

The Eye pener

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Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

I Think I'll Stay Awhile

One day, I awoke at Fletcher Allen Hospital after being in an Ativan-induced coma for four days to mitigate withdrawal from drinking alcohol. I was 53 years old and long past debating whether I was an alcoholic. I arrived in Burlington, Vermont, in an ambulance. I had never been here before.

I had, however, been in comas before. In fact, I had incurred all the consequences of chronic alcoholism: rehabs, DUIs, jail, ill health, lost jobs, relationships, and, this time, loss of everything else except some savings and my car. I didn't know it then, but a power greater than me had laid the seedbed for a fresh life to take root.

I was not the kind to lament the direness of my situation. I loved drinking and, through it all, had never

seriously considered stopping. I would leave rehab and go straight to the bar. "This is what I do," I would proudly proclaim to myself. I typically would have formulated a plan and had someone there to help me pick up the pieces. As it says in the 12 & 12, I was childish, emotionally sensitive, and grandiose.

This time was different. I was very sick, but the doctor came into my room as soon as I was conscious and said, "Gather your things and get out!" I began to protest; surely I deserved some TLC. But then he said, "If you don't care enough about yourself to stay out of this situation, then you can't expect us to care about you, either." No one had ever put it quite that way before.

I left, alone, with a referral to DayOne, (p. 2)



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an outpatient addiction treatment program within the hospital, and from there, I followed a group member to Burlington AA. I did not know where any bars were, and I did not have the distractions I would have had in my old Philadelphia neighborhood. I was in a place where I thought it might just be possible to go without drinking a day at a time. I had never been here before.

I did the steps with my new sponsor, albeit clumsily. I set up chairs. Later, I took service positions and immersed myself in the structure of AA. Burlington, my new home, has the best AA groups I've seen. I was blessed to land here. After fourteen years, I still go to meetings at least 5 days a week. I have a life outside of AA, but without AA, I would not have any life, so I stay aware of my priorities.

Fletcher Allen Hospital is now UVM Medical Center and my doctors there tell me that my near perfect health is nothing short of a miracle. I wish I could thank that one doctor for being so direct.

I am still a little sensitive and grandiose, but I actually feel like an adult. I have real friends and relate well with the people in my circles. I live a modest life, but the fertile ground given me by God has borne fruit. I am in a place of contentment and gratitude. I have never been

here before... I think I'll stay a while.

~Harry K.

Early Risers

Hope and Fellowship

I had an unhealthy relationship with substances. I was dependent on many things for escapism. As it pertains to alcohol my story goes as follows:

Some of my worst behaviors were drinking while driving, and getting into verbal arguments – and sometimes physical fights – while drinking. I would go to bars to drink and



socialize with people in real life rather than just online. I'd have a beer or two while driving because driving was a pain in the butt. I would drink while talking to people online and let my anger get the better of me far beyond where I would normally check myself.

I never really drank responsibly looking back, but the year I got sober was especially bad. I got my first criminal charges for getting in a bar fight. I was at least six craft beers deep at that point, and I made a fuss about missing last call. The guy I was complaining to thought I was going to hit him and defended himself. I ended up breaking his phone and running from the cops.

The other incident that made me really accept I have a problem was a verbal argument with a family member. When they threatened to call the cops, I got physical and threatened to kill them at some point. That's the short of my bottom. And I'm hoping to stay sober and keep it my bottom.

Yeah, so that's how I was. What happened after that was a trip to a psych unit, then a rehab, then sober housing. Going to AA meetings was part of the requirements of sober housing. So, I started to go to meetings to get out of the house and see what this whole (p. 3)

AA thing was about.

The first time I went to a meeting, I remember feeling anxious the whole time. *I don't know anyone. I don't belong here. I can't wait to leave.* I forced myself to talk to a few people after the meeting. That went alright. During the drive home, I just wanted to go get a drink but went home instead.

