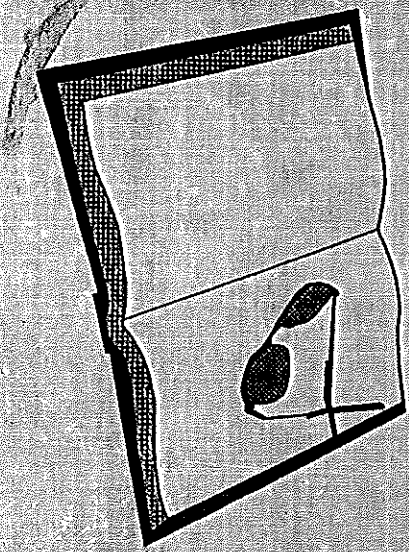


*Reflecting
On
Relationships*



Dedication

*This book is for Fabiola, the lady of our life,
And who forever walks in beauty,
Her way was peaceful, generous, and just;
A way which will forever be applauded and
blessed.*

Tom's Family

Foreword

In the Andrew Lloyd Webber play, "Cats", Deuterotomy is the wise old cat, the leader whom the other cats all love and respect. He soothes, and quietens them, and offers confirmation of a new way of life by sharing his experience, strength, and hope.

This will introduce you to our Deuteronomy, otherwise known as Tom G., who started the University Group of Alcoholics Anonymous in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in 1984. Tom has been a leader in our group ever since, and has been unswerving in sharing with us the simple program of recovery, unity, and service as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our group has learned from Tom that we are in an action program – we have been taught to just do it, do it, do it.

It has been an indescribable experience for me to observe the miracle of the 12 Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous work for hundreds of new members who have come to our group and, often under his direct sponsorship, learn to practice this simple philosophy and attain meaningful and long lasting physical, mental, and spiritual sobriety.

Alcoholics suffer from many problems. In addition to fear, anger, self-pity, and resentment, they often have serious relationship problems. In fact, these other problems are often simply a reflection of relationship problems. This book summarizes Tom's observations and much research on relationships that led to these reflections. It was taped at a series of five meetings in 1997.

Chapter One

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

Hello! I am Tom and I am an alcoholic.

Okay. We usually open these meetings with a little prayer that we have kind of adopted in this group:

Dear God: Let me set aside everything I think I know about You and me and this program and these steps, for an open mind and a new experience with You and me and this program and these steps.

Sure thank you.

Well, this series is on *Relationships*. I don't know what it is going to be like. I sure as hell hope that you enjoy it, because you have caused me about six weeks of pain and suffering trying to put it together. We did something like this a couple of years ago, but that was pretty sketchy and my notes are for sure as blazes sketchy.

Relationships is kind of a fascinating subject, and of course very close to the heart of AA because our life in Alcoholics Anonymous is like life anywhere. All of life depends upon relationships. AA living is no different, except that alcoholics, being as they are perfectionists, strive for excellence in everything. We don't ever want to come second in any race, we want to win the race, or we don't want to go in it.

This book is not intended as an academic treatise, although the wisdom is transparent and transcends the spoken word. Tom is a very practical and yet spiritual man.

My Big Book is autographed:

“Brian – this is our program:

Don't drink

Meetings, meetings, meetings

Read the book

Do the steps

Carry the message

Tom G.”

Brian V.

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

We often gain the reputation as the best lawyer in town, the best doctor we ever had around here, the best teacher we ever had in our school district, but --- and there is always that "but ... " you know. And of course, we are very sensitive people. So it makes it very difficult for us in relationships, but I thought we might just take our time and just look at relationships, to see what they are.

Bill, in our Book Alcoholics Anonymous, certainly stresses the importance of relationships. All the way through the book he talks about relationships. We have a whole Chapter dealing with family relationships entitled "*The Family Afterward*". That is what that Chapter is all about. We have the Chapter "*To Wives*" which is all about spousal relationships. We have the other Chapter "*To the Employer*" which is again about workplace relationships.

Bill points it out to us again in the Fourth Step. He says that we need to examine all of our interpersonal relationships, then he puts a bracket there (including sex) and then closes the bracket. Sex is a subject that gets a lot of discussion among us especially when it comes to Step Four.

Have you made your sex problems list? Well, it is really a relationships list because of course many relationships have a sexual connotation to them. I am sure that my relationship with my father was a sexual relationship because it was from him that I got my idea of what a man should be. And my relationship with my mother certainly was sexual in nature. It was from her that I got my ideas about what a woman should be, and my sisters, you know.

Reflecting on Relationships

If we examine all of our relationships we would see that commonality running through all of them, so it is something that is of vital interest to every member of Alcoholics Anonymous. And certainly to Alans and Alateens as well. So I thought that we would start in a very simple way of just looking at that word "relationship" and see what it means. What is a "relationship"?

Well, a relationship seems to depend on the ability of one person to communicate with another person so as to result in some degree of mutual understanding. Of course, the higher the degree of mutual understanding reached in the communication affects, and may even determine, the closeness or the intimacy of the relationship.

As we discussed the last time we did this little series. We classified relationship and broke them down into four main categories. Firstly, superficial relationships, we will go into this a little more in detail later, but for now I just want to review this with you. Secondly, companionships, thirdly friendships, and fourthly, intimate relationships.

Intimate relationships include all those relationships that are described or termed as meaningful, or now that is not good enough, nowadays it has to be deeply meaningful. I am not sure what that is all about, but I hear young people telling me. "*But Tom, I want a deeply meaningful relationship.*" I say, good luck. (laughter)

Or we call it seeing someone, oh yes, I am seeing him now. And he is seeing her now, and that is not seeing, it is obviously terminology for "significant other", that is another kind of terminology we use.

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

common-law, which I don't like at all. I don't like that name for that relationship. We should have a proper name for it and we don't have a good enough name for it. We may say living together, some say shacking up. Well that is not really a relationship. A relationship is not a weekend, guys, okay. That has got another name. Or marriage, how is that for a relationship? Or even deeper in a sense, we talk about soul mate, and this has a very deep significance in a relationship. So as I look at it here, the whole thing's kind of confusing, isn't it?

I don't know if you knew this but there are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who classify things, and those who don't. I am one of the ones who classify things. I tend to classify because it is simpler for me and it gives me a form to work with and I can keep track of where I am going easier. One of the questions that I get asked from time to time, and one of the common questions that I get asked about relationships would be "What is normal?" "What is normal in a relationship?"

I had to go back and ask myself, "How does a person acquire the ability to communicate?" The answer seems to be that communication skills are acquired or learned in the family unit. So one of the main functions of the family, the family of origin, the home, is to make the acquisition of communication skills possible.

Thus, we can define for purposes of this series what a functional family is. A functional family, my definition, you don't have to agree with it, this is just my definition for whatever it is worth, and I think that a functional family is a unit or home that basically equips a child with the emotional, intellectual and social skills

Reflecting on Relationships

(that is, relationship skills) to enable the child to deal with life as an adolescent and then as an adult.

I just want to run over that one quick time. A functional family is a family that makes it possible for the children in a family to acquire the intellectual, emotional and social skills that are the basis of communication and so enable the child to operate in life in a successful manner. The reason I came to that conclusion is because in my research (which I have not done a lot of) in a functional family, it appears that a child learns naturally in the course of growing up, the skills necessary to operate emotionally, intellectually, and socially. That is, learns to operate in relationships. Gradually, day by day, year by year, such skills are acquired. They are not formally taught.

Of course, many of us will have gone this far and looked at this and said to ourselves, "I did not get those skills, that did not happen in my family."

These skills are relatively simple. You know it is like Bill says in the Big Book, simple but not easy. Because the definition of them, the describing of them is very simple, but practicing them is not. That takes practice. You have to do it and do it and do it. So we are going to look at that later. And it seems to me that the skills that are necessary to form the basis of a relationship begin with three simple essential steps and here they are:

1. **to recognize what we feel;**
2. **to be able to put a name on my feelings;**
3. **to tell other people what I feel, what I am feeling.**

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

All leading to the capacity to care about what other people feel; the ability to listen to other people; and the ability to respond.

Those skills in AA language, we call sharing and caring. And as I said blithely for many, many years, without sharing and caring there is no sobriety and so on and so on, without ever really stopping to think about what I was saying, without realizing how basic and important sharing and caring is in our program.

It now seems to me that the sharing and caring we learn in our beloved program of *Recovery* is nothing less than a process of acquiring those basic skills that form the basis of all relationships. It has been said that Alcoholism is a learned inadequate way of life. And I suggest that our AA Way-of-Life amounts, for those members who do the Steps and follow the Traditions, to a sure way for us to learn a supremely adequate way of life.

Let us go back to the original question that I asked a few minutes ago. "*What is normal in a relationship?*" Well, I don't know that I came up with an answer to that. I will let you decide for yourselves. I wondered how many people in Canada came from basically functional families. I did a little research into that and I learned that most studies seem to agree that somewhere between 20 and 30 percent of families in Canada are functional.

Now, if that were true -- I know some of you don't think you heard me correctly. Let me say that again, somewhere between 20 and 30 percent of all families in Canada today are functional. According to that definition of a functional family that I use, that seems to indicate that somewhere between 70 and 80 percent of

Reflecting on Relationships

families in Canada today are dysfunctional. So, if I were to answer the question that I asked initially, I would have to say it is normal in Canada, today, for families to be dysfunctional.

If anybody here is worried about the future of Alcoholics Anonymous, or whether we might run out of prospects, let me tell you we ain't about to do it in the next 37 seconds. We are going to have a hell of a lot of prospects coming to us. So what I propose at this point is a new question. *Not, what is normal in a relationship.* We see that that is not satisfactory, it means dysfunctional.

The question I propose is "*What is healthy in a relationship?*" And Bill stresses that in what was just read from the preamble of Chapter Five when we opened this meeting. Bill says we are not out to get good, we are not out to become Saints, we are not out for spiritual perfection. We are striving for spiritual progress. We don't want to get saintly, we want to get well, that is, to get healthy. So I changed the first question to a new question "*What is healthy in a relationship?*" Now, I guess at this point I could sit down and go home? You are all so bloody dysfunctional it is awful (I'm just kidding -- big smile.)

I need your help now. I am in a bad way right now here and I really need your help. I would like to try a little experiment with you so I would ask you to kind of sit up in your chairs a bit, get a little bit comfortable, make sure you are comfortable, try a couple of fairly deep breaths, just to relax yourself like that, and then upon taking a normal deep breath, don't go red in the face, just pause there.

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

Go deep inside yourself, to that place that you know, that you are familiar with, and see what it is that you are feeling. Put a name on that feeling then come back out and turn to the person next to you, in front of you, behind you, wherever handy to you and tell them what you are feeling. Then shut up and listen. Let them tell you what they are feeling. So if you would help me with that, just take a couple of minutes and do that. Right now, go ahead.

-- A two-minute pause here --

If you followed the suggestions that I gave to you, took a deep breath, went down inside of yourselves and saw what you are feeling and named that feeling and then turned to another person and communicated your feeling, then you shut up and listened to the other person, you have just performed the basic communication skills which are the basis of the beginning of all relationships. Never mind what kind. It does not matter whether they are superficial relationships or deeply, deeply meaningful relationships, or spiritual relationships, all relationships, begin in the same way.

In our program, that is the AA program, we stress action. We say action, action, action. We say action is the magic word and we have a Chapter in our book entitled "*Into Action*". By that we don't mean just any action, we mean specific actions which are described in the book and Bill makes that clear.

He says: "Later on specific directions will be given to you". Bill wants to make sure that we get only certain specific actions and that is important. They are the actions that are set out in the 12 Steps, the 12

Reflecting on Relationships

Traditions and the 12 Concepts and that are followed in the Fellowship. And I have to ask myself why.

Why are those actions so effective when other actions may not be so? And I look at something like the Ten Commandments and they say thou shalt not do this and thou shalt not do that, and I wonder what if the Commandments had been termed differently? What if they had been couched in language similar to the 12 Steps; what would the effect have been on people like you and me?

