

Restrain of Pen and Tongue

The Right Side of the Ledger

Upon entering Alcoholics Anonymous, I had to first address the drinking part of the program and that kept me busy for a while, but as time passed, I moved on to dealing with the rest of the steps. I thought I was doing well but as I look back on it now, I realize that I continued to delude myself for a long time. We did not use the word denial in those days, that came later. We talked about rationalizing, (making a socially acceptable excuse for a socially unacceptable act). I knew that in step 10 in the 12X12 it says "Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. This carries a top priority rating" but what does that mean to me? Some examples I read are as follows, Restraint of tongue and pen, Drop the word blame from my speech and thoughts, (Step 4), Quick tempered Criticism, Sulking, and Silent scorn Etc. Etc. These are just a few but you get the picture.

At that point in my development, my EGO was not ready to let go of me yet. It was telling me that, if I could manufacture a Noble excuse for why I did what I did, that was all that was necessary. Now, that was great for the record, but it was bad for my Conscience, and most people did not buy it anyway. I learned that if I were ever going to achieve the Peace of Mind that is promised, I would have to make these changes in myself. I would have to accept the world as it is and not try to throw my weight around so much, and I had to examine all my motives and be sure that they were honest and unselfish. I had to tend to my own business and let others be themselves. I do not have to participate with those who cross my boundaries, but I cannot criticize them. I imagine they are doing the best they can. This seemed hard at first but as I began to trust these principles, and fight off my EGO, the results were evident. I was in a conversation with several friends of mine in the program and I ask how can you talk about a third person without it being considered gossip or criticism? One of my friend's response to me was "All forms of criticism and character assassination Stem from low self-esteem". That simple comment changed my life for the better. It occurred to me that I had low self-esteem and from that day forward I reigned in my EGO and stopped gossiping about other people, and, in time, I began to feel much better about myself. Virtually all my mistakes of the past were symptoms of alcoholism and if I wanted forgiveness for my failures, I must be open minded to the idea that the mistakes of those other people are also symptoms of deeper-rooted emotional problems and how can I judge them for not being perfect. It did not happen overnight, and that was the hardest part to accept. That is where the self-restraint came in. I had to persevere and the change of attitude and the willingness to be patient paid off. I also learned that preventive maintenance was much better than damage control. Today it is simple for me. I just tried to go through each day and not do anything that I regret. It took a lot of effort at first, but I get through most days exactly that way. Today I am in the habit of doing the right thing. Selfishness was the root of all my problems and unselfishness is the root of all my Solutions. So long as I stay on the right side of the unselfishness Ledger my life is good. 😊