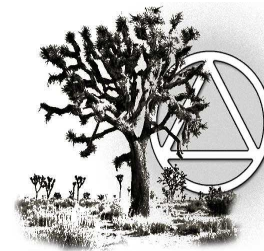


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I Am Responsible

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

My Story

I'm sitting alone in the middle of a huge living room. Yesterday I rented a Rug Doctor and cleaned my carpets. Today I went for a run/hike near my house, and spent the rest of the day grading papers, cooking, getting ready for the work week. It's Labor Day weekend, and I have chosen to spend most of it alone cleaning. A voice in my head tells me I'm a loser; that I should have other things, better things to do. "What's wrong with you?" it asks.

That's my disease, and that's how it works. Alcoholics Anonymous has taught me to live the life I am drawn to. To honestly look at who I am and who I was, to examine my character defects and acknowledge that I have them. A.A. has given me strength and trust in a Higher Power; that I am drawn to things I am doing right here and right now for a reason. It has led me to finally see who I really am, and it has given me the courage to follow my own path in life. The 12 Steps are an active, effective, and enduring way of living that has saved my life and ultimately transformed it. I have my 4th Step written in a notebook that sits on my bookshelf. I am no longer that girl anymore, and I am not the girl I was before I ever started drinking. I am someone new, reborn, and a part of society in a way I never thought possible.

After all, without A.A., I wouldn't

have a carpet to clean, or bills to pay, or two dogs to take on trail runs and boulder hopping through the wilderness of Apple Valley on Labor Day 2013. My first mortgage payment went out today. What a beautiful freedom! I never really knew that my biggest fear was that there is nothing to be afraid of. It still baffles me sometimes, and I still feel fear. I believe that fear is a crucial part of my recovery, because without it, my courage to walk through it means nothing. I have learned to pause and meditate when agitated or doubtful. I am a 32 year-old woman, who chooses to live alone in a big house, who has a fun-filled job and two additional jobs (ones as an athletic coach), who wants two dogs and not two kids, and is coming to terms with the fact that she doesn't really want to be married. Those are not things I'm supposed to want to be. Aren't I supposed to want kids and a marriage like everyone else? No, I don't think so.

I am an alcoholic, and my disease makes me question every move I make. What is true for me is not true for everyone else and vice versa.

I started drinking in college, but before that I developed a very trustworthy and reliable eating disorder. By the time I graduated high school I was 5'7" and weighed 115 pounds. I started out at 140 – 150 as a freshman in high school. I didn't know what

was wrong with me, but I knew I was wrong. I knew I had to fix something with me. So, I used food. Alcohol wasn't introduced to me until college. And I took to it like a fish to water. I went to college in Florida, as far away from California, my parents, and my old self as I could get. And alcohol was there to greet me. Drinking a Smirnoff Ice, (Really, just Smirnoff Ice? My liver laughs at such a sissy drink now!) was the first time that I felt OK to be me. I felt OK to be in my skin. Alcohol gave me courage to talk, to be me, and I discovered that I was funny, I was cute, I was sexy, I was wanted by boys, and I was envied by the girls.

And I loved it! I continued drinking and acting in ways that made me feel free and powerful. And then I started getting more visits from the guys. And the girls stopped talking to me, and then a note was slipped under my dorm room door during my junior year from "anonymous" telling me how people are talking and I am a whore.

And I believed it. But I didn't stop. I didn't know how else to live. I was using alcohol and men to fill a hole in my gut that was meant for a Higher Power, but I had not concept of that. Even now, though, I look back at what I was doing and in many instances, alcohol caused me to behave in ways I

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find unacceptable today. However, there were also other things that alcohol gave me the courage to do, because I didn't think I was worthy enough of doing them—like talking to a cute boy. There, alcohol blurred the lines and I couldn't separate the two, and I haven't been able to until now. After working the 12 Steps and really doing 10—12 on a daily basis, am I able to experience the progress of today. And more shall always be revealed, and was revealed to me this weekend.

