

THE KEY

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can
And wisdom to know the difference.

U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE HOSPITAL, LEXINGTON, KY. - May 17, 1953 - Vol. 6 No. 20

THE KEY is published weekly, by and for the AA groups here in the hospital. Opinions expressed in The Key are those of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or principles of AA as a whole.

STEP NUMBER ONE

~~WE ADMITTED THAT WE WERE POWERLESS OVER DRUGS~~
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

This is, first of all, an admission—an act of the mind. It is not something calling for strength of will, but something that calls for a weakening of a rebellious will—an honest admission—a giving in—or, in plain language, a true act of humility which is nothing more or less than absolute honesty. The objective fact that we are powerless perhaps has been there for years, but now we recognize that fact—we admit it—we take the first step on the road to honesty and humility which alone can lead to freedom from drugs and ultimate happiness. So it is not only important that we admit that we are powerless over drugs, but that we continue to bear in mind at all times that we are drug addicts. Only complete abstinence can make us and keep us normal.

'That our lives had become unmanageable.' We admit that we have drifted away from normal thinking. Anyone who will stop a moment to analyze his feeling and his behavior while he was addicted should not have a very difficult time admitting that he has drifted away from normalcy. Certainly, normal people don't act the way we invariably did while we were taking drugs.

Sincerity and honesty in making this admission in the first step is half the solution. You are then open to teaching. Your mind is prepared to receive instruction in the AA way of life.

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Ted D., Sec. Men's Group - Wanda G., Sec. Women's Group - Gilbert D., Editor
Gordon P., Chairman Steering Committee - Eloise M., Assoc. Ed. - Wm. D., Assoc. Ed.

NEWS OF OUR MEETINGS

Men's Group, Thursday, April 30, 1953. The meeting was opened with the AA Prayer. The Purpose was read by Floyd F. The 12 Steps were read by Gordon P. The speaker was Dr. K. W. Chapman, Medical Officer in Charge of the Hospital. He described the history of the management of drug addiction in this country from the time of the Hague Convention in 1912 to the present, emphasizing the reasons for the various laws designed to discourage addiction. Then he told us of various research and clinical experiences showing why several months are required to provide the maximum benefit of treatment. He next answered many questions put by the members of the group. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Men's Group, Sunday, May 3, 1953. The meeting was opened with the AA Prayer. The Purpose was read by Charlie J. The 12 Steps were read by Gordon P. Step number eleven was read by Paul A. New members were introduced by Harry M. Talks were given by Charlie J., who leaves this coming week, and by Dick M., who also leaves next week. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Women's Group, Sunday, May 3, 1953. The meeting was opened with the AA Prayer. The Purpose was read by Wanda G. and the 12 Steps by Grace H. The first speaker was Vic V., from the men's group here in the hospital. He gave us an interesting talk, describing his experiences with drugs, and of finding AA here in the hospital. He lived on the program for 17 months on the outside, but slipped; he hopes to do better after he leaves here this time. The next speaker was Houston S., from the Frankfort group. He told us how much AA had helped him. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

WISHTFUL THINKING

There is a common practice from which few alcoholics (or addicts) are wholly immune, and that is wishful thinking. Wishful thinking, when carried into our program, is the practice of deciding for ourselves that which we believe would be best and because it suits our comfort and convenience, we hope and believe it is true. Choosing to believe what we would like to believe regardless of the facts, makes stern reality all the more difficult to face. Some continue to wishfully think that those rules which pertain to their sobriety, their happiness, their improvement and progress may be ignored and that by some good fortune or kind Providence they will escape the penalty for their disregard of the facts. In AA it isn't so much a question of what we want to believe as it is a question of what we have to believe. It isn't so much a question of what we would like to be true, as it is a question of what is true.

A truth is often harder to face than a falsehood, because you can manipulate a falsehood, but you can't manipulate truth, and all the wishful thinking in the world won't change it. There may be a thousand ways of doing a thing wrong, but only one way of doing it right. There may be a million wrong answers to a problem, and only one right one. But what point is there in arriving at a wrong answer, even if it temporarily serves our comfort or convenience--we only lose time and ultimately face the fact anyway. Truth may be an exacting taskmaster, but it is a rich rewarder. Anyhow, where AA is concerned, wishful thinking is a misery that you can't afford.

--from an old Key.

Realslow

TRADITION NUMBER TEN

"AA has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

Why did you take that first shot? Was it because you resented some person, some thing, some state of affairs? This writer has to answer the second question with a yes.

Resentment is so frequently the prelude to another habit. And public controversies concerning such things as politics, sectarian religion and the administration of public affairs can create a tremendous amount of resentment. It probably is not wise for an individual AA to indulge himself too deeply in such matters, but if he does see fit to do so, he must certainly not drag AA into the melee. AA opposes no one and has no views on controversial matters.