Because in looking at it, we see immediately and you will see this too, any action has the potential to lead us either toward more intimacy, toward being more connected, or toward more isolation, abandonment - Loneliness. And there is not an alcoholic in the world that does not know what it is like to be lonely.

Alcoholism has been called the "*Lonely Illness*". And we wonder why. I wonder why. Why did I feel apart from? Why did I feel disconnected all my life, all the time? I couldn't seem to be part of anything even though I was ostensibly part of. I didn't feel that way.

The feeling of conscious separation is experienced every moment of everyday by every one of us. My experience tells me that it is not just what we are doing, it is in how we approach what we are doing and with what attitude we do it that determines if we end up feeling connected to others or, more alone. Let me give you an example, let us take sex.

That sort of gets the attention right away. Take the situation with lovers. They lose themselves in each other. They are ecstatic; they are transcendent. They

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

feel connected in every sense of that word. And that is at one end of the spectrum of sex. But if we go to the other end of the spectrum of sex and take rape, that probably is the most isolating destructive experience that can occur between a man and a woman. Total isolation, anger, fear, resentment, guilt, shame, remorse, all those horrendous feelings are generated by the misuse of sex at the base end of the spectrum. So it is not just what we are doing, it is how we do it.

Death, that is another good example. Death can be either like going into a dark little room where we are alone forever, or it can be something we fear and dread. Or looked at differently with a different attitude, it can be a return to the Father's House. It can be a matter of joy, it can be a matter of reunion with loved ones, transcendent joy. So it is not what we are doing, it is how we go about it that is so important. So you see, it is really important as to how we approach other people each day.

Because communication then, is learning to talk to each other in ways that allow another person to hear us better. Because when we feel heard, we feel connected. Heard and connected reduces isolation and stress, and illness. Healing begins when we feel heard and connected.

Now let me give you a little example to demonstrate that it is not only the action that we take, but it is how we approach it, that is what is so important. The example I am going to give you concerns a lady that I know in St. Boniface and it happened this month as a matter of fact. She lives in a house that backs onto the Seine River.

Reflecting on Relationships

There is a fairly broad strip of land that is heavily treed and consists of maybe 8 or 10 acres in all that lies behind the house, or rather behind all the houses on the lady's street. There are seven or eight houses on the street, and they all back up onto the Seine River and there are 3 or 4 or 5 hundred feet in places between the back of the houses and the Seine River and it runs all the way down to the Windsor Park Golf Course. I am saying the area comprises maybe eight or ten acres. It is a little forest and it is virtually an untrampled little forest, isolated and protected, unmarked and unknown, except to the residents of the street.

But you know when the City put a bicycle path in, it opened up the east end of that little forest and it didn't take long for some teenagers to discover that beautiful little forest. This year, twenty or thirty boys moved in and started building bicycle jumps and bon fires and drinking a little beer and hooting and hollering and raising hell. And of course, the neighbors on the street were disturbed and raised more hell. They called the police and the police came and they really raised hell. They came roaring in with their sirens blaring and they went charging into the bush, chasing the kids out and yelling and hooting and hollering.

The police gathered up their stuff and left and thirty minutes later the kids are back and the neighbors are yelling. The kids started a fire so the neighbors called the firemen and the firemen came with their trucks and their sirens blazing, and oh man! We had firemen running through the bush with tanks on their backs trying to squirt the fire and the kids. There was hell to pay around there.

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

But the lady that I am referring to decided to take a different approach and she walked down to the bottom of the garden of her yard, one evening. She saw the boys out there, she walks with a cane so it is not easy for her and the boys saw her coming, and they paused to watch her. And she called out: "Hey, you guys, come here, I have to talk to you". Some of the boys started to turn away and straggle off and she said: "No, no, no, I just want to talk to all of you, come on over here". She says: "You see that I walk with a cane and I can't go to you, so you have to come to me". "So come on over here please, I have to talk to you".

The boys straggled over and came closer to her, she said: "I want to tell you guys that this little forest is the home of many little animals and ground birds, like larks". And she named several of the birds that inhabit the area: orioles and things like that; and animals like squirrels, rabbits, martin, foxes, raccoons and beaver. "When you guys cut down trees and shrubs and make fires and noise, you disturb the home of these birds and animals, you chase them out of their home. I think you didn't know that. And if you knew that, you wouldn't want to hurt the birds and the animals."

One of the boys said "That's cool, we didn't know that". She said "What is your name?" He said "I am Eric". She said, "Well Eric, I'm Yvonne and when I am gone I would like you to talk with the other boys about how important it is for the little animals and birds to have a home of their own." She said, "You see that tree over there on the river bank", and she pointed at it. She said: "That tree was cut down by the beaver, and they cut that down not for sport, not for no reason, they cut it down to use the twigs and leaves to feed their family. And they used the big branches and the trunk to build their lodge, which is just around the corner on

Reflecting on Relationships

the river" and she pointed. She said again: "If you went down there you would see them". Eric said "Gosh, we didn't even see that tree, we will be quiet, we don't want to hurt any of the animals".

Two days later Yvonne's neighbor was out trimming his lawn and Eric rode by on his bicycle and the neighbor yelled at Eric. "Hey you, you young lug, get the hell out of here, back there making noise". Eric stopped and said, "Don't yell at me, we are being quiet. If you don't believe me you can ask Yvonne, she is our friend". The other neighbors came over during the next few days and asked Yvonne, "What the hell did you say or do to those kids?". They are sure quiet and acting differently now. It is peaceful back here."

You see, Yvonne used a different approach and she got a different result. Action was taken, but in a different way. And that's communication. You see, communication and ventilation are not the same. And of course ventilation is just getting your feelings out -- you don't care if you're heard or not. It does more harm than good. Retaliation always results and makes you angrier and the angrier you get -- the angrier you get. That always solidifies an angry attitude and establishes a hostile habit. It's all negative, negative, negative. Just ask the people in Hiroshima -- that's how the A-bomb got dropped. Anger. Revenge.

So I like the question, "What's healthy?" a lot better than "What's normal?" Communication therefore again, is expressing how you feel so that others can hear and understand you better. And that's a skill that can be learned.

The husband says, "If I tell her what I think she feels attacked and there's a big fight, and she attacks

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

back or withdraws". "And I feel more isolated". "And I stuff my feelings down inside of me and keep stuffing them down there until finally I explode". Sometimes it seems easier not to feel at all". Can you identify with that? I have no trouble identifying with that. Before I came to AA I was numb. I couldn't feel a darn thing. I remember that I stood at the edge of the grave of a friend of mine --- a guy that I flew with in our squadron, and I watched them lower the coffin into the grave and said to myself, "What's wrong with you Tom, you don't feel anything?"

There's an option. Communication is a better way. And we can't blame other people for our communication problems because they are skills that anyone can learn if we can just recognize them and practice them and make an effort to do it. We can't change other people, we all know that. We can only change ourselves and the Serenity Prayer, which we swear by, makes that so plain to us.

***"To accept the things that I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can"***

Sometimes it takes a little courage, you know.

There is a basic principle of good communication. Our feelings help to connect us, our thoughts, especially our judgments tend to isolate us. Emotions are much more likely to be heard than thoughts. Ideas might bring our minds together but emotions bring our hearts together.

Thoughts connect our heads, feelings join our hearts, why is that? Well, consider these points, I don't know why this is so, but it seems to work out. I always have seven points. You will see before this series is

Reflecting on Relationships

over if I say well we are going to consider some points, we are going to look at this, you don't need to ask, there is going to be seven of them, okay. I don't know why it is that way. That is just how it is.

1. *Thoughts are more likely to be heard as criticisms than are feelings.* We come home and we voice our thoughts, we may say, you are wrong. Oh, here is a dandy. You are a jerk. I mean this is real communication, right? Or maybe something innocent like, "You are late". See how innocent this can be? So people begin arguing right away. They are feeling attacked and they are arguing about feeling attacked and the original problem is forgotten about completely.

2. As soon as we feel criticized, it is hard to hear anything else that is said. Being heard and understood is what we want, so don't criticize and don't attack.

3. *Feelings are true statements.* I feel sad, I feel angry. You cannot argue with the truth of that statement. I might feel that I am justified in feeling sad, and you might think that I am not justified in feeling angry, but when I say that I am sad, or I am angry, or I am happy, or I am whatever, you cannot argue with the truth of that statement. That is what it is. Whereas the thought might say, I think you are wrong. Oh boy, that is an open invitation that is like a face-off. I think you are wrong. Oh yeah, argument, "No, you are wrong". "I am not wrong, you are wrong." So we fight about who is right and who is wrong, and nobody hears what the other person is trying to say. Neither person hears the other.

4. I like this one, I really like this one. *Listening is not the same as obeying or agreeing. Just listen.* But when you listen to what the other person has to say,

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

you don't have to obey, you don't have to agree. Just listen. The other person might not give you what you want, but at least they are being heard. And you will be heard, and when you feel heard, you feel connected. You don't feel isolated, you don't feel alone anymore. Now you have a relationship going. There is a trade here, there is a *quid pro quo*. I am giving you something (emotion), and you are giving me something back -- emotion. And we are sharing that. That's sharing because caring comes after sharing. We don't say caring and sharing, we say sharing and caring because caring comes after the sharing. When we hear someone we begin to understand why they are as they are, and we are able to see and share their feelings (joy, anger, frustration, etc). Compassion arises and we start to care about the other person. Sharing first, and caring may follow.

5. *Expressing feelings makes us feel safer.* We can deal with an expression of feelings. We don't have to defend an expression of feelings. We can share that, so we feel safer so an expression of feelings is a true statement, so both people feel safer, and thus they are more open. There is more freedom in that. It is easier to respond in kind. How can you respond in kind when somebody initiates the conversation by saying, "You are wrong". What choice have you got? But when I express my feelings it is a true statement, there is nothing to be defended so I feel safe. The person hearing is sharing and neither party has anything to defend. So both feel safer.

6. *Feelings are a more powerful influence than thoughts.* Do you believe that? Do you agree with that? For example, it is easier to raise money for flood victims than for medical research. Do you remember when the National Hockey Team was going to leave

Reflecting on Relationships

town and some personality on the radio (I was out of town so I didn't hear this, but later I saw and heard what had happened). Some personality on the radio gets people running around and throwing money into Banks. And they are ordinary people; just little people off the street. These are not big corporations, these are just people venting their emotions and giving way to their emotions. They voluntarily deposited 13 million bucks into the pot in an effort to try to save the hockey team. All emotion, nothing to do with thought or planning or anything like that. So yeah, feelings are more of an influence than thoughts are.

7. *Expressing feelings keeps discussion in the present.* And in the present moment, not in the past, and not in the future. This is how I feel, this is how I am feeling now. Whereas thoughts usually focus on the past or the future. The husband comes home in the afternoon and the wife says, "You forgot to take the garbage out". She is talking about the morning. "And you forgot it yesterday, too" I like to add that little "too" at the end, it makes it worse, hell of a lot worse. Or he may say, "You will never get there on time, boy look at that. I told you an hour ago get ready, and you are not ready and you are not going to be there on time". That is the future. Past and future. So there they go again, argue, about arguing, right and wrong and nobody gets heard and they both feel disconnected.

I remember talking about communication with some of the old members of AA like old Uncle Wesley from Pompano Beach, Florida. He was one of the early members that used to come and see us once in a while. Wesley always loved to say, "You know Tom, it is part of my job as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous to 12 Step every person I meet everyday." If I heard Uncle Wesley say that once, I heard him say

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

that a hundred times. He believed that. He was talking about communication. He was talking about sharing and caring. And Bill makes it so plain to us at the very end of the text, page 164, Bill says

"Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man, [the person] who is still sick. The answers will come if your own house is in order, but obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us".

So you see we have looked over this communication situation and we see that communication skills are simple, but practicing those skills has to be part of our daily living. Especially if we are normal, that is to say, addictive, obsessive, like we alcoholics are. Bill is talking about communication with others and he says clearly that before I can communicate, I have to have my own house, that is my own self in order. If I am not at peace, I cannot help you find your peace.