After college, I ran back home. I had to get away from this new me I had created, who the girls hated and the boys thought was easy. And I ran right into the arms of a man who provided an instant family. A family was what I was convinced I needed to fix me. Then, I could be like everyone else; I could fit in and fall in line. I wouldn't be promiscuous anymore. He had a kid, was divorced . . . I wouldn't have to have a kid of my own, and I was with a man who had already made mistakes with another woman – this was my golden ticket! What a perfect marriage this would be.

Wrong! It did work for a while, but when he lost his job and things became financially tough, my drinking kicked up a notch, his behavior changed as well, and the kid was innocently watching it all and handling life the best he could with his learning disability. I found A.A. and was sober for about a year and a half during some tough times. I took this child with learning difficulties to a very expensive tutoring center near our house three times a week while my husband worked over 100 miles away and only came home on weekends. It was hard. I raised that child through his most difficult years – junior high and high school. And what was amazingly apparent, and which I ignored, was that I knew I didn't love my husband. I needed him to make me “feel” whole and complete and like everyone else; just like I needed alcohol to make me feel OK to be me. I needed alcohol and outside approval to believe that I was being a good wife and step-mother. And when he lost that job, and when I didn't think I was getting the recognition I “deserved” . . . it got ugly.

I stayed in the marriage 3—4 years longer than I should have, and I used the kid as my excuse; I couldn't leave because of this innocent child . . . this child who “needed” me. But, in all honesty, I didn't have the guts to live alone. I manufactured an event, all seemingly unconsciously at the time that would bring a drastic end to my marriage. Then I judged my husband's reaction to it and found my reasons to leave. All this time I was drinking more heavily to feel better about my actions and drive the guilt away. I ran home to my mom and dad and lived there for a few months until I found an apartment back in Victorville. My old behaviors from college began to

emerge – drinking heavily, finding men, not coming home. I hated myself for everything that had happened, so I drank all the guilt away, only to wake up with more guilt pressing on my chest and eating me alive from the inside, so I would drink more. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. I had a remarkable program – just two steps: 1. Drink. 2. Feel guilty—see step 1.

The meetings I had found during my year and a half sober stint [were] enough to remind me of where true hope and freedom could be found. I was able to start attending meetings at the HUG group in a little beat up house off E Avenue. It took me about 30 days to get a week. Then it took me another 4 months to get completely honest and give up. But, I had started Step work again. I was beginning Step 4 when I met a cute guy . . . and I was given a choice. Choose me or him. I believe not that if I had chosen me, he never would have gone away the way I feared. But, I was too fearful. Halfway through my 4th Step, seeing who I was and all of my character defects, and fearful that this guy would see me for who I was, I drank again. I showed up at Christmas with my mom's family drunk and I continued to drink all through that day. I stole a bottle of clear rum from my aunt's cupboard, and I hid it in my car under the pillow in my dog's crate. My dog was just a puppy then. I would find excuses to keep taking presents to the car, and I would sneak gulps of rum just to maintain my buzz. During my amends, I discovered they all knew I was drunk. Humbling to say the least.

I drove home that night drunk and then called a man I didn't like at all just because I was lonely and wanted company. When I woke up the next morning, I discovered that I was still lonely despite whoever was around. I was not fixed; I was not the person I wanted to be. I was not me. This was not me, but who was I? I was a hung over woman, looking at her alarm clock that flashed 5:00 a.m., curled in the fetal position and repeating the 3rd Step Prayer over and over again. I was utterly defeated; incomprehensible demoralization. For the first time in my drinking career that day, and after I called my sponsor, I had to buy a few mini bottles to stop the sickness and the shakes. That scared me so badly. I thought maybe I needed a real detox center to help me through. December 27, 2011 is my sober birthday. The alcohol might not have been completely out of my system, but I had not had a drink since the previous day about 24 hours earlier. So that's the date I chose.

