

The Road to Mental Freedom

Devoid of All Unresolved Mental Issues

By Rick R.

The topics about mental freedom often comes up at AA meetings and for this alcoholic, *peace of mind* has been my goal from the very beginning. Our minds are full of negative thoughts and if we are alcoholics, we are not sure which of these ideas are valid with respect to our goals in recovery. We can itemize these things such as: guilt, shame, regrets, self-loathing, fear, etc. and it still leaves some of us, passing it off as more of the same minutia we've been hearing for years. What degree of importance do we, as individuals, place on any one of these items and expect it to make that much different in our overall growth? As I look back on my thinking patterns of the past, I realize that there weren't too many of those thoughts that weren't influenced by some thought of material gain. That isn't necessarily wrong or bad when it comes to *the normal thinking person*, but when it comes to the *alcoholic*, without the same disciplines of the normal person, it becomes the yoke around our necks that drags us down into that pit that we are all too familiar with. I was surprised, one day, when I received a phone call from my first wife's husband, (at the time.) He was reading me the riot act about an incident that my son and they were having, and he thought I was involved in it. I tried to be patient and not say anything to provoke him, and after he ran out of things to throw into the ring, he finally took one final shot by saying: "well, I've heard stories about you, and you're no angel". My response was, "Dave, I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not proud of, but I'm not ashamed of anything that I've done in the last 22 years." (Sober 22 years at the time) The conversation ended peacefully. How many people can say that? *Freedom from shame* was what I became aware of from that conversation, and as I start to look at all the other negative thing on the list, I realize that most of them have been reduced to the point of irrelevance. That does not mean that I don't have lingering regrets for things that happened prior to my getting sober, it only means that by practicing these principles in all my affairs, I don't make as many mistakes, and I never do anything to intentionally hurt anyone. We can't change one single thing that happened in the past, but we can learn from them, and we can certainly do better in the present. One of the most important ingredients for me is being totally honest about my motives. If they are pure and unselfish, I will have a clear conscience. Living by principles takes most of the decision making out of my hands. That, I think, is what they meant when they wrote Step two. We depend on help from outside of ourselves. By getting in the habit of doing it that way for such a long period of time, the rat race between my ears has slowly diminished and somewhere along the way, my head has cleared up and *most of the conflict has subsided*. What a blessing it is to fall asleep each night without all the endless garbled calculations repeating themselves over and over in my mind until I fell asleep from pure mental exhaustion. You can't put a price on *peace of mind*, and in my own words I would define it as "*devoid of all unresolved mental issues*". After years of trial and error, I seem to have settled into a pattern of thinking, based on principles that I've come to embrace, that have taken most of the guess work out of the choices that I make. There are no more sleepless nights due to that rat race in my head. I know that I'm doing the best I can, based on what I've learned in AA. I'm at peace with myself and with others, for the most part, and what more could a person ask for. *The caldron is no longer bubbling between my ears. Now, to me, that's freedom.*