Meetings got easier from there. My house manager told me to pay attention to the Promises. For some reason the fact that they are promises didn't sink in until he told me to pay attention to them. I started to listen to people's stories more closely and be amazed that they could go from their bottoms to who they are today. That gave me hope for the first time in a long time. Hope that I might have something to look forward to. That I might be able to change for the better.

Today I am about three and a half months sober. I feel less miserable than I used to. I feel like I'm making friends for the first time in six years. I look forward to seeing fa-

miliar faces in the meetings and discussing serious topics in often lighthearted ways. I've been able to get back into snowboarding for the first time in three years. I like attending the AA events around the state and region.

I have hope, fellowship, places to go, and people to see. All that is thanks to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I know I have a lot more work to do and a responsibility to pay it forward. I am nothing but thankful for all that Alcoholics Anonymous has given me so far. Thanks for reading my story thus far.

~Lucas M.

Early Risers



Coming Back To AA

I came back on day

two and had to make a choice: do I tell the group I'm on day two, or do I lie and say, "Oh yeah, life is good, just over a year and a half and I'm coming in to get my periodical AA alignment that I need every few weeks?" I was only out for six months— would anyone even know?! I picked a meeting I hadn't attended during my initial period of sobriety; I wanted to offer myself every opportunity to back out of this deal with myself. Then the Zoom window opened. My eyes scanned the screen rapidly. "OH CRAP!" I thought to myself. There was one woman in the group that was a regular at my old meeting. It was at that moment I knew I had to tell the truth. "To Thine Own Self Be True" our medallions read.

(p.4)

Early Risers

M-F, 8:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 21 Buell ST, Burlington.

open | format varies | in person

“Hi, I’m Max and I’m an alcoholic— just coming back,” I introduced myself. The whole meeting welcomed me, and I cried. I don’t know why I cried, maybe it was because I was still coming down off a six month drunken hiatus, maybe it was the virtual hug of AA that felt so warm and welcoming— I felt like I was home. Not one person scolded me for going back out; in fact, one person thanked me for “doing the research.” Maybe those tears ran down my face because I was given my first real conscious contact with God as I understood them, my higher power, because I had the ability to tell the truth. In that meeting it clicked, and I realized that I really DID want what you all have!

I’ve been working with my sponsor on the 12 Steps, something I neglected to do during my initial period of sobriety. He told me the only step I need to do perfectly is Step 1, and that the rest of the steps I just need to do “to the best of my ability.” Fortunately, my sponsor gets me — in a way I don’t even get myself. He tells me that all I need is “willingness,” and fortunately God has given me that. UGH! GOD! Why all this GOD stuff?!?! Well, for me it’s easier to accept

God as my higher power than to try to relate to the readings in any other way. It’s also easier for me to pray when I pray to God. My Sponsor also told me I can look at God as “Group Of Drunks,” an AA ‘God’ if you will.

I have just over 10 months of sobriety and I’m working my program to the best of my ability. I’ve been told, “easy does it, but do it,” and I’m doing it. I have some of the best friends I’ve ever made in the fellowship. I finally understand what it feels like to be loved for who I am, not what I have. “Enjoy the journey.” “Whatever happens today, you don’t have to drink over it.” “AA will love and support you, until you love yourself.” These are things I hear and why I keep coming back. AA has granted me permission to live life on life’s terms, something alcohol never let me do. With the hand of AA, I’ve been able to live my life again one day at a time. Life’s crazy, there’s no question about that, but what’s crazier? It’s one alcoholic talking to another about their alcoholism, and together we get to stay sober another day. I’m grateful to have made it back.

~Max

Good Morning Meeting



Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more local stories and meeting information.

Eye Opener Committee

Districts 2 & 11 Vermont

Founder	Erwin L.
Editor	Joanne B.
Art/Layout	Ali J.
Co-Chair for District 11	Joanne B.
Co-Chair for District 11	Ali J.
