SAA of New York City

Workshop Handout

Garment District
Sunday June 28th, 3:00 pm

Keep Coming Back: Dealing with Relapse and Recommitting to Recovery

By Jackson C.

NOTE: SAA in NYC does not endorse, finance or oppose any of the above non-SAA material. The views reflected on this document are the ones of the SAA member who presented the workshop. The SAA member who presented the workshop does not speak for SAA.

Dealing with Relapse and Recommitting to Recovery

Introduction

From the SAA Green Book:

“There are no failures in this program. We do not judge members who relapse, because we know that we are all powerless over this disease. If we relapse, it is important that we get right back into recovery immediately. We need not turn a mistake into a self-destructive binge. Often we feel ashamed when we relapse. Our addiction becomes charged, and the thought arises that we might as well try to get the urge out of our system. But we have learned that this is only the shame and the addiction talking. Our addictive desires cannot be satisfied. Instead, we can go to an SAA meeting, and we will be welcomed there. Whatever situation we face, no matter how badly or how recently we acted out, no matter how defeated we may feel, we can stay abstinent today. All we need to do is make it a priority to use the tools of the program and seek help from our Higher Power and our friends in recovery.”

Dealing with Relapse and Recommitting to Recovery

From AA Bill Sees It: Relapses—and the Group

“About this slip business—I would not be too discouraged. I think you are suffering a great deal from a needless guilt. For some reason or other, the Lord has laid out tougher paths for some of us, and I guess you are treading one of them. God is not asking us to be successful. He is only asking us to try to be. That, you surely are doing, and have been doing. So I would not stay away from A.A. through any feeling of discouragement or shame. It’s just the place you should be. Why don’t you try just as a member? You don’t have to carry the whole A.A. on your back, you know!

“It is not always the quantity of good things that you do, it is also the quality that counts.

“Above all, take it one day at a time.”

More from As Bill Sees It: The “Slipper” Needs Understanding

“Slips can often be charged to rebellion; some of us are more rebellious than others. Slips may be due to the illusion that one can be ‘cured’ of alcoholism. Slips can also be charged to carelessness and complacency. Many of us fail to ride out these periods sober. Things go fine for two or three years—then the member is seen no more. Some of us suffer extreme guilt because of vices or practices that we can’t or won’t let go of. Too little self-forgiveness and too little prayer—well, this combination adds up to slips.”

The Journey to Sobriety

An AA speaker named Adam T shares his experience, strength, and hope at a meeting in 2004.
Adam went through treatment 28 times,
and was a “newcomer” in AA for 17 years,
before finally achieving long term sobriety.

https://youtu.be/6LtZiYptPRg

From Adam T:
“So there I was, one more time, in one more detox, 120 pounds, totally lost, broken, and absolutely hopeless. And I’m sitting in the circle in detox with my fellow associates—a vision for you—and this woman comes in. We have a thing called H&I, which is Hospitals and Institutions. And she comes in on her AA panel in her business suit and she’s looking us all up and down and she said, ‘If I could give you all the gift of recovery I wouldn’t do it.’ …And then what she said was something that was eventually to change my life. She said, ‘The reason I wouldn’t do it is because I wouldn’t rob you of the journey.’

And all of these years later I understand that that journey to recovery, like that journey to surrender, is something that is very very personal. And nobody can give me that.”

The Relationship Between Surrender and Willingness

From Adam T:
"What I discovered is there is a relationship between surrender and willingness. For many, many years I didn't understand the word surrender. I would hear it. But I never understood it, because it's not an intellectual concept...

There's a big difference between compliance and surrender. Compliance is I'm doing this to keep the family, to keep family services off my back, I'm doing it to satisfy my PO. I might be doing it for a hundred reasons. There's a hundred reasons why I might be doing this. There's a big difference between compliance and surrender…I had to be completely exhausted of self-will and self-reliance and really get to that place. And it's funny, because there is a direct relationship between surrender and willingness.

Have you ever noticed how willing people are when they first come in here, and they're calling everyday to try to get a bed, or they first come back to A.A. after they've been severely beaten by alcohol, or some of the other stuff around here? They'll do anything! 90 meetings in 90 days. Get a sponsor. They're willing to do anything. And 30, 60 days later they're like, 'You mean I gotta go to a meeting every day?'

It's like a prize fighter that takes the towel and throws it in and says, 'I'm done,' and then starts to take the towel back one little piece at a time. And I did that over and over and over again. And I just couldn't get to the place where I could surrender.

My Journey: *Pain —> Surrender —> Willingness —> Commitment —> Service —> Sobriety*

What To Do After a Relapse

From the SAA Green Book:

“A relapse is an opportunity to take inventory of how well we are working our program. Here are some questions to consider: Do we find ourselves returning to slippery situations or places? Are we attending meetings regularly, or are we finding excuses to do something else instead? Are we listening at meetings? Do we judge what others are saying rather than trying to relate to it? Are we being honest when we share? Do we have a sponsor, and have we been keeping in touch with our sponsor? Have we been fully honest with our sponsor? Are we using all of the tools of the program? Are we making phone calls? Are we praying and meditating? Are we working the Twelve Steps? Are we stuck on a particular step? Are we avoiding a step? We need to work all of the steps if we want to continue our progress.

When evaluating our program, we are ultimately asking if recovery is our highest priority. We all have responsibilities and obligations. But if we allow ourselves to fall into our addiction again and not return to recovery, we jeopardize everything we have.”

Dealing with Relapse and Recommitting to Recovery

Jackson's "Willing-To-Go-To-Any-Lengths" Checklist

1. Do I have a sponsor?
2. Am I willing to go to a meeting every day?
3. Am I actively working the steps?
4. Do I have a morning routine?
    - Prayer
    - Meditation
    - Recovery Literature (Suggested Reading: Pages 86 - 88 in AA BB)
5. Am I willing to call 3 fellows everyday?
    - Am I calling fellows with *more* experience than me to listen to their wisdom?
    - Am I calling fellows with *less* experience than me to be helpful?
6. Do I have a service commitment at my regular meetings?
7. Am I being honest by telling my sponsor after I've had a slip?

From Adam T:

"Who am I, after being a newcomer for 17 years, to judge some guy who can't get this, or to say, 'Well, what are you doing wrong?' Or, 'What happened this time?' I had to walk that path like all of us do."

Recommitting to Recovery *Before* a Relapse

From the SAA Green Book:

"When we have been abstinent for a length of time, complacency can become a stumbling block for us. We can't take recovery for granted. Many of us have found that our disease continues to progress, even as we work our program. If we relapse, we often don't just return to our old behavior, we go on to new, more destructive behaviors. And our disease may tend to escalate faster than it used to. To avoid complacency in our program, we need to cultivate and maintain a sense of gratitude and a commitment to sexual sobriety."

NOW

IT'S TIME FOR SHARES