12 Rewards to the 12 Step Program

AA GIVES US:

1. Hope instead of despair.
2. Faith instead of doubt.
3. Courage instead of fear.
4. Peace of mind instead of confusion.
5. Self respect instead of self contempt.
6. Self confidence instead of helplessness.
7. The respect of others instead of their pity and contempt.
8. A clean conscience instead of a sense of guilt.
9. Real friendship instead of loneliness.
10. A clean pattern of life instead of a purposeless existence.
11. The love and understanding of our families instead of their doubts and fears.
12. The freedom of a happy life instead of the bondage of addiction to drugs.

A man may fall several times but he isn't a failure until he starts saying that somebody pushed him.

WORTHWHILE

It is easy enough to be pleasant
 When life flows by like a song,
 But the man worthwhile is the man
 that can smile
 When everything goes dead wrong;
 For the test of the heart is trouble,
 And it always comes with the years.
 And the smile that is worth the
 praises of earth,
 Is the smile that shines through the tears.

THE KEY

THIS IS TODAY

Today is here. I will start with a smile, and resolve to be agreeable. I will not criticize. I refuse to waste my valuable time...Today has one thing in which I know I am equal with others--time. All of us draw the same salary in seconds, minutes, hours...Today I will not waste my time because the minutes and seconds I wasted yesterday are as lost as vanished thoughts...Today I refuse to spend time worrying about what might happen. I am going to spend my time making things happen...Today I am determined to study to improve myself, for tomorrow I may be wanted, and I must not be found lacking.

Today I am determined to do things I should do. I firmly determine to stop doing the things I should not do. Today I begin by doing, and not wasting my time. In one week I will be miles beyond the person I am today. Today I will not imagine what I will do if things were different... They are not different. I will make success with what material I have...Today I will stop saying "If I had time" for I never will "find time" for anything--if I want time, I must take it...Today I will act toward other people as though this might be my last day on earth. I will not wait for tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes. But there is always today.

WE'RE ALL BEGINNERS

As I look back upon the nightmares of the past, I can find nothing in that quarter of a century worth retrieving. The old life is gone--the records have been destroyed--and a new life is begun.

Five years of continuous attendance at meetings, plus 12th Step calls, has convinced me that there is no premium on seniority in AA. There is no barrier between a man who has been sober 12 months and a man who has been sober only 12 days. We are all beginners. Each morning we start the new day together by calling upon a Higher Power to give us strength, courage, and guidance to overcome temptation. At the close of the day we thank that Power for having guided us. The books are then closed for the day. If we are yet here when the sun rises tomorrow, we can meet this new day with confidence for having lived the best we could today.

Any skeptic who doubts the sound philosophy of AA has but to look into the happy faces of men and women gathered together in various groups and learn something about their background. Some have been in jails, in hospitals, and in mental institutions. They have all made a great, and valiant uphill fight. They have won a victory, not only over alcohol, but over themselves. And now they are busy helping others.

--The Grapevine.

ACCEPTANCE IN OUTSIDE GROUPS

One of the perennial items for discussion around here concerns the treatment accorded addicts after they leave Marco and approach an outside AA group in the hope of being accepted and of thereby continuing to live the AA way of life. This is a real problem because, as far as we know, groups made up of addicts to drugs (i.e., drugs other than alcohol) only exist in New York (Narcotics Anonymous), in Chicago (Drug Addicts Anonymous), and in Los Angeles (HFD Groups of AA). Therefore, an addict who does not happen to reside in one of these areas, if he is going to attend meetings, must attend meetings of Alcoholic Anonymous groups.

And the treatment given the addict by outside groups ranges all the way from happy acceptance (the usual thing) to utter rejection (by a few groups). The writer has no personal experience, having found AA on being admitted to this hospital, but has listened to many varied reports. Betty T. says that in California it is getting to be common for a speaker to say, "I want to tell you the story of my alcoholism and of my addiction".

While there are differences between addiction to alcohol, addiction to narcotics and addiction to barbiturates, the cause of all three addictions is generally conceded, by authorities on the subject, to be the same. And, just as asthma and hayfever, both a result of allergy, often occur in the same person, so it is not at all unusual to find one person who has suffered more than one of these addictions. Furthermore, we use essentially the same drugs in treating both asthma and hayfever; why is it not logical to use the same methods of treatment in all addictions of so similar a nature?

Be that as it may, we are all of us here eternally grateful to Alcoholics Anonymous because it was members of their Frankfort group who worked so hard and so long to get our own group going six years ago.

The following article is quoted from "The Night Cap", a monthly AA magazine published by the Central Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous of San Antonio, Texas. We believe it demonstrates an unreasoning bias. Please note that the writer's "studied conclusion" seems to be that addiction to alcohol is much different from addiction to drugs and that he then cites more than one similarity. Please note that some of his "facts" are incorrect ("several hospitals...for the treatment of narcotic addicts"). Please note too, though, that much of what he says concerns barbiturates, well known as the crutch of many alcoholics, and that he may not mean quite literally what he says.

