

Self-Restraint

Upon entering Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) I had to first address the drinking part of the program and that kept me busy for a while but as time passed and I moved on to dealing with the rest of the steps. I thought I was doing very 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 much in those days as it is only mentioned two times in the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and gets very little attention. We talked about rationalizing. (Making a socially acceptable excuse for a socially unacceptable act or deed)

I knew that in Step 10 in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12) 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 our speech and thought, Quick-tempered criticism, Sulking and silent scorn etc. These behaviors 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 crossed my boundaries while I cannot criticize them. I imagine they are doing the best that they can. I had to replace my judgmentalism and criticism with empathy and compassion.

This seemed very hard at first but as I began to trust in these principles, and fight off my ego, results were evident. I began to feel so much better about myself. It cannot grandma