

The Road to Mental Freedom

Understanding Steps Six and Seven

By Rick R.

Since the day I entered the AA program, I have had an insatiable appetite for learning all I could about the disease of alcoholism and having completed a very thorough fourth and fifth steps, and examining my motives for everything I did, in steps sixth and seven, it occurred to me that most of my problems in life involved my interfacing with, "*Those Other People*." As I got further into the steps and started to process every one of these interactions, it became apparent to me that the basic cause of my discontent was *low self-esteem* and that, until I resolved that, there would be very little *peace of mind*. I had to get right with everyone. They say that *understanding is the key to right living*, and I read just about anything I can get my hands on, about these issues, that reinforce the principles we learn in the AA program such as; Emmet Fox's Sermon on The Mount, and others including, Scott Peck's, *The Road Less Traveled*, Ernest Kurtz and Kathleen's Ketchum's *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, Max Ehrmann's poem, *Desiderata*, and the like. This kind of reference material helps me to get a better perspective on how to reduce the obstacles that stand in the way of my ability to solve these problems. I should be willing to get right with "every human being I know" as suggested in step eight. (12&12) Scott Peck describes the word *Love* as: *Caring for and nurturing another person's soul*. I now look at Love as a verb and not a noun. You can love someone that doesn't love you back when you use this definition and as the result, I truly wish the best for every human being I know and offer help and guidance when I can. I became their best advocate. If I want to heal, I must look deeper and try to *understand that other person* and be strong enough to, first, *reign in my ego*, then to realize that the other person may be reacting to *my adversarial position*. Finding ways of removing my own judgmental attitudes opens the door to love and compassion. Today, I can love everyone by simply giving them the respect and acceptance that I would want for myself. After doing my best to adopt this plan of action over the years, I can only say that nothing that I have ever done, with respect to *Those Other People*, has been more rewarding than this approach. I have, to the best of my understanding, stopped judging others by their outside behavior and *have the strength to look deeper*. When I do that, I usually find a person, not too different from myself, trying to protect himself from his fears, and I just can't bring myself to pile on and compound his pain. My heart goes out to him, and I don't have to deal with regrets later. My ego is neutralized as I come to understand his troubles. The greatest gift I receive from all of this is that, as I apply this to all *Those Other People*, I seem to allow myself the same latitude without even expecting it since at one time, I was *That Other Person*. *Self-forgiveness and peace of mind* seems to be the natural result of my efforts. I can accept everyone just as they are and not mess with God's work.