There is a magic answer and Bill gives it to us. Bill says relate to the Power. Be at peace yourself. Do this and great effects will come for you and all those that you relate to. Please note: Bill says each day, not once in a while, and Bill says to do it in your prayers and in your meditation.

Meditation may be the most effective way to prepare myself for useful communication with others. I don't know what you think meditation is, I think everybody should have their own definition of meditation. They laugh at me because I always tell

Reflecting on Relationships

them what I was doing today. I say, "I was meditating" and they say, "Do you meditate all day?" And I say "Yes, eighteen holes, solid meditation". That might sound kind of goofy, but damn it all, I am pretty serious when I say that.

I have a book written by an old golf pro down in Austin, Texas, he just died at 95 or something like that, and he wrote a book. *The Little Red Book* he calls it. And in that book he says that in his experience more people are kept sane or return to sanity through playing the game of golf than by all the psychiatrists in the world. And I have never yet heard anybody, including my friendly psychiatrist, argue with him about that statement.

Because you see, once you are out there, and you are on the golf course and playing golf, you forget about self, and you are thinking about what you are doing and how you are doing it. And you are trying to hone a skill and you become totally absorbed in the action. You are paying close attention to what you are doing. And that is the beginning of all meditation. And you look around you and see the water and the plants and the grass and the trees and the shrubs and the little birds and the animals.

We have on Niakwa Golf Course a family of killdeers. I don't know if you know what a killdeer is, but they run along the ground, they are a ground bird, and if you come close to where the eggs are, where the family is, they have a way of feigning a broken wing, and they hobble along the ground and make plaintive little cries. And perhaps you will go to find out what they are doing and they will lead you away from the family and their nest.

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

They are fascinating, they are a beautiful bird. We see the eggs get laid, and we see the little chicks hatch out. They are just little balls of fluff as small as a golf ball and they can run like hell. It is amazing to see them grow and develop, and they are pecking away at the little bugs. And pretty soon they are running around on the fairway and they've got plumage. By and by they start to fly and they have the same killdeer, killdeer cry as their parents. We see the same process of development with the ducks and the geese and other birds. Oh my goodness, it is beautiful to see. It is beautiful to experience but that is relating to nature, you see. In doing that, we are relating to the Power, and in doing that we are automatically relating to each other. So it is totally a natural progressive function. Enough of birds and bugs.

I just want to review a couple of things with you now. Let's go back and look at the question we asked "What is healthy in a relationship"? It is pretty healthy in a relationship to recognize what I feel and then to be able to put a name on my feelings. I don't know about you, but when I got to Alcoholics Anonymous, I had feelings that I couldn't name. Somebody would ask me if I had fear, if I was afraid, I would say no, never been afraid in my life. I was not afraid of God or man or the devil or nobody.

But after I had been here for a while I began to identify that strange feeling in my gut that I recalled having felt several times when I was in the Air Force. And I began to identify that as fear.

In our aircraft, we used to have cushions on the seats. And those cushions were tied down with buttons. There would be about five buttons on each

Reflecting on Relationships

cushion and these buttons held the front and the back of the cushion together. When we had kind of a ropy patrol and things were kind of dicey, we would get back to the Intelligence Room for de-briefing. And the intelligence officers would be asking us what kind of trip we had had, one of the ways we had of describing it was "It was so damn bad my rear end was biting the buttons off the seat". That was a rough trip.

We didn't recognize that as fear. Never thought of it as being fear. Why? Because airmen are not afraid. We might go out and get drunk for three days, but we weren't afraid. You know, we were so confused we flat-out couldn't identify the feeling as being fear.

So I came to learn to recognize what I feel and put a name on my feelings and then be able to come up and tell other people what it is I am feeling. Gradually over time, I am able to say, "This is what I am feeling now". And all of that leads to the capacity to care about what other people are feeling.

And there is no problem in listening to what other people are feeling, because there is no attack there, there is no threat there, it is all right. And we share what we ourselves are feeling. That has happened many times to me and perhaps also to you. When you finally confess what it is that you are feeling the other person often will say, "That is what I feel too". And we get to discuss and share that feeling and care about the other person, and feel some real compassion for that other person. If they are feeling fear, we can identify with and have some compassion for that.

Then gradually in time, we develop the ability to listen to other people and respond to them. Those are the communication skills that underlie the beginning of

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

every relationship that we have. Next, we are going to go on from here, and we are going to deal with the levels of relationship. Those things that we talked about, the superficial, companionship, friendship and intimate relationships, and we will get into that.

Question: During my workday, should I confess my feelings to my boss?

Answer: I wouldn't think so, I think anybody would know that you don't do that, you don't walk up to someone who is busy doing what they are doing, especially the boss, and distract him by stating to confess your feelings to him.

I think that that happens naturally when you are going through those little communication skills that start a relationship. I don't think you would go too far with the boss before you would have an indication of how you are being received. You would get an indication because either there would be some sharing or there would not be some sharing. If there is not going to be any sharing, then you don't pursue, you don't force it, you let it happen from that point naturally, if it is going to happen. Isn't that what you do? Yes. That is pretty much what we do, I think.

Question: Doesn't the person we want to share with have to be willing to share with us?

Answer: Yes, right, because sometimes people are more afraid than we are to share. There has to be a sort of trust of some kind there, and it could be that the other person that you are trying to share with is more hampered, more dysfunctional than you are, and more afraid than you are. Being more afraid than you are, they don't want to take a chance, they don't want

Reflecting on Relationships

to risk anything so they shy away. But sometimes you may find that person comes back to you later to try to initiate a conversation. I don't think sharing later is ever a waste of time.

Question: Isn't there a definable difference, a definition, of the word - relationship?

Answer: I did not look it up, you know, but I am sure there is. Probably comes through the French from the Latin "Relation", it signifies things going both ways. Eventually of course this is going to lead us to "the" relationship, but that is probably going to be dealt within our last meeting of this series. That is the relationship with the Power, whatever you want to call that. And I found a quote some years ago that just tickled me, I still hang on to it and I read every once in a while because I like it so much.

I found this quote in a little book called "*Letters of The Scattered Brotherhood*" written by all kinds of different people from many, many different kinds of faiths. And here is what this quote says: "Nam Race Ipso", Oh maybe I should give it to you in English, \ - that is in Latin. (Just being smart ass, pay no attention). Here it is. I first read this thing to myself and I thought "That thing was written by some Protestant". Here is what he said:

"That which is now called the Christian Religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the planting of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion, which had already existed began to be called Christianity".

Importance and Development of Relationship Skills

And then I looked down to see who the author was and it says, St. Augustine. He was a mick and here he was saying stuff like that. It just so happens that I am also a catholic and I agree with him and I felt good about it and I still feel good about it. I think that it is a true statement.

Bill says it so beautifully in our Big Book. He says that in every man, woman, and child exists a fundamental idea of God. To me that is what St. Augustine is saying. That fundamental idea has already, always, not already, always existed. It comes with us. We don't need to acquire that, we all have it.

But we have to uncover it, and discover it and then follow it. It is part of our instinct, but St. Augustine said that it has always been there. He wrote that in 1569 so this is not a new idea by any means you know. New to me perhaps, at one time in my life, but that was just my own ignorance. I can't blame that on anybody but me.

My old California sponsor, Chuck, used to tell me a story. He would say that on a bright sunny morning two young little fish were playing around in the ocean, blowing bubbles and chasing each other when a papa fish went majestically swimming by. Papa fish said "Morning boys, ain't the water fine?" and sailed away. The kid fish said "Yes sir, sure is" very politely and watched papa fish sail on. When he was gone one kid splashed at the other and said: "What's water?" and those two kids swam all over the ocean looking for water. In which they lived and moved and had their being. And I came to see that, that's me -- swimming all over my life looking for God, for the Power. in which I live and move and have my Being.

Reflecting on Relationships

Well, that is probably enough for tonight. We are going to go on with this series next Wednesday and we will get a little further into relationships then.

Thank you.

The Living Framework of Relationships

Chapter Two

The Living Framework of Relationships

We will start like we always do with our little prayer:

Dear God, let me set aside everything I think I know about You and me and this program and these steps, for an open mind, and a new experience with You, and me, and this program and these steps.

Sure Thank You.

My old sponsor Chuck used to tell me and tell everybody, he didn't just tell me. People would say to him things like "That's very simple and yeah, I've known that for years". And they'd say I followed you all the way, everything you said, and I remembered all those things you talked about from my early days.

Yeah, they'd say yeah, I know all that stuff. And Chuck would say, "Maybe you do, and maybe you don't". If you know it all, he would say, how come you are still having trouble? How come you are still hurting? Just because you are aware of something intellectually, doesn't necessarily mean that you know it. You may know it up here in your head, but you don't know it till it is down here.

A lot of us get fooled by that. And I sure did for seven and a half years. After I came to AA, I used to say that "I came to the program" and give my dry date. But that wasn't true. I didn't really come to the program

Reflecting on Relationships

for seven and a half years after my dry date. I lived on vicarious sobriety, I borrowed, I got it by friction through the ass of my pants. That ain't solid sobriety. So a lot of us get fooled by that.

But I say, after living with the likes of you for a little more than three and a half decades, that taught me, I don't know anything until I know it in my gut. When I know it down there, then I can live it. But I don't know it until I can live it.

So please don't come around after the meeting tonight and tell me that oh yeah, I followed you all the way, I understood what you were talking about, I knew what you were saying, I know all that stuff. I don't want to hear that. For those of you who are taking notes, you could write this down.

You only know it, when you can live it.

Those of you who know me know that my wife and I had nine kids and we went on, (they are all married) and went on to have 23 grandchildren. And you know that at every Christmas we used to have a big Christmas do. All those grandchildren would get presents under the Christmas Tree, and I'd have a marvellous time watching those kids. It was real cute to see those little rascals, year and a half, two years, and three years old, diving into those presents.

The little ones would get all caught up in the ribbon and the wrappings and the bows and the shiny paper and, they were satisfied with that, like that was the present. I'd watch those little kids and I'd have to smile. And I'd look at them and say, that's me, that is what I do. That is what I do with my program. I get the package,

The Living Framework of Relationships

but I get all caught up in the tinsel and the fancy wrapping and the fellowship and the socials and the dances and roundups and coffee after the meeting. And I'd see those kids had to have help from their parents and their older brothers and sisters because they didn't know what the present really was, and that was me. I really had to have help, to get into where the present really is, the program. The answer, the problem, and the answer to the problem.

You know my dad was a wonderful kind of a guy. He was retired of course and I had eight years with him after I got sober before he passed on, and we had a good relationship. We did a lot of things together and I got to know him in a way that I had not known him previously. He spent a lot of his time gardening, he loved to garden, and he was good at growing roses and petunias and dahlias and all kinds of flowers.

One of his real favourite flowers was the sweet pea, and that is one of my favourites too. I love the aroma of a whole bank of sweet peas in the morning on a clear brisk, summer morning. There is nothing like it, it just knocks you out, you get intoxicated with it, and he taught me that when you are growing sweet peas you have to have a trellis.

You have to have a framework. If you don't, the vines just grow up and fall over and get all matted and rotten and you don't get any flowers and you don't get an aroma. You get a smell, but it ain't an aroma. But if you put up a trellis, then the vines have something, a framework to grow on, and I look at that and I think about that and I say migosh, that is just like AA. We have to have framework, we have to have a trellis. That framework, that trellis, is called relationships. That is the

Reflecting on Relationships

trellis that our program grows on, and gives off a very sweet loving aroma. Without a trellis you just get a tangled mess of vines, and sometimes they smell pretty high.

So relationships are important. They are just the framework on which we have to live our answer. If we expect that some person is finally going to come along and bring us happiness, "She'll make me happy", we're mistaken. You already have all the happiness you are entitled to. It is inside of you. If you are not consciously aware of your happiness, you are not feeling your happiness, it is because something is blocking you off from it. Because it is within you.

My Sponsor Chuck would say to me, "What you're looking for, you're looking with". And for many years I could not understand that. "What you're looking for, you're looking with". The Power is deep within you. It is your spirit -- a part of the divine spirit -- and it is necessarily by its nature, a part of your every positive action.

