

Kenny

March 08, 2019

Learning to love ourselves

Page 70

"What we want most is to feel good about ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 101

"We'll love you until you can learn to love yourself!" These words, heard so often in our meetings, promise a day we look forward to eagerly—the day when we'll know how to love ourselves.

Self-esteem—we all want this elusive quality as soon as we hear about it. Some of us seem to stumble upon it accidentally, while others embark on a course of action complete with affirmations made to our reflections in the mirror. But fix-it-yourself techniques and trendy psychological cures can only take us so far.

There are some definite, practical steps we can take to show love for ourselves, whether we "feel" that love or not. We can take care of our personal responsibilities. We can do nice things for ourselves, as we would for a lover or a friend. We can start paying attention to our own needs. We can even pay attention to the qualities that we cherish in our friends—qualities like intelligence and humor—and look for those same qualities in ourselves. We're sure to find that we really are lovable people, and once we do that, we're well on our way.

Just for Today: I will do something today that helps me recognize and feel love for myself.

K

8  
MARCH  
TURNING IT OVER

Every man and woman who has joined A.A. and intends to stick has, without realizing it, made a beginning on Step Three. Isn't it true that in all matters touching upon alcohol, each of them has decided to turn his or her life over to the care, protection, and guidance of Alcoholics Anonymous? . . . Any willing newcomer feels sure A.A. is the only safe harbor for the foundering vessel he has become. Now if this is not turning one's will and life over to a newfound Providence, then what is it?

— TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 35  
Submission to God was the first step to my recovery. I believe our Fellowship seeks a spirituality open to a new kinship with God. As I exert myself to follow the path of the Steps, I sense a freedom that gives me the ability to think for myself. My addiction confined me without any release and hindered my ability to be released from my self-confinement, but A.A. assures me of a way to go forward. Mutual sharing, concern and caring for others is our natural gift to each other and mine is strengthened as my attitude toward God changes. I learn to submit to God's will in my life, to have self-respect, and to keep both of these attitudes by giving away what I receive.

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March 09, 2019

Small things

Page 71

"In the past, we made simple situations into problems; we made mountains out of molehills."

Basic Text, p. 90

Making mountains out of molehills seems to be our specialty. Have you heard it said that to an addict, a flat tire is a traumatic event? Or how about those of us who forget all pretense of principle when confronted with a bad driver? And what about that can opener that won't work, you know, the one you just threw out the second story window? We can relate when we hear others share, "God, grant me patience right now!"

No, it's not the major setbacks that drive us to distraction. The big things—divorce, death, serious illness, the loss of a job—will throw us, but we survive them. We've learned from experience that we must reach out to our Higher Power and others to make it through life's major crises. It's the small things, the constant day-to-day challenges of living life without the use of drugs, that seem to affect most addicts most strongly in recovery.

When the little things get to us, the Serenity Prayer can help us regain our perspective. We can all remember that "turning over" these small matters to the care of our Higher Power results in peace of mind and a refreshed perspective on life.

Just for Today: I will work on patience. I will try to keep from blowing things out of proportion, and walk with my Higher Power through my day.

K

9  
MARCH  
SURRENDERING SELF-WILL

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

— TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 34  
No matter how much one wishes to try, exactly how can one turn his own will and his own life over to the care of whatever God he thinks there is? In my search for the answer to this question, I became aware of the wisdom with which it was written: that this is a two-part Step.

I could see many times where I should have died, or at least been injured, during my previous style of living, and it never happened. Someone, or something, was looking after me. I choose to believe my life has always been in God's care. He alone controls the number of days I will be granted until physical death.

The matter of will (self-will or God's will) is the more difficult part of the Step for me. It is only when I have experienced enough emotional pain, through failed attempts to fix myself, that I become willing to surrender to God's will for my life. Surrender is like the calm after the storm. When my will is in line with God's will for me, there is peace within.

K

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March 10, 2019

Our own recovery

Page 72

"The steps are our solution. They are our survival kit. They are our defense against addiction, a deadly disease. Our steps are the principles that make our recovery possible."

Basic Text, p. 19

There's lots to like in Narcotics Anonymous. The meetings, for one, are great. We get to see our friends, hear some inspiring stories, share some practical experience, maybe even hook up with our sponsor. The campouts, the conventions, the dances are all wonderful, clean fun in the company of other recovering addicts. But the heart of our recovery program is the Twelve Steps—in fact, they are the program!

