

The New Playbook

Deeper Rooted Emotional Problems

When I entered AA, I was not aware of the degree of change that would be required if I were to have any chance of fully recovering from alcoholism. Sure, I knew I had a drinking problem and that I wanted to find a way to quit, and to stay quit. That, I thought, wasn't going to be easy as all my previous attempts at going on the wagon only lasted a short time and as soon as the heat was off, I found some lame excuse to have a drink, and I was off to the races again.

At my first meeting I felt something different that I had never felt before. People held out their hands to me and made me feel at home. They listened with compassion and empathy, and this was different than anything I had ever experienced. **They seemed comfortable in their skin**, and I thought, maybe they have something here and I wanted to learn more, especially while I was still suffering from the withdrawal of a pretty good bender. Introduction to AA couldn't have been better.

I jumped in with both feet and I was on my way to learning why alcohol had such a horrible effect on my life when others could take it or leave it alone. It wasn't long after I started getting into the 12 steps that I learned that most of my thinking up to that point had flaws and I was going to have to question all my decision making and determine which ideas were sound and which ones were flawed. One of my mentors suggested that all my decisions were **flawed because they were based on faulty (selfish) perceptions**. Some of them may be the right answer but based on selfish motives and they only tend to bolster my ego. That didn't stop me from wanting to be right, and I spent much of my early years debating issues and still driving people away from me. Someone said that **I would rather be right than be happy**. That was true as my **EGO** was running the show.

I finally evolved enough to see the wisdom in his words and have been spending most of my efforts in the AA program trying to keep my **EGO** in check. I often use metaphors to make a point. If I were a professional football player and something happened that ended my football career, but still I had the talent to play baseball and could sign on with a baseball team, that would be great. I show up in my new uniform and when the game starts, I tackle a base runner trying to get into 2nd base. It's obvious to everyone else that I shouldn't do that, but I can't understand what the problem is after all, I did have the right uniform on. Things go on like this for as long as I am **still using the old play book**. It seems ridiculous but we see it every day in AA. We come in thinking that if we jump through the right hoops, that we are following the program if we don't pick up a drink. This is shallow alcoholic thinking and usually fails before too long.

The new playbook deals with the deeper emotional problems that cause us to search for relief in the bottle. It suggests a humbler approach to our relationships with others. **It suggests being nonjudgmental. It suggests restraint of pen and tongue. It suggests surrender, patience, acceptance, kindness, love, and many other qualities that are unfamiliar to the average alcoholic, and most of all, it suggests EGO deflation.** This is a large order for a person who needs attention and has self-esteem problems. When we see a person in the program for a while, that has struggled trying to make the old playbook work, and finally crosses that line and picks up the new playbook, the change is so profound that it obvious to anybody. Be willing to question whether you are stuck in the old way of thinking and look deeper into your motives. It may be easier than you think to change those old habits if you persist. **Pick up the new playbook and get into the game.**