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Java Journal



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From The Archives

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Caught in Hateland

An AA once trapped by resentments offers a guide to the way out

DURING my drinking years I was a general all-around expert on all subjects. Now I feel that my experience qualifies me as an expert on only two, resentments and rationalizations.

Although there is a relationship between them, since resentments are developed against the people and situations which we think are the cause of our trouble, it will be simpler to discuss them one at a time. This is about resentments.

After working on a personal inventory for about eight months, it became clear that one of the worst of my character defects was a tendency to harbor resentments. Tendency did I say? My mind was one big total resentment against the world and everything in it. It didn't know how to think any other way. My thoughts were automatically resentful--and that is a clue as to why I believed I had no resentments at all.

I really believed that all the things I thought, were true. I thought my boss was a dope, that my wife was constantly putting upon me, people on the sidewalks and in the subways got in my way. I was critical of my friends, business associates, the government and the world in general. I constantly had hurt feelings because people didn't treat me with the kindness and thoughtfulness I deserved. Just the opposite.

But there was little I could do to change all these things and people. I couldn't help it if my boss was a dope or that people behaved so miserably. True, I suffered for it, but it was not my fault, and there was almost nothing I

could do about it except fight back and make the best of it.

On looking back, I can see that during my whole life before AA. I believed that I judged other people objectively. What I believed, was to my mind, fact. It never occurred to me that the "facts" might be wrong.

So after joining AA, when my new friends and club members talked to me about resentments, I said, "Who, me? I don't have any"--and I was completely honest about it.

After a few months in AA I began making attempts at the Fourth Step--efforts which repeatedly turned out to be neither searching nor fearless. Many years of rationalizing kept forcing me to turn the painful spotlight away from me onto others. But persistence paid off. After about eight months of effort on the Fourth and Tenth Steps, the only sudden thing that ever happened to me in AA happened!

In one flash of insight I saw that if I were to wait for all the other people to shape up, I was going to get drunk and stay drunk a long, long time. In that instant I saw that all the things I had considered facts, were not facts at all, but my own thoughts. And that this was very fortunate, because I could do something about changing my thoughts but nothing about changing the people around me.

So the fault was mine after all. I felt humiliated; but there was a sense of relief, too. While I felt totally inadequate to deal with the faults of the world and its people, I did not feel quite so inadequate to deal with my own mind. So I think that the most important factor in eliminating resentments is to know you have them. You can't fix something if you don't know what's wrong.

So then, what to do? Well, I decided that every time a resentment came into my mind,

(Continued on page 2)

Humble

Marked by meekness or modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit; not arrogant or prideful

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From the Archives (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

I'd toss it out. Is that so? After a few days I found it wasn't that easy. Resentments were so automatic, that I didn't recognize them unless I consciously thought about them. Here the Tenth Step was invaluable because, although it doesn't say so in so many words, I interpreted it to mean that I should do it every day. Each night before going to sleep, I reviewed the day, and every day I found that I had been building up resentful thoughts. And I also found that if I recognized them before they grew into big ten-megaton size, it was not difficult to toss them out. Merely recognizing them seemed to do the trick. But, if I didn't recognize them, and they got to be real big massive resentments, I found that I could not just cast them out. In spite of my efforts to get rid of them, they rankled around in my mind for days, until time finally wore them out, and my mind went on to other things. Oddly enough, the hardest ones to deal with were the ones in which I happened to be right about the underlying facts.

As time passed I recognized resentments more readily, and I began to learn little devices that are helpful in getting rid of them.

For instance, I learned to reason about them this way: A resentment is made up of two parts, (1) the facts, and (2) the emotional content. As to the facts, I may be right or I may be wrong, but that's not important right now. As soon as I can I will review them and try to find out the actual truth of the matter. Right now my stomach is turning over, and that's wrong. It's my stomach, and I'm the one who's suffering, and it's totally unnecessary. Worse, it incapacitates me to a degree that is relative to the strength of the anger. If it is very strong I can't think straight. In fact, it blocks me completely from thinking about anything else. For a while, my mind is consumed with it.

What I am really doing is giving up my own liberty and freedom. I am putting myself at the mercy of anyone who comes along, who either consciously or unconsciously chooses to make me unhappy and to interfere with my effective-

ness.

As a practical matter, if I react angrily I lose every chance of convincing anyone that my view is correct. In business, I am able to convince others of my point of view (assuming I happen to be correct) only if I respect the opposing opinion, and present mine in an agreeable and friendly manner. Only that way can I be convinced, never by someone angrily trying to cram something down my throat.

Such reasoning helps, but it is not all-powerful against emotions. For reason alone can't do it all. So I learned another tactic at meetings--to do something nice for someone, anyone. Give someone a deserved compliment. Say "How are you today" to the phone operator. Just show a little human interest in anyone around you. Invite someone to lunch. Order some tickets to take your wife to a show. It is amazing how little of this sort of thing it takes to make the resentment vanish.

If the occasion calls for it, some self-ridicule helps. We learn to laugh at ourselves in AA, and a good thing too. One time a member had some small folders printed and on the cover was the title RULE NO. 87. On opening it you read, "Don't take yourself so damn seriously." . . .When I found myself getting into a disagreement with someone, and felt the ire rising, and heard myself thinking "how can anyone be such a big jack-ass," this inspired me to say to myself, "Look out now, you might learn something." This would make me change my attitude and listen respectfully to the jackass's opinions.

And then there is another very powerful little thing you can do, if you have made just a little progress in the life of the Spirit, and that is to say to yourself, about whomever you feel the resentment, "God bless you." And really mean it. If you don't feel quite that spiritual, you can at least say, "I wish you well."

As you practice you learn many tactics in fighting resentments. And you can be absolutely certain that your handling of them will keep improving just as long as you keep practicing.

Monthly Laughs



*“Those
guys
don't
know
how
special
we
are.”*

Traditions Checklist

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

Tradition Seven: Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my central office, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the newcomer who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when tanked in a barroom?
2. Should the Grapevine sell advertising space to book publishers and drug companies, so it could make a big profit and become a bigger magazine, in full color, at a cheaper price per copy?
3. If GSO runs short of funds some year, wouldn't it be okay to let the government subsidize AA groups in hospitals and prisons?
4. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
5. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?

Barley!!! Corn!!!

He can still get
his humility in
the eye of THAT
needle and leave
plenty of room
for the camel.

AA's Newsletter for the

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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.

Monthly Prayer: Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator,

I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.

(Big Book pg. 76)



Calendar of Events



<p>2010 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous “A Vision For You” Alamodome, San Antonio, TX. AA members and guests from around the world will celebrate AAs 75th year. Big meetings held Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday morning in the Alamodome. Other meetings, scheduled or informal, will take place throughout the weekend in the San Antonio Convention Center and local hotels. Go to http://aa.org for amore information.</p>	<p>July 1-July 4</p>
<p>Cowlitz River Roundup. Shady Firs RV Park Randal, WA. For information: Wes Y. 360-508-4748, Donny T. 360-978-6891. For registration info: Sheila B. 253-278-0830.</p>	<p>July 16- July 18</p>