

Special Insert: Sobriety & Chronic Pain

Surrender to a Higher Power

I am an alcoholic named RayJ.

Over the past few weeks I have been suffering immensely! I have two damaged disks, L4 & L5, and arthritis in my lower back. This has caused problems ranging from sciatica, to numb toes, achy legs, and pelvic pain that feels like I hit the center bar on a bicycle, you know when you are peddling hard and your foot comes off the peddle. ARGH NO FUN!

Now I am not here to have you feel sorry for me. Why? Because, I had a personal breakthrough this past Monday morning in dealing with these physical conditions.

In the morning when I shower I use the solitude to pray. On Monday, while I was praying asking God to take the pain away, an idea came to me. I have been given the 12 Steps of AA to use in my life. I also realized that I have been telling people that only half of one step deals with alcohol and the other eleven and a half deals with living your life. In that moment I realized that I had not been doing that which I had been preaching.

OMG! I realized I was powerless over the pain and because of the pain my life had become unmanageable. I felt like my life was totally insane. Step One was staring me in the face. I thought what the heck so I said aloud "I am powerless over my back pain and my life is unmanageable."

I then took Steps Two and Three directly from the AA program, without modification, saying "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity!" then saying "Made a decision to turn our will and life over to the care of a God as we understood Him."

What happened next was like magic. As the water from the shower rained down upon me I felt the pain and discomfort wash away and go down the drain. Almost immediately I felt better. As the pain left so did the insanity. What showed up was hope and purpose.

You may be asking yourself "has he been to a doctor and what did they say?" The answer to this question is yes. I have seen doctors, chiropractors, physical therapists, massage therapists and various holistic practitioners. What I came away with is that I need to take control of my life, exercise more, eat healthy food and, oh yes, take pain killers and muscle relaxers. They also talked about surgery but strongly suggested that it was only as a last resort and not a permanent fix.

I did what was prescribed for about a year and a half with good results, all but the taking the pain killers and muscle relaxers. Being that I am an alcoholic, I am afraid of pain killers and muscle relaxers and only take them when the pain is totally out of control and yes this is insanity. I am afraid because I have buried many a friend who lost their sobriety to such prescriptions.

Yet here I was praying for God to take the pain away. I had slacked off of the exercises because basically it is a lot of hard work and is very time consuming. When I was doing all that stuff I did feel better. Yet I wasn't getting better. I had this expectation that I should be over my back pain because I had taken control of my life.

In the shower I realized that I had not accepted the fact that I have an injury that has been with me for some fifty plus years and I was not going to reverse fifty years of damage in eighteen months. All the taking control of my life and figuring things out was as insane as a drowning man putting rocks in his pockets to stabilize himself. If he would just surrender to what is so (acceptance) he would most likely float to the surface where he could take a breath. This is surrendering to a higher power, the water.

To me God is in everything and everywhere. There is a Power greater than myself that can restore my sanity. I have not arrived at nirvana; I am on a journey dealing with my sobriety and physical health day by day. What is available to me is the daily reprieve of not being the one being in control and failing. When I take this stress of being in control out of my life I can be at peace. This peace opens a space where I can do things such as exercise, eating healthy and prudent use of my meds.

I continue working on steps Four through Twelve as I take on my journey.

If you have areas in your life that feel out of control, consider doing the first three steps and finding peaceful relief. Because, you just might find yourself doing steps Four through Twelve and finding the relief for which you are searching.

Thy will, not mine, be done.