So, yes, what you are looking for -- you're looking with. It is in you, you know, the values are always inside -- in here. There are no values out there -- none -- that is outer space out there, there is nothing out there. So I only have one problem, and that's me.

My old sponsor Marr straightened me out on that, he was a very loving guy, a very spiritual guy, and he told me that one night in the club. I'd been sober a long time (maybe five to six weeks) and I knew most of it by then. I'd already done the first three Steps the first night I was there, because I'm a Catholic, so I've got a leg up on all

The Living Framework of Relationships

you Protestants, it takes you a lot longer to get with it, because we know all that stuff, (ha ha ha).

So I have to look at it, I am the problem, he told me that, you are the problem. He said that right to me, "You don't have a problem, you are the ding dang problem". A very spiritual man, talked "ecclesiastical" all the time and used Biblical expressions like that. So I can't blame my wife or my kids or my sponsor. "If I'd just had a decent sponsor".

I know you won't believe this, but there are people in this room that have fired me as their sponsor. Some of them more than one time. And then they get up in the meeting and tell people how grateful they are. But I can't change them, the only one that I can change is me, and the only way that I can change me is by living the program.

This is a living program. It is not an intellectual program. Alcoholics Anonymous is not an intellectual conquest. It is a spiritual experience. Which means we do something. I have to do that in all my relationships, that is why we have 12 Steps and Step 12 says "In all my affairs", because affairs includes relationships, just as though Step 12 read "In all my affairs and in all my relationships".

Last week we mentioned the various levels of relationships in passing. Tonight we will take a look at them, because we build our framework, our trellis, out of the levels of relationship. You'll see that this becomes an actual framework, it goes from one day to the next day and on to the next day. As my old sponsor used to tell me, "The experience of the day and the lesson, the experience of the day and the lesson, the experience of

Reflecting on Relationships

the day and the lesson". That is how you get from one level to another level, experience by experience, and lesson by lesson.

The first level of relationship we called superficial. That is just casual relationships. It may be sexual, it may not be sexual. It is just someone you meet, the clerk at the grocery store, the mechanic at the garage, the Priest at your Parish, or maybe your Preacher. That could be casual if you only see him a couple of times a year, and you know who he is, the fat guy or the skinny guy or whatever, the waitress at the restaurant or the people that you meet at your group; it would be them.

Often we want to be more to these people, but we don't have the time, we don't have the occasion. And if they have a problem, well, it is too bad, but it is their problem. Maybe one of them passes away and we regret that and we think, gee, I only wish I had a chance to know him better, but the relationship was just casual, superficial, no commitment. That may change through time and circumstances and begin to become a companionship.

In that next kind of a relationship, companionship, the activity is more important than the person. They are just a companion. And there may be a commitment, or there may not be. It is not a serious commitment, it is not a heavy commitment, at all. In that category, it might be, for instance, someone I meet over at the golf course. I don't have a tee time, I just want to hit a few balls on the practice range. But when I get out on the range and hit a few balls, I meet somebody there and they say, "I'm just going to play nine holes, I'm walking, do you want to come with me?" I say sure, so I go along and play golf with him that day. Just a companion.

The Living Framework of Relationships

I don't know, I'm not a big movie fan, I don't go to a lot of movies, but I remember a few years ago there was an actor, whose name was Charles Bronson, I don't know if you know him, but he is a little guy and he is cocky and he is tough. He made a series of movies called Death Wish. Death Wish, Death Wish II, Death Wish III, and I liked that little guy, he is kind of macho, you know, I'd like to be like that, but I'm not. (laughter)

So I'd have a friend that I'd call up and I'd say, "Joe, I want to go and see Charles Bronson, There is a new Bronson movie out, do you want to go?" And he'd say "Yeah", and away we'd go and we'd watch the flick and we'd go for a coke after or something and talk about the movie and say good night, and I'd go home and he'd go home.

But a couple of times I'd call him to go see a Bronson flick and he'd say no I'm sorry, tonight I'm tied up, I can't do this or that. I'd say okay that is fine, I didn't get mad at him, I didn't say, "what the heck is the matter with you, you don't love me anymore". I'd just hang up the phone, (well you know I'm in the program, I don't get hurt that easily anymore), and I'd phone somebody else. And I'd just keep phoning around till I'd find somebody and away we'd go. We'd go to the movie.

That is companionship. Maybe go to a meeting, it happens to me sometimes when I am out of town. You know, you know what it is like to go to a town and go to a meeting. The minute you get into a meeting you go get yourself a coffee or whatever. And I'd look around and I'd spot some old goat. Maybe I knew him before, maybe I didn't, but I'd go and sit beside him and talk to him. We would take in the meeting, share the meeting

Reflecting on Relationships

together, and maybe we would have coffee after, and discuss the meeting. It was just companionship. If he had been busy, I'd have picked somebody else. It wouldn't have mattered. I was just looking for a companion, because the activity was what was important, the meeting, the movie, the golf, whatever, that is what is important, not the person, that is companionship.

But you know, if you do that with a companion a number of times, you may get sufficiently interested in that companion to want to see them a little more. Then this is turning into a friendship, and with friendship there is very often a commitment. Spoken or unspoken there is a level of commitment. In friendship the person is more important than the activity.

For example, if I called my friend up and said that I'd like to go to a flick tonight, and my friend said no, I really don't feel like doing that, well I'd say what do you feel like doing? I thought I'd go to the bookstore, there are a couple of new books out, and I want to go see if they had them in. Oh, okay, let's go to a bookstore, I don't care, because what I want is to spend quality time with that person. So there the person is more important than the activity. So the activity becomes secondary, you see, and we have a kind of commitment there. And then, as time goes on and that friendship deepens, it may be that it changes again, and it becomes what we call an intimate relationship.

And an intimate relationship is shared passion, this is love, even romantic love. Sometimes we call it living together, and in the old days we used to call it marriage. Remember that? And here there is commitment and the commitment is declared. But I may think that is all so

The Living Framework of Relationships

simple, that I got that all down pat, one, two, three, four. Except that it is a little more complex than that because sometimes one person may be operating at one level, and another person is operating at another level.

When two people are operating at different levels, it can be a little bit confusing. Like a husband comes home. He has been working hard all day. It has been a full day for him. But during the course of the day he noticed that there was a certain picture on at a certain theatre. And it was a flying picture and he loves flying and he said dang it all, I want to see that flying picture. All about that new airplane and those smart bombs and all that stuff, and I really want to see that. So he comes home all supercharged, all ready to go and see that flick.

Unbeknownst to him, his wife has also been having a bit of a full day, but instead of being in the mood for going out and attending a movie or something. She is in a more friendship related mode. She wants to stay home and spend the evening, a little quality time, maybe just talk a little bit, watch a little TV and have some popcorn, or cuddle a little bit or something like that.

The husband of course is totally unaware of this. So he comes charging in and he says, hey, lets go see 633 Squadron. She says I don't want to go see 633 Squadron. He says that's okay, I'll call Jack and we'll go together. She blows up and gets madder than hell, she says what's the matter with you, you don't love me anymore, I wanted to spend time at home with you tonight and every time I want to get close to you, you want to do something else with someone. And there is a battle. She says you're wrong, he says you're wrong, and the fat is in the fire.

Reflecting on Relationships

I've noticed that if sexuality is the basis for a relationship, 90% of the time you are heading into a dysfunctional relationship. That sex alone or as the prime ingredient is not a successful basis for setting up a relationship. The relationship that survives is the relationship that grows from one level to another, from superficial to companionship to friendship to intimate, and that ain't a weekend kids.

They tell a story about the alcoholic who wrote a book, you know, about forming a relationship and he does all of that, all those four steps in fifteen minutes. That is kind of hard to do. But of course once you are in love, life is not over, is it? I have kids that think that at that point you die and go to heaven, you know, and it's all over, you are in love. Won't I be fixed, be wonderful, won't it be all over? No. No! No! No!

Romantic love emerges into a functional intimate relationship with another person. This is something that has to grow, and it takes time, and it takes experience and it takes shared activities in an intimate relationship. You make commitments in the real world to each other, to cover each other's physical, emotional and social needs, and romantic love deepens as it goes along. There are new levels of intimacy, just like Bill promised us. And if you are asking the question, "Isn't the thrill of romantic love short lived?" the answer is no. The song says the thrill is gone, sadly, this little songstress is standing at the corner of the stage in the dark and she is singing that, the thrill is gone, my heart is broken.

Well, if the thrill is gone, that is not romantic love, that's infatuation or something like that, but infatuation is not a relationship, that is an obsession. Obsessions are

The Living Framework of Relationships

not relationships, but as you are going to see in a little while, when I get to my magic number seven, there are obsessive relationships and dang it all, we alcoholics are real good at them, we are very inventive when it comes to that. Romantic intimacy finds new thrills.

Bill says in our book, a new life will be given to us, and new happiness will be given to us. This is what he is talking about. This romantic intimacy, we share everything, we look at the other person, and saying it or not saying it we realize you are my loved one, you are my lover, we share everything, we share physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. You are my love.

When I came to the program it took five years for me to hear my spouse say "I love you". Because I had destroyed everything, or almost everything. We had seven kids when I came in. Can you imagine what I put them through? But after 45 years of marriage, 27 and half of it in the program, we were more in love than ever. And I know if her life had continued, that shared love certainly would have continued, because I appreciate her more now, in different ways, in new ways than I ever did in my entire lifetime. And she is with me all the time, like my old sponsors, they are all dead.

Don't, don't ask anyone to be my sponsor because they all die. I've told some of you the stories about the holidays in Hawaii with my wife and how we got close to each other by sharing, sharing, and sharing. And how wonderfully things turned out.

Of course I didn't realize that I was being prepared by God for the time that she was going to go, and I was going to be left. I didn't realize that, I didn't understand that. Never thought of it, but I've thought of it many,

Reflecting on Relationships

many times since. Because, during those vacations we had squared everything away, we cleared the decks. We had a better understanding than ever. When she left, when she did die, I was left without guilt or fear or remorse or the if onlys, or God o'mighties, or any of that stuff.

Sadly enough in today's world, only half of the marriages survive, and of course, I have nothing to say about that really, but I do think that people should take more time to go through the levels of relationship and prepare themselves for what is coming. But I didn't do that. I fell in love with her the first time I ever saw her. The 37 plus years that I have enjoyed in this program are no credit to me;

I did almost nothing about it. God gave her to me, and God and my wife saved my tail. That is my story. She had her own program, it came with her, and she gave me her all, she knew what love is all about. There was a lady that understood love. She knew about cheerful, willing service and she knew about forgiveness.

A couple of weeks after she died, my son Murray came to see me at the house, and we were sitting in the kitchen having tea and inevitably we got to talking about mother. And he said to me, "Dad, he said, the thing that I will always remember about mother was her willingness to forgive — especially when you didn't deserve it". And I thought oh my God, I sure know about that I'll tell ya.

So in an intimate relationship we make all those real world commitments and you know, the mundane ordinary things made mutually, you pay the bills, you pay

The Living Framework of Relationships

the rent, you buy the food, you do all those things. And if the person to whom we are committed has problems, if they have health problems, you don't walk out on them, you carry through.

For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, that is in the marriage ceremony many times, but it is a life contract. It is a very spiritual contract, but it is one that everyone understands automatically. You make a deal with somebody, you come to an understanding, you make a commitment, you don't walk out on that commitment. You keep that commitment.

And if you have children, then of course you make real commitments because now you have to work on your relationship with the children. And I had to do all of that at one time all together. That is called parenting. They write books about it nowadays, they have people who go around lecturing about parenting. I didn't have anything like that, I had AA and I had my kids. And I went to five or six AA meetings each week and I learned like that.

I went out to the retreat house to do spiritual retreats at the retreat house in St. Norbert. And there would be 60 or 70 drunks, and there would be every faith, we had Catholics and Protestants and Jews and Mennonites and whatever. All kinds of religions, and we had a wonderful time. It was great, and I learned there that my big problem was not what I thought my problem was.

