

Happy New
Year!!

January
2011

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3citiesaa.org*

Java Journal



Twelve Steps to Happiness

AROUND THE TABLES, I found myself part of a discussion on Step Seven, and I said, as I always do, that the only way to take a Step is to do it. As far as I am concerned, talking about Step Seven at a meeting is great, but it is absolutely meaningless unless I do it. And if I haven't done Step Four, it is impossible to do Step Seven any justice. (I didn't take each Step just once and stop there; I'm always taking all of them.)

Don't debate the Steps; do them. There is much to be gained at a table as we exchange concepts, ideas, and the like, but sharing our actual experience must count far more than sharing abstract doctrines. One aspect of the AA experience is happiness, and it is delightful to share it. I have found unbounded joy in being able to share happiness, and the basis for my happiness is the practice of the Steps.

It is sad to observe the great waste of time and energy by many AAs as they pursue this new discovery or that new book, looking endlessly for happiness, but avoiding the Steps. Their example, however, is not lost on me; it reaffirms my simple belief that *doing* the Steps is the easiest, softest way to happiness.

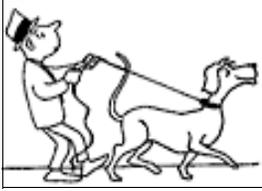
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Responsibility Declaration

"I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."



*With Ron, I am
not sure who the
sponsor is;
sometimes I carry
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carries it...*

Who Sponsors who?

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The year was 1956. I came in to AA on April 27 and Ron on August 10. In those early days, getting to twenty days of sobriety was as far as we could see. If you had asked us then, the prospect of our being in the range of 20,000 days was beyond our wildest dreams. Anyway, we're still counting -- one day at a time.

Ron stood on the viaduct, feeling he had reached the end of the line. Then he recalled a place called Alcoholics Anonymous. It was little known in those days, and I wonder if he would have found his way there if he hadn't worked for the phone company. He had been sent there to empty the pay phones. His second visit there sent him on a lifetime journey.

Pretty soon, Ron and his wife, Rose, were attending AA and Al-Anon meetings. It didn't take Rose much time to realize the importance of joining a group. Ron, however, was in that "looking around" mode. Rose went on a prayer campaign to get Ron to join an AA group. Soon he joined the young people's group, and this is where I came in.

Next, Rose went on a campaign for Ron to get a sponsor. She felt, as he was very shy, that he needed an older, wiser sponsor to guide him. Ron came home from a meeting one day and announced to Rose that he had a sponsor. Rose gave thanks and asked who the sponsor was. "Bob M." was his reply; Rose went ballistic. Having only known each other for some weeks, I decided not to take her reaction personally. Hey, in those days, with my three months in the program, I almost qualified as an old-timer -- an obvious sponsor for Ron. But I did not live up to Rose's expectations, and she made it known -- to everyone. Fifty years later, I can now (almost) admit her concerns were justified. I was so new, and still struggling with the program.

Of course, my sponsor, Dennis, kept an eye on me. I recall his concern. He would walk over and ask me, "What are you doing?"

"Just sitting and thinking," I would reply.

"You don't know how to think; you know how to worry. There is a new guy over there -- go talk to him."

"I don't know what to say."

"Well, then listen; you may learn something."

Then there was the "Read the Big Book" episode. Eventually, he tried, "Read a chapter of the Big Book." Finally, "Read a paragraph." How could I tell him I couldn't sit down or stand up? I was in perpetual motion -- wound up like a clock. Holding and reading a book was not an option at that point. But he was right -- and one night I opened the Big Book and read into the wee small hours. I still read the Big Book and find new avenues to explore. I guess I am in AA for life.

But this was the guy Rose saw. Even I had doubts about whether I was ready to sponsor. When I discussed this problem with Dennis, all I got was a hug, a slap on the back, and a "You can do it." And, thank God, like everything else in the program, I didn't have to do it alone. There were old-timers around that I could run to every time Ron posed a question on the Big Book or the Steps -- and in those days, that meant I did a lot of running.

Who sponsors who (cont. from page 2)

I would return with an "old-timer" answer and ponderously lay it on Ron. I guess it came down to learning on the job. Old-timers in those heady days were men and women with long-term sobriety -- five years, occasionally ten years. We looked to those people with awe and admiration; they were always ready to share their experience and love. I seem to remember my sponsor forever suggesting, "Don't take yourself so seriously." I guess today it would be: "Lighten up."