We've heard it said that we can't stay clean by osmosis—in other words, we can't just attend meetings, no matter how many, and expect to breathe recovery in through the pores of our skin. Recovery, as another saying goes, is an inside job. And the tools we use in working that "inside job" are the Twelve Steps. Hearing endlessly about acceptance is one thing; working the First Step for ourselves is something very different. Stories about making amends may be inspiring, yet nothing will give us the freedom from remorse that taking the Ninth Step ourselves will give. The same applies to all twelve steps.

There's much to appreciate about NA, but to get the most from our recovery we must work the Twelve Steps for ourselves.

Just for Today: I want everything my personal program has to offer. I will work the steps for myself.

K

10  
MARCH  
TODAY, IT'S MY CHOICE

. . . we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 62  
With the realization and acceptance that I had played a part in the way my life had turned out came a dramatic change in my outlook. It was at this point that the A.A. program began to work for me. In the past I had always blamed others, either God or other people, for my circumstances. I never felt that I had a choice in altering my life. My decisions had been based on fear, pride, or ego. As a result, those decisions led me down a path of self-destruction. Today I try to allow my God to guide me on the road to sanity. I am responsible for my action—or inaction—whatever the consequences may be.

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Thanks KG

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March 11, 2019

Lightening the load

Page 73

"It will not make us better people to judge the faults of another It will make us feel better to clean up our lives."

Basic Text, p. 38

Sometimes we need something tangible to help us understand what holding resentments is doing to us. We may not be aware of how destructive resentments actually are. We think, "So what, I have a right to be angry," or, "I might be nursing a grudge or two, but I don't see the harm."

To see more clearly the effect that holding resentments is having in our lives, we might try imagining that we are carrying a rock for each resentment. A small grudge, such as anger at someone driving badly, might be represented by a pebble. Harboring ill will toward an entire group of people might be represented by a enormous boulder. If we actually had to carry stones for each resentment, we would surely tire of the weight. In fact, the more cumbersome our burden, the more sincere our efforts to unload it would be.

The weight of our resentments hinders our spiritual development. If we truly desire freedom, we will seek to rid ourselves of as much extra weight as possible. As we lighten up, we'll notice an increased ability to forgive our fellow human beings for their mistakes, and to forgive ourselves for our own. Well nourish our spirits with good thoughts, kind words, and service to others.

Just for Today: I will seek to have the burden of resentments removed from my spirit.

K

11  
MARCH  
GOOD ORDERLY DIRECTION

It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us. To make this increasingly possible is the purpose of A.A.'s Twelve Steps, and Step Three opens the door.

— TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 40  
All I have to do is look back at my past to see where my self-will has led me. I just don't know what's best for me and I believe my Higher Power does. G.O.D., which I define as "Good Orderly Direction," has never let me down, but I have let myself down quite often. Using my self-will in a situation usually has the same result as forcing the wrong piece into a jigsaw puzzle—exhaustion and frustration. Step Three opens the door to the rest of the program. When I ask God for guidance I know that whatever happens is the best possible situation. Things are exactly as they are supposed to be, even if they aren't what I want or expect. God does do for me what I cannot do for myself, if I let Him.

K

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March 12, 2019

Getting out of the rut

Page 74

"Many times in our recovery, the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous, and boring."

Basic Text, p. 78

Sometimes it seems as though nothing changes. We get up and go to the same job every day. We eat dinner at the same time every night. We attend the same meetings each week. This morning's rituals were identical to the ones we performed yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that. After the hell of our addiction and the roller-coaster craziness of early recovery, the stable life may have some appeal - for a while. But, eventually, we realize we want something more. Sooner or later, we become turned off to the creeping monotony and boredom in our lives.

There are sure to be times when we feel vaguely dissatisfied with our recovery. We feel as though we're missing something for some reason, but we don't know what or why. We draw up our gratitude lists and find literally hundreds of things to be grateful for. All our needs are being met; our lives are fuller than we had ever hoped they'd be. So what's up?

Maybe it's time to stretch our potential to its fullest. Our possibilities are only limited by what we can dream. We can learn something new, set a new goal, help another newcomer, or make a new friend. We're sure to find something challenging if we look hard enough, and life will again become meaningful, varied, and fulfilling.

Just for Today: I'll take a break from the routine and stretch my potential to its fullest.