I went there and I was trying to do the Steps Four and Five, I didn't have much idea of what I was doing and I told a little Father who was listening to my Step Five that my big problem is lack of patience, I am impatient. And he said, "Tell me about it". I started

Reflecting on Relationships

telling him all about it and he stopped me and said: "no, stop there!" I said "why", he said: "Your problem is not impatience." I said: "Oh, what is it, a hang nail, or what." He said: "No, your problem, Tom is you don't love your family enough."

Well! I stamped out of there I'll tell ya. I left my footprints in that concrete that had been there for five years. I was madder than blazes, but when I got home I started looking at it and I realized he was right. And then I started looking at my kids and I'd look at my little daughter who was three years old at the time, and she was an eye blinker and a stammerer, and she was a nail biter and a bed wetter and she was showing all the signs of my alcoholism.

Alcoholism is a disease, it is a family disease, it has symptoms. You can see it, you can tell it, and she was showing that. Somewhere I got the idea of putting on a campaign of love with that kid, and then all my seven kids, and it was miraculous what happened. It was a miracle. Within a year, within one year, by the time that kid was four years old, no more eye blinking, no more stammering, no more nail biting, and the bed wetting was almost gone.

Amazing what happened. You see, that is not a treatment, that is recovery. That is the birth and growth of relationships. I had no relationship with my own children, I knew nothing about parenting, but you guys brought me a program that taught me how to live a day at a time. And as I learned that, I didn't even know that I was learning it, I was just doing what you told me to do.

And we have a relationship with our parents, and family, and in-laws, and life becomes and is a never

The Living Framework of Relationships

ending progression of relationships, all of which begin in the same way, and all of which progress in the same way, so that its totally a growing experience from relationship to relationship in every facet of our lives. And this is where we really reap the benefits of good recovery in the program. But you know, recovered people don't get married or move in together two weeks after meeting somebody. They go through the development of a relationship.

They may or may not have sex on the first date, but they realize that that's a kind of Russian Roulette. You know how that is, you take a six shooter, and you'd drop all the bullets out then you plop one in and spin the chamber, the revolver part of the gun, and then put it up to your head and say, 'pitchue', and if it goes click, you are okay. Well, it's like that, see. It may be that you develop some things in common other than sex, or it may be that you walk away with herpes or aids. You don't know. You never know, and it might take time to find out, it might take a year or more, you don't know that.

That's high risk sex, kids, and those are high risk relationships. That is not the way — if you are planning to build a successful surviving relationship. But of course you know what it's like when the hormones are flying, when the gonads are doing the talking, it has to be right. Right? I used to tell my kids there is a big difference between Mr. Right and Mr. Right Now.

Sexuality for some reason or another shuts off our minds, shuts off our brain. I hesitate to suggest that we think with that particular portion of our anatomy, but it certainly gives rise to the emotions. But you know, my old sponsor Chuck always told me that any time the will

Reflecting on Relationships

and the imagination or the emotions are in conflict, the emotions and the imagination are going to win out every time, every time. Not just once in a while, every, every time.

Love includes respect, we honour the person that we are in love with. And that grows, you don't start out in a superficial relationship by honouring the clerk in the grocery store or the guy that delivers your mail, or whatever. That's not the initial stage. But as it grows, respect comes and honour comes.

And Bill knew all about that in our 12 Concepts, I bet you guys thought that the 12 Concepts have something to do with the politics of AA maybe, or service, whatever the heck that is, general service. Nothing to do with relationships, right? Oh, no, everything in AA is the same. The beginning of AA is the same as the end, it is the same half-way through, it's the same in the middle. It is one thing all the way through.

And I guess Bill's most spiritual writing was in the 12th Concept and the Charters and the "Six General Warranties of Alcoholics Anonymous". And in those Six Warranties, he tells us how to relate to each other. He says that we will always treat each other with love and respect. Its all one thing.

And we have to learn that because we come in here unloved, unloving, and alone. The only thing that we've got going for us is a marvellous intellect, we know everything. We know so darn much you can't teach us anything. We have to learn it the hard way. How many times have you heard people say "Well I don't really get down to it until I'm hurting so bad I've got to". That is how smart we are.

The Living Framework of Relationships

But oh Lordy, the sex is so good, isn't it? We meld into the universe and become one and then we come back and float high and it's universal, it's the Big Bang Theory to the max. We blow all our circuits and we blow our minds and ha, ha, ha. And besides, nobody else would understand the deep religious nature of the experience. Never said that?

Well, I was told many times by my old sponsor that simple psychology teaches that there are two great needs of the human being. The need to be needed and the need to be loved. And he would laugh, and pat his foot on the floor and say, "That's just as backwards as everything else they ever taught me". It ain't true, it's simply not right. The two great needs of the human being are the need to love and the need to do. The need to do! And that is exactly what Dr. Bob talked about in his last talk.

He said "Its love and service, and everybody knows what love is". He said that, and that killed me. I still, I get a funny little feeling in me when I listen to that tape and hear his voice say that. Everybody knows what love is, and I'd say Dr. Bob, I don't know. And everybody knows what service is, and I didn't know what that was, I had to live it, I had to find that out.

Our book tells us that up to this point we've been trying to get our lives in order, but that is not our real purpose, our main purpose is to fit ourselves parenthetically, (spiritually) to be of maximum service to Him and others, all others, not just alcoholics. Everybody, you know, and of course that is exactly what St. Frances was talking about in his prayer, the prayer of St. Frances.

Reflecting on Relationships

He pleaded with God, he said, God, don't let me worry about people being compassionate with me, let me feel and show compassion for others, don't let me worry about being understood, let me be understanding and don't let me worry about being loved, let me love. That is the do part, the do part.

So with that kind of background we can take a look at some of the characteristics of some obsessive relationship, and because I'm a bit of a student of Carl Jung, I use number 7 for everything, well not everything. I use 4 when, you know, like the four winds, and where Peter K. is concerned he often mentions, the 4 stones that lead into the sweat lodge, and the four directions, four everything. The Mandala that Jung drew for himself was four, four, four, four. He said four was a number that had no meaning, nobody knows the meaning of it. He said every number had to have a meaning, one, there is One. Everybody knows what that means. And two, yeah we know what two means, two means you and I. And three, everybody knows what that means, that means you and I and God. What does four mean? Jung said "I don't know", and would draw a Mandala and demonstrate that.

And its an amazing thing, a curious thing, a compelling thing, that those Mandalas that Jung drew at his desk in Switzerland were identical with Mandalas that were drawn by American Navaho Indians in their sand paintings, in the southern states of New Mexico and Arizona. And they were the same as Mandalas that were made by the bushman in Africa, and the same as were shown with the Taoists in Ancient China, and the I Ching and the even older text of the Magnificent Flower.

The Living Framework of Relationships

So this is not something new, it is not something invented by scientists, it is part of what Bill says is the fundamental idea of God. That we all have, that comes with us, that you've had since you drew your first breath and that you have been aware of at some level, or another, conscious or unconscious level, all of your life. But you see if your relationship with that Power has been superficial, and not even companionship, and not up to friendship, and not intimate, you'd be puzzled by that and wonder what that is, and have vague stirrings. And I used to wonder what that means in my life. What is that? And we would wonder about that.

Now we look at the traits of an obsessive relationship, the kind that I came in with, and I like to start out with one that I call Magical Thinking or unrealistic expectations. I don't know if you've ever had that, but we are into that magical thinking before we even meet our partner.

We already know what it is going to be like, and what she is going to be like, and what she is going to say, and what I'm going to say and what they are going to be, we knew what it was going to be. And we believed that an intimate relationship will make me and my life better, without the need to think better, or act better. It's magic.

Every aspect of my life will be improved by that person. And I won't have to do sweet Fanny Adams about it. I just take it, and let it come. Automatically, I'm going to get better. Magic. I'll be fixed. I'll be wonderful. It'll make me something that I'm not now and I won't have to expend any effort. It'll just happen. It's magic. I'll fall in love and I'll be carried away and it will

Reflecting on Relationships

be wonderful. Except that it don't work like that. But that is how the obsessed person looks at it.

And that is not how the healthy person looks at it. The healthy person who is working on recovery and who is working on the Steps and who is dedicated to the principle of Anonymity. That person belongs to Alcoholics Anonymous and believes in Anonymity. And Anonymity tells us that principles come before personalities. You hear that read at every meeting that you go to and you nod at it and you say that's right, "That is what we read last week too".

And if you remember that chapter that we just finished in our Sunday morning meeting entitled "*The Family Afterward*". Why that title and who is in "*The Family Afterward*"? This meeting, this group is the family afterward. We are the family afterward. You are part of my family --- and I'm part of your family. You're family!

And as family I love every one of you. I didn't know about love. I thought that I should love somebody better than somebody else. Or I love him but I don't love her. And then I look at that and say, it can't be like that, because God said that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. And God loves everybody the same and I have to do that too. Because you either love somebody or you don't. If you love them, you love them and it's unconditional. So I didn't love my wife better than I loved my kids. I loved them the same. The relationship was different, but the love was the same.

I love you people and every one of you in Alcoholics Anonymous just as much as I love my wife and our kids. The relationship is different, but the love is the same. //

The Living Framework of Relationships

is my business to love you. Its not my business what you think of me; that's your business what you think of me. But it is my business what I think of you because, whether you do or not, I know who you are. You're God's Kids, and therefore I love you. That's my business, and I have to work at it because that's my relationship with you. So I make it my business.

At the end of that Chapter, "**The Family Afterward**", Bill gives us what he calls three little mottoes, that just kills me, because they're powerful, they're so powerful. We think we know them all, and we talk about them in meetings and we say, oh ya, well, "**First Things First**". That means sobriety comes first. And then we go on, we give a short little thing and then we say "**Easy Does It**", that means don't get all excited, don't get all heated up, and "**Live and Let Live**". Then we talk about live and let live, let the other person go on about their life and so on.

But in the case of a person who is in healthy recovery, the very first thing that they look at, is "**First Things First**". So, if you are hoping or expecting to get lined up with a healthy recovered person, and maybe going out on a date with that person, they are probably going to plan some kind of a group activity. Maybe go to a show or go to dinner, but usually in a public place. They are not going to be sequestered and have deep expectations of time spent alone in the dark and groping and fumbling and wondering what will transpire. It is not going to be like that.

And that healthy person is probably going to have a question in mind. Remember First Things First? The question they are going to have in mind is "Is this person sane"? Now that is a heck of a good question. It is a

Reflecting on Relationships

very important question. It is good to know that. It is very good to know that if you are going to start out on some kind of a growing relationship with somebody. It is worth while to find out if they are sane or not, because there are a lot of people running around out there that are not sane. You know that and I know that. We all know people who keep repeating the same performance, the same experience everyday, day after day, and yet always expecting different and, of course, better results. And that is insanity. You see.

And then the second characteristic of the obsessive person in a relationship I call "**Instant Gratification**". And of course that is based on intense sexuality. That is where love equals sex or sex equals love, they are interchangeable in the mind of the obsessed person. This is huge animal magnetism, you merely look at some attractive other and bells go off, and whistles blow, and you think "I can't wait" and "wow!".

But now here is experience, this is experience coming now. If you are out at a party or whatever, and you see someone across the room and there is instant huge animal magnetism, and life goes "boing" and bells go off. Walk the other way. (Laughter) It is dangerous, let me tell you. If I expect my partner to provide me with immediate continuous gratification on demand, that is dangerous. But I want it! Isn't that what love is all about? That is the way obsessed people think. I love you, blow my mind. What does that? Now this is interesting, why would we be like that? Are we crazy? Of course we are crazy, but are we crazy, crazy? What is capable of blowing your mind on demand? Are there any alcoholics in this room?

The Living Framework of Relationships

We are looking for a living, breathing drink, with appropriate sex organs. We are simply transferring our obsession from booze to sex. The obsessed person thinks "I have to get that feeling, I have to get that gratification, that satisfaction, I have to get that somewhere, so I'll seek out the people who can provide it to me". There is a huge adrenaline surge involved in that. And we feel that, we feel our heart beating and we feel excitement, we wonder what that is, we think that is passion. We think, "My God I must be in love with that person", look at my heart beating and I feel like that!!!!

