

RECOVERED OR RECOVERING WHICH ARE YOU?

All too frequently, a rather senseless argument is heard within our Fellowship as to whether a person is a recovered or a recovering alcoholic. Ironically, that argument is usually initiated by a person who is neither.

If you will look carefully at the “Dust Jacket” of our Basic Textbook “Alcoholics Anonymous” you will notice in the lower right-hand corner the following words, “This is the Third Edition of The Big Book, the Basic Text for Alcoholics Anonymous”. If your copy of the Big Book lacks a “Dust Jacket”, turn to page xi, 2nd paragraph and read, “Because this book has become the basic text for our Society,.....” So, if it is “The Basic Text” for the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the answer to the recovered/recovering question must lie between pages xi and 164.

First of all, let’s go to page xiii and read how Bill W. introduced the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” to the world. He wrote:

“We of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.”

Hmmm, recovered alcoholics authored the Basic Text for the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

What do they mean by recovered? Well, Dr. Silkworth said he believed that we had an allergy of the body that produced a craving once we took the first few drinks, the result of which is that we always drink more than we wanted to, passing through the well known stages of a spree emerging remorseful with a firm resolution to never drink again. (AA, pg xxvii). There is no known solution for that problem. We are not cured of alcoholism. (AA, pg 85) So that problem is solved only by entire abstinence. (AA, pg xxviii). If we don’t drink, we can’t get drunk. What an insultingly simple truth.

So what’s the problem? “Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (AA, pg 23) And the problem is:

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.” (AA, pg 24)

How does that problem of the mind manifest itself in the chronic alcoholic?

“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.” (AA, pg 30)

“He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk!”. (AA, pg 37)

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*"Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity."
(AA, pg 37)*

How should "insanity" be defined for our situation?

Insanity - State of being insane; unsoundness of mind or without recognition of one's illness - (Webster)

We cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false - (Dr. Silkworth, AA, pg xxvi)

The real problem of the chronic alcoholic, then is the insane thinking when it comes to alcohol, i.e. cold sober, and having lost many things and created numerous problems because of our drinking, we go into a liquor store and buy a bottle of the stuff that has robbed us of everything decent in life and start drinking again because we love the sense of ease and comfort that comes at once by taking a few drinks. But then the craving for the next drink kicks in and every drink convinces us that we need another drink. Then the spree. Then the guilt and remorse. Then the pledge, the vow, the promise, etc. Then restless, irritable and discontented. Then the drink. Then the drunk. Then the spree. Then the humiliation. Then the pledge, the vow, the promise. Then restless, irritable and discontented. Then the drink. Then the drunk. Then the spree..... It is all repeated over and over and over.

The insanity of our disease is the source of the unmanageability of our lives. If we could manage that decision, pledge, vow, promise, etc. to never drink again, we would not need the Power of the Program of A.A. There may be other areas of our lives with lacking degrees of unmanageability but the killer is that relating to our inability to stay stopped. Drinking is not the problem. Alcoholics have no problem drinking. Stopping is not the problem. Alcoholics have a variety of ways to stop drinking. Staying stopped is the problem. If we had the will power to stop starting, we would have no problem with alcohol. Lack of will power, that was our dilemma. We must find a Higher Power!!!

Now we have identified the real problem of the hopeless alcoholic.

*"However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. Strong language--but isn't it true?"
(AA, pg 38)*

We are real fruit cakes because we lack the power to manage a decision to not take the first drink. We must therefore find a Higher Power if our power is insufficient to act sanely where alcohol is concerned.

So, if we carefully follow the clear-cut directions (AA, pg 29) up to and including pages 84 & 85, we will receive one of the many promises of our Program (The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous), "For by this time sanity will have returned." (AA, pg 84) Now, we have recovered. Read the Tenth Step promises from the bottom of page 84 to the bottom of page 85. If that leaves any doubt in your mind, carefully read pages xiii (2X), xv, xvii, xxiii, 17, 20, 29, 91, 97, 113, 132 & 133. You will find recovered on each page.

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It seems to me that the most powerful statement of those referred to is this one on page 132. "We have recovered and have been given the Power to help others." What a miraculous deal!!!! Don't miss it!!!!

We have clearly identified who the recovered alcoholics is. What about the recovering alcoholic? The recovering alcoholic is one who is somewhere between Steps Three and Eleven. They are in the process of coming to believe but have yet to have a spiritual awakening/experience. Bill W. was a recovering alcoholic for 2 - 3 days in Townes Hospital. Most of the alcoholics who participated in the writing of the Big Book took the Steps during the first 7 - 10 days after their last drink. Many had recovered before they ever attended a meeting.

If a person coming to Alcoholics Anonymous for help because they have been unable to find a way to stop starting to drink and are not taking or have not taken the Steps, they are neither recovering nor are they recovered. They have a case of untreated alcoholism and if they have developed an alcoholic mind, they will drink again. They are the ones who choose to declare that there is no such thing as a recovered alcoholic. How would they know?

No where in Alcoholics Anonymous literature does it suggest that if an alcoholic goes to enough meetings, they will recover. No, the recovered alcoholics who authored our Basic Text Book said they recovered as the result of taking the Steps, not going to meetings.

We paid a hell of a price to get here. Let's pay the price to stay here by having a spiritual awakening as the result of taking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.