

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

SUITING UP AND SHOWING UP

I was twenty, it was Christmas of 2010, and I had just finished dinner with my immediate and extended family. I had been using since I woke up and continually sneaking away from everyone throughout the day to drink, per usual. The family was watching an NBA basketball game, and my father made a small, insignificant comment about a player and his look. This was the perfect opportunity for me to take this comment personally and create a scene!

I had already crashed two cars, so I took my father's without asking and I proceeded to get with a few of my friends and share this atrocity with them over drinks. But those few drinks led to a bender. I came home on December 30th pretending everything was normal, but the blood that I was spitting up kept me from "playing it off."

I ended up in the hospital with two hemorrhages in my lungs and no one visiting me on New Year's Eve. I was baffled at what my life had come. Upon being released from the hospital my father asked

me a question "what are you going to do?" I wanted to say that I just needed to get back to school, but I knew that was a lie. God stepped in and the words that came out of my mouth were "I don't know how to stop and I can't go back to school."

Shortly thereafter, I was admitted into a treatment center that used 12 Steps and required regular attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous. Afterward I landed at a halfway house where I got a sponsor and began to work the Steps. I was introduced to a new way of life, handed a kit of spiritual tools and shown how to build a relationship with God that would keep me from drinking and live a life of sobriety to this day.

This time of year can be tough for many people; however, for those of us in recovery it is a time to show up for the family and friends that we had been unavailable for so long. We cannot change the past or control anything outside of ourselves, but we are responsible for being sober and showing up the best we can with the help of God and our AA community. We don't have to feel lonely if we choose to reach out,

stay connected, and serve those we neglected for so long.

~ Anonymous

THE HOLE IN THE DOUGHNUT

In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, in the chapter on Step Three, Bill Wilson imagines that a newcomer might worry that if he goes beyond relying on the AA group to help him stay sober and actually gives his will over to a higher power, then he will lose his sense of himself. Bill writes that the newcomer might ask, "If I keep turning my will and my life over to the care of Something or Somebody else, what will become of *me*? I'll look like the hole in the doughnut." Bill goes on to say that this line of thinking is an example of "the process by which instinct and logic always seek to bolster egotism, and so frustrate spiritual development" (36).

In the last five years, I have read and studied and practiced to develop and deepen as a yogi. This growth has occurred hand in hand with my continued love for the AA program of recovery. Through my

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reading and my yoga and meditation practices, I have come to cherish that place where my ideas about who I am, who you are and how everything is supposed to be begin to fall away. I sometimes can relax in the vast richness of being where everything is beyond understanding, where I don't have to figure anything out or make something happen. Bill is right that "instinct and logic" fight this process every step of the way. I constantly battle the parts of my mind that want to maintain the illusion of control, allowing me to feel safe and protected, and the ways of thinking that keep my ego feeling puffed up and happy.

The heart of what makes us human lies in this juxtaposition: the interplay between the hole and the doughnut, between surrender and the ego. These are the contrasts that make it so hard to be human and especially hard to be an alcoholic trying to stay sober: the very impulses that draw us out of ourselves towards spiritual growth are in a constant dance with the impulses that affirm and comfort our sense of self in the world.

So, I try to remember in working the third step, the doughnut is just the doughnut. But the hole, the hole is everything.

~ Meg T
Early Risers Group

WARDING OFF ISOLATION

People in recovery know a thing or two about isolation. Like many, I drank alone and even when I did drink with others I often felt like I wasn't really apart of. In sobriety, especially during winter times, it can be easy to start slipping back into those isolation tendencies, and that's never a good place to be. That's when I start getting a little too familiar with self-pity, loneliness, resentment, and sadness.

Luckily, the sponsors I've had and others in the rooms give great advice on how to ward off isolation and keep my sobriety safe. Here are some of the favorites that I've learned.

One of the best ways I can ward off isolation is to go to meetings and surround myself with fellow alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope. That said, it can be tempting to want to stay in after returning home from work when it's already dark at five!

So, I rearrange my day to better serve my meetings. On nights where I have evening meetings I get into work on the later side and go right from the office to the meeting, completely bypassing the very

comfortable couch. For weekend morning meetings when I'd rather stay under the covers and sleep in, I make plans to meet with my sponsor after the meeting for coffee, and most of the time that works.

As I've heard many people suggest, I can go outside my comfort zone and foster friendships that

move beyond the physical meeting room through fellowship. In such a quiet time of year, it feels good to be surrounded by others and remind myself that sober people can be just as fun and boisterous; "we are not a glum lot!"

And I know that if I am feeling more down or even depressed during the winter I don't have to keep that to myself and suffer silently. Instead, I can go to a meeting and share. Undoubtedly someone else is feeling the same, and I can get advice from other alcoholics who have been through the low points and made it out the other side.

~ Jocelyn H.
Proud & Sober



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