We don't recognize what that is. Do you know what that is? Fear, that is fear, yes fear. We confuse it with excitement. We confuse it with passion. But it is exactly fear. It just replaces the fear we used to have when we were drinking. But it's the same kind of fear.

The person who is recovered doesn't get into that trap. Because that person, the recovered person, is following the principle of *Easy Does It*. They take time to discover who and what the other person is, who their family is, what their family is, what their education is, what their culture is. And they share those things with each other. The healthy recovered person is looking for a long term relationship with a person of value. They are not looking for hyper sex and hyper excitement. No, they are looking for value. The healthy person looks for someone they can relate to, value to value. Self to self. Of course I am not saying that sex doesn't ever come into a relationship like that.

Of course it very well may, and I have nothing against that after maybe 10 or 12 weeks. Something like that. And the obsessed guy looks at me and says "What? 10 or 12 weeks, -- that's three months -- I can't

Reflecting on Relationships

wait!" And I say what is the hurry? When was the last time you had sex? He says a year and a half ago, but I can't wait! We have to learn little by little how to share. All relationships begin with sharing. Sharing is vital to relationship. Without sharing -- no relationship.

Sometimes people get a little upset with me because they say I can't date somebody who is going to be attractive like that, you know ba-ba-ba-boing attractive. They ask, "Who should I date?" I tell them, date boring people. Boring people? Yeah, boring people, you know I don't mean deadly boring, I just mean people who are calm. It is amazing what you find out about somebody when you spend a little bit of time with them.

Have you ever had that experience? I am sure that you must have. Where you would meet somebody, and you might know them for some time and think very little of them, and perhaps not have too high an opinion of them. And then something happens, and all of a sudden you start to get to know that person better, and the better that you get to know them, the more value you place on them. The more you realize that they are indeed a person of value. You see we are all God's kids. There is nobody here that isn't a person of value. Nobody.

And there isn't anybody here that is that much better than everybody else. Nobody. We just show it in different ways, that is all. But the interesting part of that is getting to know the other person in a sharing way. That is why we follow that principle of Anonymity, of *Easy Does It*, of *Take The Time*.

But of course with all that magical thinking and the desire for instant gratification, dishonesty has to creep

The Living Framework of Relationships

into it, because we are stuck with the obsessed person. You are stuck with the firm belief that the relationship will be destroyed if I know everything about you and you know everything about me. The magic will be gone, we will know the truth about each other, and we are both inadequate.

Young people sometimes come to me and say, I can't get a decent guy out there. They are all jerks, they are all jerks out there. The good ones are either married, or gay. And I can't get a decent guy of my own. I don't know what the hell I am going to do. And I say, well, were you at the meeting last night? Yeah, I was at the meeting last night. Strange thing, I talked to a couple of the guys at the meeting and they said that all the girls they know in the program are flakes. (Laughter) And that they can't go out with them.

So I get all the jerks on one side and all the flakes on the other, and I say how about you going out with you and they look at each other and say yeack. They don't want that. There're still looking for something magical. It doesn't start that way. You have heard of the diamond in the rough. Do you know where a diamond mine is? A diamond mine is not on the surface, diamonds don't grow on trees, they are not shining in the sun, you don't go by and pick them off, and say I got a diamond, I got another diamond. You dig for them. And you mine them up, and you clean them off, and polish them up.

Boy I tell you, when I was 25 years married, I was about six years sober, something like that, and my kids suggested that we should go to church and renew the vows. And I said to my wife, "You want to do that?" And she said, "Nope." And she was being honest, and

Reflecting on Relationships

we never did it, because I didn't merit that. She did, but I didn't. I had to earn that.

But at the end, after 45 years, I tell ya, it was totally different. That was a different relationship. It had gone from one level, to another level, to another level. The only thing that held it back was me. My self-centredness. My selfishness, my self-obsession was what did that, you see. So dishonesty creeps in because I can't be honest with you, so that there are no talk rules. I don't talk about me, you don't talk about you, because you feel the same way, it is an obsessed obsession. And with no talk rules, they are necessary to keep the fear alive, because we think that that is the passion, you see, keep the passion going. But there is no communication, and we have to be sneakily dishonest with each other, you know, and that leads to compulsive over control.

But a healthy person doesn't fall into that kind of a trap. A healthy person says no! no! no! no! Live and Let Live, and there is no dishonesty. It is based on rigorous self-honesty, that is what our program says, the truth, just the simple truth. That is good enough. Don't need to keep secrets, don't need to embellish our story, try to make ourselves bigger than we are, better than we are, smarter than we are, richer than we are. Let us just be the way we are, because a recovered person will accept us unconditionally, for what we are. If you can't fall in love with us like that, for what we are, but somebody will if we are honest, and true to ourselves. It will happen. And we can't keep secrets from each other, for the healthy person keeping secrets may be grounds for termination of the relationship, you know.

The Living Framework of Relationships

The Chinese have an adage that I just love. I think it is terrific. The Chinese say: "if you have a secret, whisper it down a well at midnight". In other words, don't tell anybody, because if you tell anybody, it is no longer going to be a secret, you can't keep secrets. We kill ourselves trying to keep secrets, we feel guilty, we feel ashamed, we feel fear, we have all those lousy negative feelings that drive us crazy, trying to keep secrets from each other because we feel different, we feel unique. I think you won't know me, you won't understand me, your experiences have been different than mine, and of course the truth of the matter is that we are all the same. There is very little difference between any of us. So we deal on the basis of honesty.

That doesn't mean that I have to go and do a Step Five with you, I don't tell you every single detail, just the nature, you know, of my performance, of myself. And it takes time to do that, I don't do that the first night. If the other person can't handle that, well there is no future in that relationship anyway.

But very often the obsessive person goes out on the very first date and maybe they go to dinner and as soon as they get there they say, now I have to be honest with you, I have to tell you I am an alcoholic. And the other person says, oh, okay, I know some people that are alcoholics. Well let me tell you my story. And then they very proudly go into their AA story, and they tell the whole damn story with all the warts and bumps and violence and language and escapades, everything, and then look at the other person and say, do you still want to see me? Am I still a person that you would be interested in? And if they say well yeah, well let me tell you I also have a gambling problem.

Reflecting on Relationships

At that point the healthy person backs off. But if the other person also happens to be an obsessive person, they probably say, "Ooh, lets get married". And then that Obsessive relationship gets into *compulsive over-control*, oh man. We have to keep the climate just right, so the relationship will blow my mind on demand. It has got to be perfect, I have got to make the relationship work. Without intense continuous effort, the relationship will self-destruct, so I have to put in that horrendous effort, I have to work at it and think about it, all the time. I should be working at it and thinking about other things, but I can't, I am obsessed with this relationship.

I take it to work with me, I talk about it at work, I take it home with me, I talk about it when I get home, I have to be with that other person, and the compulsion becomes overwhelming. Then, you do what we all do in that situation, we isolate. Remember we talked about connecting feelings, feelings connect us but ideas separate us, judgments separate us, continuous compulsive control separates us, but we try to hide that.

So we have brief intense moments of pleasure, you know when the sex is so great, and that then is followed by continuous effort, this pain, this plotting and manipulating and manoeuvring and oh my god. It is a constant struggle. But the person who is recovered, the person who is not obsessed, doesn't get into that. The recovered person is not interested in a relationship that would take a lot of work. Why should she be? She expects to receive voluntary free flowing co-operation. What she is looking for is comfort, to be comfortable. She wants to be secure, she wants to be safe, see the contrast?

The Living Framework of Relationships

Because it feels good, it feels nice, and during periods of normal problems, they are solved, that is what healthy people do, they solve their problems, through co-operation and then that is followed by mutual joy and pleasure and comfort. But comfort is the norm, and the problem of me, is always discussed by both parties, openly and honestly. But in the compulsive, obsessive, over control relationship, the problem of me is never discussed, because the fear is always there. If I were honest with you and told you what I thought, you wouldn't want to talk to me anymore, I would lose you, you would be gone. So you isolate your partner.

And this is very interesting, you might sink out of sight for two or three weeks and nothing else counts, and compulsiveness continues, you see. You don't bring your partner around and introduce them to anybody, you are hiding the supply. Just like you did when you were drinking. When we got a 40 oz bottle, what did you do? Did you bring it out to the boys and say, "Hey guys look at what I got, 40 ozs, help yourself?". Like hell, you hid it in the garage somewhere so nobody else would find it, and you would sneak out and take a couple of little nips once in a while and think oh boy, I am getting away with it, nobody knows I have got the supply.

But that kind of horrendous compulsion that becomes so overwhelming gives rise to problems. Trust problems. We have two people who are doing this to each other. They are both manipulating, they are both trying to control, and each feels that I can't let you know who I am or what I am because if I do you will leave me, and they each feel like that. So I am going to trick you into giving me what I want or what I need, without telling

Reflecting on Relationships

you about it. You are going to have to guess, and you had better guess right.

And that is the essence of compulsive over control. That is why we have to manipulate. Manipulate that person so that they will guess right and give us what we want. We are not going to tell them what we want, we are not going to tell them what we need, we are going to trick them into giving it to us. There's a lot of fear involved in that, a lot of anticipation, a lot of angst, a lot of anxiety. There is no comfort in that. So that persistent sort of control gives rise to what we call alternating doubts. Isn't that good, alternating doubts, like sometimes I think it is me, sometimes I think it is you, in the morning it is me, in the afternoon it is you, and by evening we are both in trouble and at fault.

I know there is something wrong, I can feel there is something wrong, and I suspect it may be me, maybe I am defective and oh boy that doesn't make me feel good. I feel shame, and I feel guilt, or maybe it is not me, maybe it is them, ah ha. So I complain; I say damn it, look at the bitch I am hooked up with. The gals say that bastard that I am living with, if you knew what he was like, you'd never talk to him again. Whining, we become graduates of whining one and whining two and self-pity creeps into it. You may meet somebody like that, maybe in a coffee shop or maybe somewhere else and for a half-hour, hour and a half later, depending, you are still getting a long litany of all their complaints.

I have people who phone me and want to talk to me and they will phone me and they will say, Tom, I have to talk to you, I want to talk to ya, and I say okay, fine, I got a little time, I am willing to talk. One girl said to me, Do you talk to women?, I said yeah sure, of course, why

The Living Framework of Relationships

not, of course I talk to women. But I said I want you to understand something, I don't want to talk about your husband, I don't want to talk about your kids, I don't want you to talk about your job or your health, or any of those things. Oh well, hell, what else is there to talk about? I say, if you want to talk to me, I am pretty willing to talk to you, meet me at the meeting at quarter to eight, you be there and well talk. And if you need more time than that, we can stay after the meeting and talk. Okay, I'll be there. I come to the meeting and they are not there. They don't want to talk, they want to complain. And I don't want anybody to complain. I learned that from my sponsor years ago when he said to me, Tom, you don't have a problem, you are the damn problem.

Bill tells us that, Bill tells us that when some guy comes along and says I can't get sober until I get my family back, can't get sober until I get a job, can't get sober. Bill starts right out in the next paragraph and he says, let no man say that. Don't even let him say it. Don't let him say that he can't recover, or be happy, unless he gets his family back, unless he gets what he wants, unless his compulsive over control works. That is not Alcoholics Anonymous. That is not our program, that is not relationships, that is not starting with the superficial and building it through companionship and friendship, into intimacy, with another person or intimacy with the Power. It is all one and the same thing.

If we fulfil the conditions for sobriety, we automatically fulfil the conditions for the good life, and that comes up through the series of relationships as we've tried to show and explain in this series. And of course the good news of Alcoholics Anonymous is that in doing those simple things we are automatically

Reflecting on Relationships

fulfilling the conditions of God. They are all one and the same thing.