Then there was the odd old-timer who told us, "You are lucky to get it so young. You didn't have to go through what I went through. Heck, you have a lot of good drinking years ahead of you." We learned the importance of learning to laugh, and the idea of going back out to the old life was really laughable. My sponsor focused on, "Do you have a drinking problem and are you ready to do something about it? If so, you are in the right place." All these years later, I see that AA is just as it was in those early days. What has changed is that we are much more broad-minded and open to all -- young and old, male and female, black and white, straight and gay. It was not always this way. For example, Fran, who is approaching fifty-six years of sobriety, recalls that when she came in she couldn't sit with the men; she had to sit with the wives. In those days a woman (single or married) in the program was thought a threat to the wives of the married men. We also had to find a group in Buffalo for our one clandestine gay member. While the AA program stays as written, we have moved with the times.

Action was the magic word. In the young people's group, we visited Montreal, Buffalo, and other small towns to carry the message. I had always been a loner; my sports were cycling and running, but never team sports. But for the first time in my life, I was willing to be part of the group. Both Ron and I experienced the joy and elation that came from being involved and active.

I came into the program without a friend in the world. As a child, we moved -- "geographic cures" -- from town to town, country to country. Yet here is a relationship that has flourished for over fifty years. As I write, I question which relationship I'm referring to, though. Is it the relationship with AA, the relationship with Ron, the relationship with my sponsor, or the relationship with life?

With Ron, I am not sure who the sponsor is; sometimes I carry the umbrella and sometimes Ron carries it. We have laughed at the good times -- weddings, children, and grandchildren. We have endured the tough times -- the loss of a wife, the death of a child. Through it all, we have always leaned on our friendship, the program, and our belief in a Power greater than ourselves who would carry the day.

In these later years, Ron's diabetes has left him legally blind. He handles this by talking about the things he is able to do. "I can walk and feel the sun on my face. On the beach, I can hear the water, I can listen to my music, and I can enjoy my family and my many friends." Generally, Fridays are our day. We enjoy a noon meeting, a trip downtown, or a visit to the city parks. In fact, we enjoy anywhere there is a cup of coffee and a chat with old and new friends. When it's time to return home, he always thanks me for a wonderful day. He doesn't know how much I appreciate his indomitable spirit. We have both benefited greatly from this simple program.

Sponsorship has been wonderful, rewarding, challenging, a test, and, at times, a pain in the butt, but overall, it's an experience I never would have missed.

Bob M., Thornhill, Ontario

*Ron stood on the
viaduct, feeling
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the end of the
line...*

**A great
resource for
information on
sponsorship ,
the A.A.
Pamphlet....**

**Questions and
Answers on
Sponsorship**

**AA's Newsletter
for the Greater
Tri-City Area**

Central Office Bookstore

(upstairs at the Alano Club)

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POB 6675, Kennewick, WA 99336

Mon - Thu, 11.30 am - 1.30 pm

6.00 pm - 8.00 pm

Sat 10.00 am - 2.00 pm

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Central Office Questions:
Angie (509)378-4120

Java Journal Editor: Gina
javajournaldistrict4@gmail.com
AA Hotline (509) 735-4086
See us online at www.3citiesaa.org

**Please Contact The Java Journal Editor With the
following Info:**

- Events, announcements, fellowship information, Journal corrections;
- Your email if you would like to receive the Journal in your inbox once a month.

Calendar of Events

Chapter 5 Potluck and Speaker Meeting. 6.00 pm - Kennewick Library, South Union Street, **Jan 16, 2011**
Kennewick, WA

Ladies Potluck & Speaker Meeting. Benton REA Community Room 6095 W. Van Giesen. **Feb 4, 2011**
West Richland, WA 99353. 11:00AM Potluck. 12:15PM Speaker—Amanda P. with 20 Years
Sober. Questions call 509-378-4646 or email: rainbow7964@hotmail.com

Looking for a Service Position?

The **Central Office Bookstore** needs volunteers with a min. of 1 year sobriety.
Volunteers are needed for the Tuesday and Wednesday day shifts and for alternating Saturdays

Monday thru Thursday

11:30 AM—1:30 PM

6:00 PM — 8:00 PM

Saturdays 10:00AM—2:00 PM

Contact Angie at 509-378-4120