

Peace of Mind at Last

The Solution to My Mental Dilemma

By Rick R.

One of the promises in Alcoholics AA is "*we will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace*". Words like *serenity* were never used in my circle of friends but peace was not foreign to me, although I never had much of it. Like many of us, my brain was always in turmoil and as I look back on it now, I realize that that my, irrational, thoughts were almost always concerned with what other people were thinking and how I would respond to what they might say or think what they think I am thinking and blah blah blah. I did have thoughts of somewhat natural things, such as financial and parental responsibility but as I look back on it now, they were not my problem. When I drank, I was not looking for physical or material relief, I was trying to get some degree of *peace of mind*, and the booze did the job for a while.

The steps of the AA program are a framework which teaches us to start the process of cleaning up the wreckage of the past, and to set in place principles that ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of yesterday. I was as diligent as I could be as I went through the steps, and it still did not stop my mind from spinning. I have been attending a weekly step study meeting ever since I first got sober in 1969 and somewhere along the way I stumbled across *the solution to my mental dilemmas*. When I took my fourth step, the first thing on my list was: character assassination. I hated myself for the way I judged and criticized other people and my conscience never let me rest. The first person that I had to consider was my first wife. In the early 70s, I decided to stop vilifying her for making the difficult decision to leave me and from that day till now, I have been treating with love and kindness. Years later it occurred to me that if I could do that with her and still be willing to criticize others, that I would be hypocritical, so I started to apply the acceptance principle to everyone I know. Everyone gets amnesty and if I want forgiveness, I must give those other people the same latitude. Everyone has enough problems of their own and they do not need me being one of them. In the words of Shakespeare: "The quality of mercy is not strained; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.... It is twice blest; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes".

We in A.A. often hear someone referring to the mistakes of the past as a sack of rocks. I believe that sack has a few rocks in it, but I also see where there are a million pebbles in it also and as I attend that weekly step study meeting, it has a rock tumbler effect about it and each time I cycle through, it helps me to improve and deepen my own level of acceptance. It also helps me to redefine words and phrases that, for our purpose, can help us to better understand how to navigate the less obvious approach and for the topic of this article I would define *Peace of mind* as: *Absence of all unresolved mental issues*.

An old mentor of mine, in the early 70s once said: All I want out of life is "Peace of mind and a quiet heart". Now I understand what he meant.