So I have to talk to those people, and some of them don't like me very good, because I might say to them, what is it about you that attracts you to somebody like that? And they don't have an answer for me. Or I might say to them, what is it about you that you stay involved with somebody like that? You don't have to, you can go, you are free. You can go anywhere you want to go. If you are hooked up with a world class loser, what is wrong with you that you are? That is your fault. That is nobody else's fault.

I had to learn and my sponsors helped me, taught me, patiently, that no man hates me enough to hurt me. I found that hard to believe, but Chuck always pointed out to me that people don't do the things they do because they want to, but because they have to. They are doing the best they can with what they have got. If they knew better they would do better.

There are only two ways in which you can make yourself feel better. You can either so perform, that it gives you a sense of accomplishment, and you can feel good about yourself, and that is good, and you feel good. And if you can't do that, then the only other thing open is to tear the other person down to your level, so that you can get a kind of perverse satisfaction out of that. But they are not trying to hurt me, they are trying to make themselves feel better, and when you know that, they can't hurt you.

That is why I don't worry about what people think about me, it is none of my business. It is an interesting side note, I was thinking about this and I kind of

The Living Framework of Relationships

discovered this as I was going through this series --- Girls that are raised with brothers don't take men that seriously, they are not easily impressed or persuaded by men. And they are not as apt to be overly romantic, as girls raised without brothers may often tend to be. And I was thinking back to my sisters, you know.

My own girls, I had four girls and five boys, and those girls played basketball on the driveway, that one-on-one, and the other stuff that they play, just like the boys did, and they had elbows and knees too, and they weren't overly impressed by the guys I'll tell you. You big goof, they'd say. And they could shoot pretty good too. I think men have to learn. Women know things intuitively, they are more intuitive than men.

These are just my own observations, you don't have to believe it. It's just what I've seen. I think that a real woman is a wonder. Just a wonder. They are stronger than a man. My wife was stronger in a lot of ways than I was. There is much to be learned from a woman and I have learned from every important woman in my life, my wife, my mother, my sisters, my daughters. Many men are still babies, mom's boys, they are spoiled. They think they have to have their way because they want their way.

I used to wonder how women acquired their magic, I thought they learned it as they grew up, or maybe had a secret association called Women's Anonymous and they taught magic at that course. I didn't know that it came with them. I learned that from my little grandchildren. My little daughters taught me that too. Because I would see them 12 months, 14 months, 18 months old, little "ga ga" in my arms like that. I am the boss, I am the man, I am the daddy, I am the everything: ha, and she

Reflecting on Relationships

could rap me around her little finger just like that, and get anything she wanted and persuade me to do whatever she wanted me to do. Amazing. So I think that all women are to be admired and I do admire them.

But I have to tell you in honesty, that I think women are at their best when they are with a man, a good man to relate to so that one shares with the other in every area of life. And those two together are amazing, and what a strength. There is an old saying that behind every successful man is a good woman, and my wife never let me forget that. I have got a series of birthday cards. I was looking at them a month or so ago, because I saved them all, you know, actually my kids saved them for me really. But they gave them to me later and I have them, and it is amazing how that theme comes through.

She used to love to give me my birthday cake on birthday nights, and she always had something to say to put me in my place. She was just testing, can you take it, you're pretty damn good at handing it out Tom, can you take it? And I took it and I was grateful for it, and she taught me much. She taught me much. And then in that obsessive relationship after that compulsiveness, there are privacy rules, there are no talk rules, we can't talk about things and nobody is going to get near my partner, it has to be very, very private. So we hole up alone, and no one else can share in this marvellous experience that we are having. Just us.

You know the way the music goes, "I can't smile without you", and "It's you and I against the world", that is where all those songs come from, all that kind of obsessive relationships. I'll tell you if you feel reluctant about bringing your partner to your group, introducing

The Living Framework of Relationships

your partner to your friends, something is seriously wrong with the relationship. Maybe some stinking stuff going on that you don't want anybody to know about. There is a repeating cycle of pain that commands desperate action, I'll do anything to try to make this relationship work. Boy, if you are in that situation, that relationship is not going to work, it doesn't matter what you do. You might be engaged in a night of intense pleasure and you might think oh god, it is worth it. I don't care that I had to go through six months of pain, I don't care, it's worth it, wow, I'm transported.

But then shucks, the next day it's right back to the desperate action and the bitterness and the accusing jealousy and you're into the "You looked at him and he looked at her" and oh my god. That's not sharing. Healthy people don't get into that. You see what we try to follow is Live and Let Live. But it is "live" that comes first. And the live part means working at the program and getting on with your life -- your new life. If you can't find someone to love you, maybe there is a reason.

Maybe if you took time out and didn't cast about looking for some idiot that would love the kind of person you are right now. You wouldn't want him anyway, he would be one of those jerks that you cast aside. So maybe take time out, and that is why we say to new people when they first get here, take a year, take a year, don't make any relationships, don't try to get involved with anybody, take a year, and just work at the program. Just work at you. And don't work at anything else.

The desperate part about this is that recovered people know how to handle this situation. Because you know people go on to grow, and maybe one person outgrows another, or grows in a different direction than

Reflecting on Relationships

another, and it may be necessary to terminate that relationship. And responsible people, recovered people, can do that responsibly. They don't get into a hassle about it. They know how to responsibly end a relationship and they may even remain as friends after. They may find out, well, this romantic business isn't going to work for us, because you can't change the fundamental nature of a person. There maybe certain cosmetic changes that can be made, you know, Friday night instead of Monday night, or something like that.

But a person will always go according to their nature. If you are a morning person, you are not going to make it with a night person, you are not going to make it with a city person. I don't mean country/city in that sense, what I am thinking of is the type of mind where he is a real city guy. You know, he wants to get ahead in his corporation, and he wants to give a lot of time to that. And he thinks in terms of jazz, and he loves the blues, he likes to go to the theatre and you know. And this gal he was going out with, she is not interested in that. She just wants a part-time job, she just wants to earn enough money to get by, because she wants to live out in the country somewhere, where she can go walking in the woods, and maybe listen to John Denver records. He is the most mournful guy I ever heard in my life. I like Duke Ellington or something like that. See, we wouldn't get along together, so they don't have problems with that.

A responsible person goes from one relationship to another with ease and comfort, whereas the obsessed person gets a repeating cycle of pain. Because they dump that relationship, (a friend of mine says - can that relationship), but damn it all, then I go out and start the same process all over again. Like if I go to another

The Living Framework of Relationships

place and I find another "boing" and away I go. And the whole process starts all over again, and I haven't learned a damn thing. And we are supposed to learn by experience, but people who are suffering from insanity and obsessiveness don't do that. All I am doing is transferring the obsession from one thing to another, and never getting to the basic problem which is the self-centredness. Until I deal with that, I am not into the answer.

I am told by people who know better, psychologists who know all there is to know about psychology, that the two great impediments to growth are firstly, refusal to take the action, I know what the action is, but I won't take the action, and secondly refusal to let go. And I think about that, and I think about that vis-à-vis my relationship with the Power. And I get a mental picture of God standing there holding out His hands like this, and saying to me, "I have some beautiful things to give you. I want to give you health, I want to give you prosperity. I want to give you a successful happy relationship, a growing relationship. I want to give you a good life, but I can't do it because your hands are full."

You are standing there hanging onto that lousy relationship. You are standing there hanging onto that lousy job that you hate. And you are hanging on to everything, the little bit of money that you have, you won't share that, you won't share your time, you won't share a single thing, and your hands are full with the stuff of all your problems. You are simply hanging onto them because they are yours. And God says: "Let go, let go".

Sometimes people ask me "What is your definition of sobriety in the program?" and I tell them what my

Reflecting on Relationships

sponsor told me. Sobriety to me is the ability for me to be comfortable with you, to be comfortable with me and to be comfortable with the Power. And I have to check that every day, and for a few minutes every night, and see if I am uncomfortable in any one of those three areas. If I am uncomfortable, I have a problem, not you, me. And it is not God.

The very second that I see that, I know what the problem is. It is always me. It always comes back to me. And it is the same throughout all of my relationships. When there is a problem in any relationship, it always comes back to me. It is not the other person. The other person may truly be a jerk. But it is my fault if I am trying to relate to them, because that is not Live and Let Live, that is not Easy Does It, that is not Anonymity and that is not the program.

My sponsor Chuck used to say if there is fault, it is mine, if there be fault, it is mine. And then he'd laugh and he'd say "if" there be fault, because I don't believe there is fault. And I don't think there is fault. I think we are doing the best we can with what we got, and when we know better we will do better. If I am in trouble with me or God, I better change. I am the one that has to change.

If I am in trouble with you, I better find out the reason and either change my attitude or my approach, or terminate the relationship. They tell a story about two Arab sheikhs who met in the desert. They each had a brand new Mercedes. And they were the only two cars within a hundred miles, and by gosh they managed to crash into each other. And the two of them jumped out and threw their arms around each other and said "Isn't it wonderful that our God Allah has arranged for us to

The Living Framework of Relationships

meet in this wonderful way in this lonely place!" And I recently read where a few weeks ago, two cars crashed into each other on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. And the two drivers got out and started shooting at each other.

When you are in a relationship, do you ever wonder how you got there; what or who puts the people in your life that you relate to. Do you choose them, do you think so, do you choose the people in your life? I have 9 children and 23 grandchildren and I didn't choose any of them. I didn't choose my parents, my brother, my two sisters, my in-laws, I got two brother-in-laws in the fellowship, surviving, there were more a while ago, but two surviving now, and they are closer to me than brothers. And I didn't choose you people, God put you in my path which makes me very happy.

I started in the Winnipeg Group over 35 years ago, and they have had me back to take their Monday night Beginners Meetings (you see, I am still a beginner) every year in May for more than 30 years now. And I went on (not my doing), to Tiger Group, and Big Book Group and then University Group, and I didn't have anything to do with any of that really. And there are people and friends and sponsors that I relate to in every one of those groups, and I am enjoying my life.

Bill says we absolutely insist on enjoying life, in that Chapter "*The Family Afterwards*" that we read last Sunday. Bill says that. And kids, that is not a suggestion. We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free, a new freedom, a new happiness. Bill says we made our own misery, God didn't do it, avoid them, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if

Reflecting on Relationships

trouble does come, cheerfully capitalize on it as an opportunity to demonstrate His power, and His love.

If you look back at your life, you will see that God had constantly supplied you with people to relate to, and to learn to love. We alcoholics have to learn to love. If you will surrender your own selfish will, and seek knowledge of His will for you, and the Power to carry it out, you will presently become a person worthy of love. A person people will unconsciously want to be with, want to love. If you will permit it, the Power will teach you little by little how to become one of His kids. We say we are God's kids, so we act like one of God's kids and prove that we are.

Thank you.

Chapter Three

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

I'm Tom and I'm an alcoholic. This is our third meeting in this relationship series and I would like to start tonight in the same way that we started all our meetings with our little prayer:

Dear God, let me set aside everything I think I know about You and me and this program and these steps, for an open mind, and a new experience with You and me and this program and these steps.

I am feeling better tonight. I am glad to tell you that I am back to abnormal. You know crazy things happen

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

in AA and I am glad to see all you people here, this is really something. I enjoy this very much.

Some years ago, you know what alcoholics are like, basically they are very lazy people. I am sure you have trouble believing that, but they are. So you know when they put on a Roundup in one city and they are going to have a Roundup in another city, the second city will look at what the first city did and they do not want to ask this speaker or that speaker. They take the whole program and bring it over, because that way it is easier, they don't have to do any planning or thinking or anything like that.

There was a gal at work at GSO and her name was Eve M. (now gone), she had been there for a long time. She was Bill's secretary for at least 25 years and I got hooked up with her and an Alanon gal by the name of Ramona B. (now gone). I am sure some people here will remember Ramona. She was a pure blooded Native Indian Lady from Oklahoma who was a legal secretary, smarter than hell, and made a terrific talk and I, in fun, called her Pocohontas.

So the way it worked out, Pocohontas would talk on Friday night and Eve would talk on Saturday night and I'd talk Sunday morning. We must have done 10 roundups together like that, and it was a lot of fun, they were just wonderful people.

