

The Credibility of Change Takes Time

Will They Ever Trust Me?

I was on a visit to the place where I grew up, after being gone for many years, and one of the things that intrigued me the most was that many of the neighbors that I encountered there were, for the most part, the same as they were when I left there. They hadn't changed much at all. Some of them still had the same resentments and comments towards their neighbors that they had when I moved away. How can that be, isn't it a natural process to put those things behind us and forgive and forget? The answer was; NO. Most people *don't* change, simply because they don't have to. Alcoholics change. Why do we change? We change because we must, in order to survive. Occasionally we hear a new member, disappointed that, after being sober for X number of days, his family doesn't appreciate that fact and he wonders, "Are they ever going to trust me again, can't they see that I've changed". It's not that simple, for they don't live inside of our brains. They only see some of the external improvements brought about by the natural effect of abstaining from alcohol. That can all disappear the next time they hear the pop of a beer can, and they know it. The people close to us are encouraged by the positive changes they see in us, but as they say, Rome wasn't built in a day. It takes time to overcome years of the alcoholic behavior and the mental image left in their memories. As for those people who aren't in our immediate circle of friends and loved ones, they, like the people I visited in my hometown, haven't witnessed the day to day changes, and the only thing they have to go on is a snapshot of the last headline from our drunken behavior before we got sober so why should they think that we would be any different. If we can be patient, and not be in too much of a hurry to regain the approval of our friends and loved ones, we will develop a much deeper trust than anyone would have imagined. It's hard to understand but we can't speed up the clock. A close friend of mine coined the term, SLOWBRIETY, and that explains it all for me. Easier said than done, you say? Yes, but that is where faith comes in. Trusting that it will turn out alright is so out of character for us. It requires daily surrender, quiet dedication, perseverance, and above all, TIME. Imagine what progress we could make if, from this day forward, we never made another mistake. Impossible, I know, but not a bad thing to strive for. Going through the steps in the spirit that they were intended, helps us establish a framework that will sustain us for the rest of our lives. The further along this path that we are on, the easier it is to accept change and if we can reestablish our values and principles, over the long haul, we will slowly develop the credibility and integrity that we seek. But, as they say, "It's not a sprint, it's a marathon". I say, it's a long slow walk without the distraction of a bag of golf clubs.