K

12  
MARCH  
A DAY'S PLAN

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 86  
Every day I ask God to kindle within me the fire of His love, so that love, burning bright and clear, will illuminate my thinking and permit me to better do His will. Throughout the day, as I allow outside circumstances to dampen my spirits, I ask God to sear my consciousness with the awareness that I can start my day over, I am I choose; a hundred times, if necessary

K



March 13, 2019

That one special person

Page 75

"A sponsor is not necessarily a friend, but may be someone in whom we confide. We can share things with our sponsor that we might not be comfortable sharing in a meeting."

IP No. 11, Sponsorship Revised

We've asked someone to sponsor us, and the reasons we have for asking that particular person are as many as the grains of sand on a beach. Perhaps we heard them share at a speaker meeting and thought they were funny or inspiring. Perhaps we thought they had a great car and we would get one by working the same program they work. Or maybe we live in a small town and they were the only person who had the time available to help.

Whatever our initial reasons for getting the sponsor we have, we're sure to find that our reasons for keeping them are quite different. Suddenly they'll amaze us with some stunning insight, making us wonder whether they've been sneaking peeks at our Fourth Step. Or maybe we're going through some sort of life crisis, and their experience with the same problem helps us in ways we never dreamed possible. We call them in pain, and they come up with a special combination of caring words that provide genuine comfort.

None of these remarkable feats on the part of our sponsor are mere coincidence. They've simply walked the same path before us. A Higher Power has placed that one special person in our lives, and we are grateful for their presence.

Just for Today: I will appreciate that one special person in my life - my sponsor.

13  
MARCH  
A WORLD OF THE SPIRIT

We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 84

The word "entered" . . . and the phrase "entered into the world of the Spirit" are very significant. They imply action, a beginning, getting into, a prerequisite to maintaining my spiritual growth, the "Spirit" being the immaterial part of me. Barriers to my spiritual growth are self-centeredness and a materialistic focus on worldly things. Spirituality means devotion to spiritual instead of worldly things, it means obedience to God's will for me. I understand spiritual things to be: unconditional love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control and humility. Any time I allow selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear to be a part of me, I block out spiritual things. As I maintain my sobriety, growing spiritually becomes a lifelong process. My goal is spiritual growth, accepting that I'll never have spiritual perfection.

Mar 14, 2019, 5:34 AM

March 14, 2019

Relationships

Page 76

"Also, our inventories usually include material on relationships."

Basic Text, p. 29

What an understatement this is! Especially in later recovery, entire inventories may focus on our relationships with others. Our lives have been filled with relationships with lovers, friends, parents, co-workers, children, and others with whom we come in contact. A look at these associations can tell us much about our essential character.

Often our inventories catalog the resentments that arise from our day-to-day interactions with others. We strive to look at our part in these frictions. Are we placing unrealistic expectations on other people? Do we impose our standards on others? Are we sometimes downright intolerant?

Often just the writing of our inventory will release some of the pressure that a troubled relationship can produce. But we must also share this inventory with another human being. That way, we get some needed perspective on our part in the problem and how we can work toward a solution.

The inventory is a tool that allows us to begin healing our relationships. We learn that today, with the help of an inventory, we can start to enjoy our relationships with others.

Just for Today: I will inventory the part I play in my relationships. I will seek to play a richer, more responsible part in those relationships.

14  
MARCH  
THE KEYSTONE

He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 62

A keystone is the wedge-shaped piece at the highest part of an arch that locks the other pieces in place. The "other pieces" are Steps One, Two, and Four through Twelve. In one sense this sounds like Step Three is the most important Step, that the other eleven depend on the third for support. In reality however, Step Three is just one of twelve. It is the keystone, but without eleven other stones to build the base and arms, keystone or not, there will be no arch. Through daily working of all Twelve Steps, I find that triumphant arch waiting for me to pass through to another day of freedom.

Mar 15, 2019, 4:26 AM

March 15, 2019

Feeling a "part of "

Page 77

"The get-togethers after our meetings are good opportunities to share things that we didn't get to discuss during the meeting."

Basic Text, p. 98

Active addiction set us apart from society, isolating us. Fear was at the core of that alienation. We believed that if we let others get to know us, they would only find out how terribly flawed we were. Rejection would be only a short step away.

When we come to our first NA meeting, we are usually impressed by the familiarity and friendliness we see other recovering addicts share. We, too, can quickly become a part of this fellowship, if we allow ourselves to. One way to start is by tagging along to the local coffee shop after the meeting.