I re-entered the rooms and raised my hand as a newcomer. I deleted all phone numbers of the men I was currently dating. I didn't care how much any of it hurt, I had to get sober and learn how to live and save my life. I didn't know how, but I was going to try this time. I walked through Steps 1—3 again and then picked up on Step 4. Before completing Step 4, I had to tell my sponsor things

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about me that I couldn't stand. I had to mix Step 5 with 4 otherwise, I believe, I wouldn't have made it all the way through my Fourth Step. I got the big things off my chest and out into the world. And once I shared them, they were not longer so scary and big. And I discovered that I wasn't the only one with such secrets. It was wonderful!

I finished Step 4 and continued on. I had no idea, really, what it meant for God to remove my defects of character, but Steps 6—8 showed me. My life changed dramatically. Also, one of the men I had deleted from my phone kept calling, and I decided to keep seeing him. Without people and relationships of any kind, how was I to know I was any different from the girl who drank everything away? I did not enter a relationship until I was a year sober this time, but I was dating. And in so, I was deciding who I am now in this new life of mine – my new sober life.

Step 9 was painful and yet so beautiful in the very act of admitting wrongs; then, to actively make amends to others. Every time I went to pick up the phone, or visit someone, it seemed the hardest moments of my life. But, once the words were flowing from my mouth and the actions being taken, there was a new freedom and a new happiness. I did not regret the past or my alcoholism because it led me to the moments I was experiencing now. I know how hard Step 9 can be. But, I promise you, the freedom on the other side is like nothing you will have ever experienced.

Steps 10, 11, 13. Daily. In sobriety I have made many mistakes, but I will say this: I have NOT repeated any. I have made new mistakes. That is the gift and beauty of A.A., that I honestly look at the person I am and used to be, and my Higher Power gives me the courage to try NEW things so as not to repeat my old ways, and in doing so, new gifts and new mistakes emerge. And with each mistake or gift I have the opportunity to decide and be who I want to be. Each day I create myself. I just ended a 9 month relationship with the man who kept calling me when I began my Step work again. What a journey! What a journey into who I am. What a learning experience this has all been for me and for everyone else. More has been revealed about my true desires and the path I want to take. It is scary, but freedom is scary. Not having control is scary. Not knowing what will happen is scary. To be me is scary. But I wouldn't trade it for the world. I choose emotion and fear, happiness and freedom, pain and healing over ONE drink any day. I'll sit and cry for hours rather than pick up a drink. I'll spill my guts to a sponsor and admit my character defects all over again just to feel all this and live in each mo-

ment the best I can.

Thanks to A.A., I have a life. I have myself. I have a 2,500 square foot home that sits 100 feet from rocks in Apple Valley. I discovered I love trail running, hiking, rock climbing, painting, surfing, and teaching. At 6 months sober I went on a multi-state road trip by myself with my dog to rock climb, hike, and camp. I went to meetings wherever I could and met family in every one. I met people from different countries and states and made friends who recently came to California to see me and rock climb. I made my first trip out of the country with my first passport last Thanksgiving—Costa Rica. I can't wait to return! Then in December I went to Cabo San Lucas and La Paz, Mexico for 10 days, a few of those days I spent alone. I hiked Mount Whitney last September, and I climbed its East Butte – literally climbed Whitney! There is no mistaking that my new house is exactly where I want to be; among wonderful new neighbors, a quiet, safe neighborhood, and miles of wilderness 500 feet from my door – and rocks to climb.

And yet my disease tells me I don't deserve any of it; that strong women always end up alone, which is my fate; and that my choosing to do all that I have done; I chase men away; I am unworthy of being me; that I am wrong. So, Steps 10—12; reality checks and gratuity lists make up my daily routine; the Serenity Prayer and the 3rd Step Prayer; Saint Francis of Assisi Prayer.

