

Problem by Problem or Principle by Principle

It Renders My EGO a Weak Contender

When people come through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous they are usually overwhelmed with problems. Some of these problems are of a legal nature, while others may be due to marital strife, and still others may just be because of desperation due to a life that has been spinning out of control. The one thing that is the common denominator in all of these matters is the use of alcohol otherwise, why would they be coming to A.A.? In the beginning you will hear the horror stories of the divorce proceedings or of the legal fees for the DUI case and you will see well meaning members of the program telling them how to get around some of these problems and when, occasionally, that person gets away with it, he thinks that the DUI was the problem, but as we know, it was but a symptom of the real problem, that being alcoholism. Most of the wreckage of the past is the result of our unbridled thinking and if, in the beginning, we focus only on getting out of trouble and not focusing on the thinking that got us into those difficulties in the first place, it often gives us the feeling that we are on safe ground and can relax. A half hearted effort concerning our decision making just leads to more faulty thinking and rationalizing why we do the things we do. This often leads to a succession of relapses before that person finally crosses that line where he is opened to change and if, at that time, he is encouraged to learn to live by proven principles and not to modify those principles to suit his/her own selfish agenda, he/she finally has a chance to live a meaningful life. My experience has been that, living by principles is much easier than anything I could have come up with myself. When we solve a problem and we don't change our behavior, it's only a matter of time before another similar problem arrives. We can solve one problem at a time or, we can set in place, a principle that governs many problems of a similar nature. Take for instance: Cash register honesty. This, to me, means much more than just not cheating the person at the cash register. It means that I should never take an unfair advantage of anyone. With this approach in mind, I think before I act and, I get it right the first time and as the result, I have a clear conscience. Why focus on one problem at a time when I can live by unselfish principles and take the decision making out of the equation. If I can just be honest with myself and do what's right, It takes away all of the guilt and shame and lightens my spirit. This is reward enough for me and it far outweighs any material gain I could have acquired by taking the selfish path and after practicing this *new* way of thinking, over a period of time, my load gets lighter and lighter. My EGO seems to run my problems and strives for material victory over them, while my Conscience decides my principles and when I follow the dictates of my conscience, I stop making the mistakes of the past and my spirit heals. I'm no longer ashamed of my behavior and over a period of time, as I continue to rely on my conscience to fashion a life of unselfish principles, a drink has no appeal to me and, in the end, it renders my EGO a weak contender.