At these gatherings, we can let down the walls that separate us from others and discover things about ourselves and other NA members. One on one, we can sometimes disclose things that we may be reluctant to share at the group level. We learn to make small talk at many of these late-night gatherings and forge deep, strong friendships as well.

With our newfound friends in NA, we no longer have to live lives of isolation. We can become a part of the greater whole, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Just for Today: I will break free of isolation. I will strive to feel a part of the NA Fellowship.

15  
MARCH  
THE GOD IDEA

When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 52

Like a blind man gradually being restored to sight, I slowly groped my way to the Third Step. Having realized that only a Power greater than myself could rescue me from the hopeless abyss I was in, I knew that this was a Power that I had to grasp, and that it would be my anchor in the midst of a sea of woes. Even though my faith at that time was minuscule, it was big enough to make me see that it was time for me to discard my reliance on my prideful ego and replace it with the steady strength that could only come from a Power far greater than myself.

Mar 16, 2019, 6:46 AM

March 16, 2019

Inventory

Page 78

"The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory is to sort through the confusion and the contradiction of our lives so that we can find out who we really are."

Basic Text, p. 27

Using addicts are a confused and confusing bunch of people. It's hard to tell from one minute to the next what they're going to do or who they're going to be. Usually, the addict is just as surprised as anyone else.

When we used, our behavior was dictated by the needs of our addiction. Many of us still identify our personalities closely with the behavior we practiced while using, leading us to feel shame and despair. Today, we don't have to be the people we once were, shaped by our addiction; recovery has allowed us to change.

We can use the Fourth Step inventory to see past the needs of the old using life and find out who we want to be today. Writing about our behavior and noticing how we feel about that behavior helps us understand who we want to be. Our inventory helps us see beyond the demands of active addiction, beyond our desire to be loved and accepted—we find out who we are at the root. We begin to understand what's appropriate for us, and what we want our lives to be like. This is the beginning of becoming who we really are.

Just for Today: If I want to find out who I am, I'll look at who I've been and who I want to be.

16  
MARCH  
AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM

My friend understated what then seemed a novel idea. . . . "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?" That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.

— ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, p. 12

I remember the times I looked up into the sky and reflected on who started it all, and how. When I came to A.A., an understanding of some description of the spiritual dimension became a necessary adjunct to a stable sobriety. After reading a variety of versions, including the scientific, of a great explosion, I went for simplicity and made the God of my understanding the Great Power that made the explosion possible.

With the vastness of the universe under His command, He would, no doubt, be able to guide my thinking and actions if I was prepared to accept His guidance. But I could not expect help if I turned my back on that help and went my own way. I became willing to believe and I have had 26 years of stable and satisfying sobriety.

Mar 17, 2019, 4:41 AM

March 17, 2019

True courage

Page 79

"Those who make it through these times show a courage not their own."

Basic Text, p. 86

Before coming to NA, many of us thought we were brave simply because we had never experienced fear. We had drugged all our feelings, fear among them, until we had convinced ourselves that we were tough, courageous people who wouldn't crack under any circumstances.

But finding our courage in drugs has nothing to do with the way we live our lives today. Clean and in recovery, we are bound to feel frightened at times. When we first realize we are feeling frightened, we may think we are cowards. Were afraid to pick up the phone because the person on the other end might not understand. We're afraid to ask someone to sponsor us because they might say no. We're afraid to look for a job. We're afraid to be honest with our friends. But all of these fears are natural, even healthy. What's not healthy is allowing fear to paralyze us.

When we permit our fear to stop our growth, we will be defeated. True courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the willingness to walk through it.

Just for Today: I will be courageous today. When I'm afraid, I'll do what I need to do to grow in recovery.

17  
MARCH  
MYSTERIOUS WAYS

. . . out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally, inescapably, the conviction came that God does "move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

— TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, p. 105

After losing my career, family and health, I remained unconvinced that my way of life needed a second look. My drinking and other drug use were killing me, but I had never met a recovering person or an A.A. member. I thought I was destined to die alone and that I deserved it. At the peak of my despair, my infant son became critically ill with a rare disease. Doctors' efforts to help him proved useless. I redoubled my efforts to block my feelings, but now the alcohol had stopped working. I was left staring into God's eyes, begging for help. My introduction to A.A. came within days, through an odd series of coincidences, and I have remained sober ever since. My son lived and his disease is in remission. The entire episode convinced me of my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life. Today my son and I thank God for His intervention.