Help me, God, to be the woman You need me to be. Because the woman I created through alcohol doesn't work for me anymore. The woman I am, and who I am becoming, and who I am meeting each day – I like her, I'm proud to be her, and her freedom and power scare my disease like no other. I had no idea the person I was ultimately looking for my entire life was me! So, let this journey continue. I am willing.

Submitted by,
Alison B., Apple Valley, CA

*It's not making a mistake that will kill me.
It's defending it that does the damage*

Minutes of the Intergroup Meeting 17 August 13

The meeting was opened at 9:36 a.m. by Doug H. who led us in the Serenity Prayer. Chad F. read the Twelve Traditions. In attendance were Ted B., Doug H., Helen M., Susan V., Sam D., Craig B., Betty B., Richard B., Chad F., and Jim F. Ted B. read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Chad F. gave the report. As of July 31, 2013, there was a balance of \$7,679.42 in savings, \$7,099.53 in the C.D., and \$5,873.34 in checking. Income for the month of July was \$2,682.77, with total expenses being \$4,923.90. This came to a negative balance of \$1,616.13 before literature. July

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literature sales were \$991.25. The net income for July was <624.88>. The negative income for July was due to taxes – payroll tax state (EDD - \$182.55) and the Federal payroll tax (\$935.48). In July, 17 people contributed [\$560.45 to P.Y.M.W.Y.M.I.]. The Treasurer’s report was unanimously approved.

Webmaster’s Report: Jim F. gave the report. The webpage is going well, although Jim is presently having some problems with the server. Jim will soon have complete control [Now that’s a scary thought! Editor] of the web so emails can be sent to only one address. A separate page has been created for events. The events will automatically be erased from the page after the date of the event. In the four months that the webpage has been up there have been 3,900 hits.

Office Manager’s Report: Craig B. reported that there were 107 visitors to Central Office in July. There were 177 information calls with two 12 Step calls. There were 159 Call Forwarding calls with one 12 Step call. The totals for July were 336 information calls and three 12 Step calls. There is an [open Call Forwarding shift] for every other Sunday. Please announce at your meetings. If someone is interested they should call Craig B. at Central Office. Also, please announce at your meetings that there is a need for people to be on [the office’s] 12 Step list. In stock book covers are on sale at a 10% discount. Central Office also sells medallions and jewelry. There is also a catalogue if someone wishes to order non-stocked [items].

Old Business: Craig B. has booked [his room for the Central Office Manager’s Seminar in] Rancho Mirage in October. Representatives from all over the U.S. will be attending . . . One of the bigger issues will be the “threat” of the Internet to Central Offices. A quorum [was not] present to vote, [so the Intergroup meetings will continue to meet every month] until the end of the year.

New Business There will be an H & I Roundup at the Apple Valley Horseman’s Club on September 21, 2013.

The next Intergroup meeting will be September 21, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.

Betty B. motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Respectively submitted,
Ted B., Secretary

HELP WANTED/NEEDED

Your Central Office

is in need of volunteers to fill office shifts and to do after hours call forwarding. If you would like to be of service or know someone who *needs* to be of service, call 760-242-9292 for all details!

More Financial News

FAITHFUL FIVERS	
James L.	5.00
Happy Birthday To:	
Ron M.	39.00
Geoff C.	31.00
Betty B.	23.00
Sam K.	21.00

*A bartender
is just a
pharmacist
with a
limited
inventory.*

Central Office Activities

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>AUGUST</u>	<u>Y.T.D.</u>
Visitors	87	725
Info. Calls	195	1,365
12 Step Calls	3	13
<u>Call Forwarding</u>		
Info. Calls	157	850
12 Step Calls	9	24
<u>Totals</u>		
Info Calls	352	1,347
12 Step Calls	12	41

Upcoming Events

September 21, 2013

H & I Roundup, Horseman’s Center on Highway 18 in Apple Valley. For more information contact Central Office at 760-242-9292.

And Finally . . .

Sign at an Irish Pub

