

Understanding Emotional Sobriety

Kill Them with Kindness

By Rick R.

It would be nice if all we had to do when we came to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) was to stop drinking and we could consider ourselves sober, and technically we can if we go by the minimum standard in The Oxford American Dictionary: (not affected by alcohol). There are, however, other definitions under the word sober that describe sober emotions, such as: moderate; well-balanced; tranquil; sedate, and these things are sometimes the measure of our progress as we trudge the road of happy destiny. I have never heard of, and I hope I never do hear of, a person being refused the RITE of receiving an anniversary token because he or she wasn't "tranquil enough" or "well balanced enough". Abstaining from alcohol is the first requirement and nothing else can be accomplished until we surrender to this fact. On page 21 in the 12&12 explains it clearly: "We know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins A.A. unless he first accepts his devastating weakness and all its consequences, until he so humbles himself, his sobriety—if any—will be precarious. Of real happiness, he will find none at all". Let's face it, if we can't find happiness, what's the point? I find happiness to be a feeling of contentment or wellbeing. This all has to do with my emotions, and I never looked at it that way until I started to explore the A.A. program and how it applied to me.

A few years back, a man showed up from out of town and started attending our well established A.A. meeting and it wasn't long before he started throwing his weight around. He was very intimidating to most of the members of the group. He even got physical a time or two. He started telling us how the meeting should be run. He became the topic of conversation for some of the members before and after the meetings, and it seemed perfectly justified to point out his faults. You get the picture. I wasn't intimidated by him, but rather looked at him as a project, so at every meeting, when given the opportunity, I would share openly that "I never judge a person by their surface behavior alone, but I try to have the strength to look for the deeper rooted problems, and when I discover what those are, I can only feel empathy for that person, as he is still plagued by those demons, and that I can't pile on when a person is so troubled". I also refer to the line in the St. Francis prayer in the 12&12 "To Understand Rather Than to be Understood", then I might throw in the "kill them with kindness" kicker.

I don't claim to be the solver of those kinds of problems, but I do know that the words I use mean something, so I try to give the perpetrator and the critic alike, a gentle and mature way to accept one another and to relax their adversarial postures. Emotional sobriety to me is just handling things in an adult manner. We cannot be selective about these things; we must stop fighting everyone and everything. I also want to report that the big bully, slowly, in time, laid down his arms, and the critics began to restrain their tongues and started treating him with a little more compassion, and things got so much better for everyone. The bully eventually turned into a teddy bear. (Well almost).

"The joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and action is the key word. Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in *distress*. Here we experience the kind of love that asks no rewards. Here we begin to practice all Twelve Steps—in our daily lives so we and those around us may find *emotional sobriety*". (12&12 pg. 106) That's what I'm talking about.