The article follows:

"It is our studied conclusion that there is no place in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous for the narcotic or barbiturate addict. The average alcoholic knows nothing about these addictions; therefore can be of little help in giving sympathetic understanding to those victims.

"Of the two addictions, we are told that Barbiturates, known to us also by the nicknames of goofballs, yellowjackets, purplejackets, sleeping pills, etc., is the more dangerous or insidious. The U.S. government has several hospitals at strategic locations around the country used exclusively for the treatment of narcotic addicts. These persons are usually compelled to take these treatments, being incarcerated for a determinate or indeterminate length of time.

"But, as in the case of the alcoholic, the treatment and cure seem to be two different things. A narcotic addict can be "cured" of his addiction, only to start
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all over again upon release from the institution.

"In some of these hospitals AA groups operate, using our Twelve Steps and adding the words "and narcotics" in the first step, making the step read "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - and narcotics - that our lives had become unmanageable."

"These AA groups are encouraged by the hospital officials because they have shown a tremendous amount of success. And then there is the other fellowship which operates on the basic lines of AA which is named Narcotics Anonymous.

"Barbiturates have a tendency to build up a "deposit" in the human system. That is, the system uses only a portion of the pill and a residue is left which may be re-activated by a glass of beer or in other ways and cause the victim to go to sleep at odd times, such as while driving home from work after having had a bottle of beer or a highball.

"The victim has every appearance of being drunk and is so accused and convicted in many instances after a traffic mishap. One such case was of a Captain in the U.S. Army who took sleeping pills on the order of his doctor. This captain was in the habit of having a bottle of beer in the afternoon when off duty, before driving his car home. He had an accident one afternoon at 4 o'clock in which another car was damaged. He was permitted to go home, after satisfying the owner of the other car. He had a second accident at about the same time of day in the same block. He was haled into civil court and fined for drunken driving. Then he had a third accident at about the same time of day in the same block in which three cars were damaged.

"He subsequently was dishonorably discharged from the Army for habitual drunkenness. Upon his insistence, the Treasury Department investigated the case thoroughly and it was proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the captain had not been drunk; that the one bottle of beer had reactivated the residue of the sleeping pill (or goofball) and caused him to become overpowered with sleep. The very coincidences of time and place were in his favor.

"There is a moral to this story and it is pointed out thus: "Lay off the goofballs." You can join Narcotics Anonymous and arrest your craving for narcotics. But there is no understanding of the goofball user."

Time passes quickly. There is nothing we can do about it except to see, as far as possible, that it passes fruitfully. If, in passing swifter than a weaver's shuttle, it nevertheless lays up its store of good deeds done, noble ambitions sought to heroically, and kindness and sympathy scattered with a lavish hand, there will be given to it a permanence and enduring quality that nothing can take away.

The past is gone; the future has not yet come; the present is all we have. We cannot change the past, nor can we draw upon the future, but we can use the present. Do let us have the philosopher's stone, for it is the foundation for successful living.

Take time to look--it is the price of success. Take time to think--it is a source of power. Take time to play--it is the source of perennial youth. Take time to read--it is the source of wisdom. Take time to be friendly--it is the way to happiness. Take time to laugh--it is the music of the soul. Take time to play--it is conversation with God.

--Sunshine Magazine

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OUR PURPOSE

This is an informal group of drug addicts, banded together to help one another renew their strength in remaining free of drug addiction.

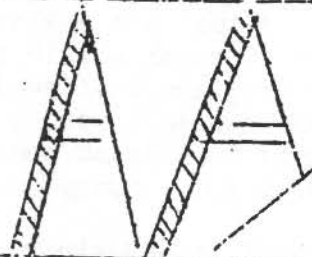
Our precepts are patterned after those of Alcoholics Anonymous, to which all credit is given and precedence is acknowledged. We claim no originality but since we believe that the causes of alcoholism and addiction are basically the same we wish to apply to our lives the truths and principles which have benefited so many otherwise helpless individuals. We believe that by so doing we may regain and maintain our health and sanity.

It shall be the purpose of this group to endeavor to foster a means of rehabilitation for the addict, and to carry a message of hope for the future to those who have become enslaved by the use of habit forming drugs.

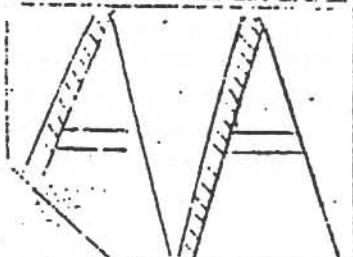
THE TWELVE STEPS OF AA

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and drugs--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual experience (or awakening) as a result of these Steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics and addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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