

RELAPSE

Why is it that some people come to AA and never want a drink again in their lives, while others come and have multiple relapses prior to recovery, and then there are others that never get sober at all? When I hear the discussions about this topic it seems to me that the most important requirement is often overlooked. *The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.* How many of us have a desire to stop drinking just because they got a DUI and were sentenced to attend so many AA meetings in place of jail time? I didn't, even after my 2nd DUI at the age of 22, and nobody suggested that I should stop drinking. I didn't have a desire to stop until I woke up one morning at the age of 28, divorced, alone, desperate, and emotionally depleted. The first thought that came to me was: I had better do something about my drinking as I was circling the drain and the only thing I could think of was to call AA. I made my 1st meeting on Oct. 15, 1969 and have never wanted a drink since that day.

I was one of the fortunate ones that came to AA with a *desire to stop drinking* and not just a desire to get out of trouble. There are some people that are sent here to fulfill a legal requirement and they sometimes discover something that they never knew existed and they become one that is of the "*educational variety*", as mentioned in Appendices 2 in the Big Book, but that is a rarity.

Those that suffer relapse after relapse are tragic stories indeed and my heart goes out to them. When a friend of mine was asked why we have so many relapses' in AA he replied, "Sometimes the fruit gets picked before its ripe" implying that that person hadn't reached that point of desperation yet. Once an alcoholic has lost the ability to control his drinking, it never returns. He will continue to try to regain a level of control but the compulsion will be irresistible. He will continue to try the old game again and again with no success. He will continue to seek that short period of euphoria that he feels when he is half way through his second drink but his drinking never stops there. He will, most likely, continue to repeat this until something tragic happens and he loses more than he was willing to lose. Sometimes the most dreadful thing that happens to us turns out to be the best thing that ever happened to us, if it gets our attention and renders us teachable

The disease of alcoholism progresses rapidly in some and slowly in others. Add drugs to the equation and it speeds up the process. I don't think I have ever seen an AA member in their teens or early twenties that didn't have a drug problem that compounded the progression and as a result, they often get sober earlier than the average alcoholic.

An alcoholic left to his own devices can't continue indefinitely without enablers. They will usually be someone who is willing to bail him out when he is in jail or call and report him off when he can't make it to work, etc. etc. This only postpones the inevitable and allows the

alcoholic to deepen the degree of collateral damage. Eventually he ends up divorced, jailed, fired, or any of a dozen life changing catastrophic events that finally become the straw that broke the camel's back. He then, in desperation, comes to AA to try to salvage what's left of the world he has been living in. Accepting his lot in life and being willing to address his problems with the help of the fellowship he may finally be on the road to recovery. The cat is finally out of the bag and his alcoholism can never be denied again.

Trying to talk an alcoholic out of drinking is not the goal of AA. Describing the true nature of his malady is the real message we should be relating to him/her so they understand why and where they are in the progression of the disease, and that they can decide for themselves if they are ready to throw in the towel. To validate this I recommend: (Ref. BB. Bottom pg. 31-32 and pages 101-103) you can also read the third and fourth pages of step one in the 12X12 and get the same message. We ought to be careful not to put our own slant on the message that we carry. It can do more harm than good and prolong the suffering of the recipient. I see it done all the time by well meaning members who got that message from other well meaning members but they are misguided. The Big Book will bear me out on this.

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