a step study meeting and I have followed that suggestion ever since. One of the benefits of that decision is that we study each step four times a year and each time I repeat a previous step I notice an improvement in my understanding of that step. In the presence of that group, I may hear 20 to 30 different perspectives on how to address my faulty thinking and all those viewpoints are stored in my mind as I peel away one more layer of the onion. I learned the value of living by unselfish principles and that simple understanding takes most of my decision-making out of my hands. Principles are not flexible, and I do not create my own principles. I do, however, have the ability to follow well-established ethics and even then, sometimes things may go wrong but my motives are of an unselfish nature, and I do my best. I learn to be prudent when it comes to my decisions. I learn to decide if it was my Ego or my Conscience making that choice and today my Conscience renders my Ego irrelevant for the most part. I have always known right from wrong but with my fears and insecurities I usually made the wrong, selfish decision and my conscience suffered. If I already know when I am doing the wrong thing, why am I praying to God when I already know the answer and still make the wrong choice? It is true that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking but in AA I found so much more.

Within the safety of my AA group, I get to test these qualities out and establish a new perspective, unselfish in nature, as I peel away layer after layer and my load gets lighter and lighter. I no longer look at this process to be ponderous. I now see it as exciting and I want to continue to look deeper into my spiritual condition, living by the dictates of my conscience, and I hope this process never ends as I trudge that road of happy destiny.