

Self-Loathing

Low Self-Esteem

By Rick R.

In the AA Big Book they use the term, "self-loathing". We do not like ourselves and we do not know why. We think that we are bad people when we show up in AA meetings and this is caused by that faulty perception of ourselves. The drinking is but a symptom of that negative conditioning. We all have a conscience and from it we developed guilt and shame, and if we didn't, why would we ever change? All these things began long before we ever took a drink and when we got to the point when we began to test our independence. We took that first sip and great things began to happen. For the first time in our lives, we felt normal.

I was told, a long time ago, that, *alcohol attacks the part of the brain that causes you to care, and the more you drink, the less you care until, the only thing you care about is the drink*. Then we begin to think that the drinking is the reason for our low self-esteem, when it had masked these issues for a while, until our tolerance for alcohol was gone, (never to return), then we were at the jumping off point. The rollercoaster ride was over and there were no more ups, only downs, and there we sat wondering what was left? Hopefully, at this point, we become desperate and open minded enough to reach out for help, for until we do so, we will continue to struggle with, what seems to be, an unanswerable mental chaos as we would continue to hate the character we had become.

Once a person concedes to his/her innermost self that they are alcoholics, the process of recovery can begin. The first nine steps deal with addressing the wreckage of the past, then, steps ten through twelve deal with the present, and the future, if you like. Until I entered AA, I thought it was a *moral issue* and that I had no will power and, as the result, I learned to violate my own value system. So, called " *Bad people "have no guilt or shame*. Good people are guided by their conscience and are plagued with guilt and shame when they step out of character and do what are considered "Bad Behaviors". Guilt and shame are the motivators that cause us to want to do better, to clean up the wreckage of the past, and to get back to those values that most of us were born with. We are not "Bad People", we are good people that, through some flaw in our early years, caused us to go astray for a while, but when we could take it no more came to AA for answers about how to face these issues.

It's hard for us, in the beginning, to understand that we **were not responsible for becoming an alcoholic**; that we did not sign up for this lifestyle as an infants, it just happened in some of us that way, but **we are accountable** for our behavior while in that faulty state of mind, and that if we are willing to revisit those areas, as suggested in the twelve steps, where we went off the track, and are willing to repair the damage done to others, we can come out the other side a much better person than if we had never been an alcoholic in the first place. This is the great reality for us. Each of us reach this point of desperation and surrender in our own time, and I do not think that anyone can pick the day that someone else gets it, in or outside of the program, but we, who have experienced this wonderful transition, will be there to greet them with open arms when they arrive.