Anyway, maybe the third or fourth time we got taken to Atlanta to talk at a Roundup there and I got on the NorthWest airplane here in Winnipeg. They are a modern airline, they were leaders in the field and they trained their pilots to talk to the passengers and get the nerve level down. They all do it now, but in those days

Reflecting on Relationships

it was brand new.

This particular pilot on this morning, we just got off the runway and he starts talking to us. And he's telling us as we're going up through 5, 10, 15, 25 thousand. He is saying that outside air temperature is 60 below and of course everybody is real interested in that. And I don't know why, because I didn't see anybody who was planning to go outside. He kept on chatting and telling us about the weather and telling us we were going to have breakfast and when we would be in Minneapolis.

Then he obviously forgot to shut off his microphone button and he continued talking to his co-pilot and he said well, I have made the Public Service Announcement, thank God that is over. Now I am going to have a cup of coffee, hit the can, and I am going to get that little red headed Stewardess back there up here and have a little fun with her and maybe pitch a little woo.

And the little red headed Stewardess is sitting four seats behind where I am and she realized immediately what had happened. Her face flushed as red as her hair and she went by me on the dead run. She got about four seats in front of me, and there was a little Jewish grandmother sitting there, and she stuck out this little arm like a pipe stem, more like a steel rod, because it stopped the Stewardess cold and she looked at her with her kindly watery little blue eyes and she said to her: "Sweetie, don't rush, first he has to go to the bathroom."

But Eve M. was a hell of a gal and she was the one who initiated, who coined that saying you know,

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

"Alcoholics don't have relationships, they take hostages". Eve was the one who coined that, and the first time I heard her say that was in Atlanta. I have heard it a million times since and everybody takes credit for it. It was Eve who started that anyway.

And the reason of course that we do that, take hostages, is because we want control. We want to control everything. We are always trying to manage our lives. So that desire for control of course stems from the ego, out of the alcoholic ego, the obsessed ego. Let's take a look at the relationships around the group.

I don't know if this has ever been in your experience, but it has been in my experience. When you are my friend, you are my friend, you are mine. I have possession of you, I bloody well own you. I have had pigeons like that. I remember old Joe Leith talking about a guy that he called on in jail, he went and he knocked himself out. He made eight visits to this guy in jail and the little bugger wouldn't get sober for nobody. Out of jail, he came one night to the group and he talked to one member who had been there for three weeks who didn't know a damn thing about the program and he never took another drink.

And Joe used to sit across the room and look at him. Joe would be sitting here and the little guy would be sitting there and Joe would look at him and say, "You little bastard, you don't know it, but you belong to me."

Some sponsors are like that, they own their Pigeons, they want to direct their life, they want to tell them when to go, when to come, when to do this, when

Reflecting on Relationships

to do that. And some sponsees are like that. Some Pigeons are like that, I have had Pigeons like that, they own me, they would do anything for me. But, they own me, they were jealous.

If I went and worked with somebody else, or went and talked to somebody else, they would be in a huff. And it used to raise hell in some of our sponsees' meetings. I used to have all my sponsees come to my office at 5 o'clock on Tuesday or Thursday or whatever date. And it caused upset in that meeting, in that group, because people were uneasy, they were uncomfortable, because of their insistence that Tom is THEIR sponsor. Like YOU can't even talk to him.

So I thought we would take a quick look at what a healthy sponsee sponsor relationship might look like, and take a look at it from both sides.

First of all, what should a new member, Pigeon, look for in a sponsor? Well I suggest they should see how the sponsor acts around the group and in the group. See what his actions are, because of course actions speak louder than words. Are they positive actions? Is he a positive member of the group or is he a negative member of the group? Take a look at him and see. Does he have good sobriety, does she have good sobriety? And you might ask length of sobriety; length of sobriety doesn't mean everything, but it is an indicator.

I know people that have five years sobriety that Jeez I wish I had their sobriety, they're magnificent. And I think that's great. Sobriety is not something that is the same every single day of your life. Some days are better than others you know and that ain't going to

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

quit when you get ten years sober, or 20 or 30 or 40 either, because we always have that self in here.

So you might have to find out a little about the guy for a sponsor. Has he done the steps? Has he had that experience? You may have to talk to somebody around the group or more than one person around the group and find out a little bit about him. How about communicating with that person, can you communicate with him? Of course the way you're going to find that out is to go and talk to them. So go and talk to the person and see how you get along.

You can talk to them before the meeting or after the meeting, that is why coffee after the meeting is so important. It gives people in the group a chance to meet each other and talk to each other and communicate. It is very important, we always talk about "the meeting after the meeting" and how important that is, and that is one of the reasons why.

You could ask yourself this question:

Could I feel comfortable enough to share with that person if he was my sponsor? Could I really share, could I really be honest, holding nothing back, no secrets, just tell it like it is, unload, absolutely bare naked in front of the guy? Would I be able to do that?

Because it is my feeling that if there is anything in your life that you can't share with your sponsor, it means either that you shouldn't be doing it or it means that you need a new sponsor. Because with a Sponsor you have got to get that level of sharing. We can't

Reflecting on Relationships

Keep secrets -- secrets kill us.

So then we could look at some questions that the Pigeon might want to ask himself, that you might want to ask yourself. What about this; are you convinced that you are an alcoholic, are you convinced that you are a real alcoholic? Recently I discussed the term "a real Alcoholic" with a member in my group and we decided a real Alcoholic was like a 747 roaring through other people's lives. A few days later he got a new licence plate for his automobile. The new licence plate ARA 747. He was convinced now it was directed at him personally and meant "A Real Alcoholic is like a 747".

You know what the Book says a real alcoholic is. I laughed. We were down in Northern Minnesota a couple of years ago, five or ten years, I don't know and there was a guy there from California. They know me very well down there, I have been there many, many times and sometimes I like to talk about being a real alcoholic.

They had picked the term up at this particular convention, you know how things go like that, and they were talking about being a real alcoholic. This guy from California comes on and says "What is all this talk about being a real alcoholic? What does that make the rest of us!" Unfortunately for him, he asked me that question, and he never should have done that. I said "it makes you a person who has never read the Big Book". (Oh), I says "In the big book it tells us clearly what a real alcoholic is." Bill asks that question in the Chapter 'There Is a Solution'. He says "What about the real alcoholic?"

"A real alcoholic is a person who once having

started to drink discovers that he has lost control and can no longer control his drinking."

That is what a real alcoholic is, so to me, Bill says I'm a real alcoholic because that describes me beautifully. Many times I would go to functions, whatever they were, particularly law functions or political functions or something like that, and I would not take a drink. I couldn't trust myself. I would much rather say no thank you I don't want a drink, because I knew damn well that if I took one drink I was going to be looking for more. And the seminar could go to blazes and the Law Society with it. After a couple of drinks I didn't care about those things, I just wanted more booze. Why? Because I am a real alcoholic. It is not a mark of distinction. It doesn't mean that you are better than, it means you are more obsessed than, it means you are hooked with the obsession.

So, a question I like a Pigeon to ask himself, because I am surely going to ask him is; "Are you convinced you are a real alcoholic? And will you discuss that fully and frankly with your sponsor? Are you prepared to talk about that?"

Some of us get here and we don't know if we are alcoholics or not. Some of us think we're not. Some of us keep denying that we are an alcoholic for some time after we get here. So I am never impressed very much when somebody comes in and says, "I am not really an alcoholic, I took a few uppers and downers and did a little acid and a couple of lines here and there, but I am not an alcoholic".

I knew a little Sister named Rita who came from east of Grand Forks, whatever the name of that town

is. She was a school teacher living in a convent there, and the Mother Superior was sending her to AA. And the little Sister didn't like that. I ran into her at a meeting down there and she confided to me. "I am really not an alcoholic". I said how do you know that? Everybody else at the convent said she was,

But she just didn't think she was. Anyway she came up to Winnipeg and spent a weekend with us here. We put her up in a motel and spent 3 days with her. We spent one whole day just teaching her to say, "My name is Rita and I am an alcoholic". And she learned it so well she went back to Grand Forks, and a year or so later I ran into a great big truck driver, and he walked up to me and I thought, "Oh my God what is he going to do, break my neck or what". Puts his arms around me and slobbers all over me and says, "Tom you saved my life." I said, "Saved your life. Shucks, I never even met you, what are you talking about?" He says, "I ran into a little gal in AA called Rita and she taught me to say, "My name is Bob and I'm an alcoholic."

We have to learn those simple things. Bill says, "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics." What do you really know about who and what you are the day you get to Alcoholics Anonymous? You don't know yourself. You have no actual intimate relationship with yourself. That is what we are talking about with this series.

We are talking about that superficial relationship that you have with yourself when you get here, and then how you expand that to companionship, and then it grows into a friendship with yourself. And eventually

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

in time and through recovery, it becomes an intimate relationship, where you actually begin to have knowledge of who you are, and what you are, for the first time in your life. It is called the *Miracle of Self Discovery*. And the amazing thing about it is that that is all that is necessary.

We had a guy years ago who was vice-president of the American Atheistic Society, and who became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Through the progression of relationships he came to be able to stand up in front of a room like this, smiling, and say that, "I depend on God for everything, my real reliance is always on Him". What a change in the guy. You see I am convinced that the discovery of Self (the Inner Self), and the discovery of God are one and the same thing. That is what it is. You discover that the Power within you is as real as anything else in your entire make-up. That is a new way of thinking. I didn't really mean to get into that at this juncture, but there is such phenomenal freedom that comes to us when finally we are able to make the important concession to our "innermost" self.

Now, here's another question for a sponsee to ask himself. "*Will you commit yourself to the sponsor?*" Will you make a commitment to your sponsor? Are you just going up to this guy because he is popular, and maybe he is well known in the group or AA or what, and say would you be my sponsor and then run away and hide. But you have what you want, you can go around the group and say, "Oh yeah Joe is my sponsor."

Chuck had hundreds of people that loved to say, "Oh yeah, Chuck is my sponsor". Chuck never talked

Reflecting on Relationships

to them, did not know anything about them, he didn't sponsor anybody. He was one of my sponsors, in many ways my main sponsor for 25 years. But he never said he was my sponsor.

He used to drive Clancy crazy. People would come and ask Chuck, "Are you Clancy's sponsor?" Chuck's answer was "He says so." Chuck never said he was my sponsor, he just sponsored me. It is the relationship that matters, not the name. Anonymity can be an important part of a relationship.

Next question, "*Will you put AA first in your life?*" I was taught that AA comes First, Last, and Always. *If you don't put AA first you can't have it, and if AA doesn't remain first you can't keep it.* That means meetings, inventories, steps, service, sponsoring, being sponsored, it means the works. It means that eventually you will give your life to Alcoholics Anonymous. I mean it will become your way of life.

That is how you will live. If that sounds threatening to some people, it is only because they don't understand. Because the AA way of life is infinitely richer and broader and more wonderful than any way of life that any alcoholic ever had. And some of us had a pretty decent way of life before we got here, but as nothing compared to AA living.

Would you be willing to be rigorously honest with your sponsor? Ask yourself that question. No matter what, ooh boy, that is a tough one. Can you learn to talk to your sponsor before you do something? And can you learn to go back to your sponsor after you screwed up? This is how we learn to live. Your sponsor isn't going to tell you what to do, very rarely,

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

very rarely. What he or she will do is just share with you what they did, what happened to them in their life, and give you a chance to benefit by that experience. It takes guts to do that, good sponsees do that and they stay sober and they get happy.

And this is a trick question, remember seven, always seven if it comes from me, "Do you like your sponsor?" That is a trick question, some people like their sponsor because you can go to him and he doesn't really listen and they say, "Is that okay with you?" and he says "Yeah, okay, I guess so" and they go away and do whatever they want. They just want somebody to agree with them. They are not looking for a sponsor, just looking for somebody to agree with them.

A lot of times I would have to answer, "No, I don't like him because he hurt me, and I am a sensitive alcoholic", and sometimes he laughed at me, at my bloody childishness. Which I guess he should have done, I didn't like it, and if you'd have asked me right then if I liked that so and so, I'd say I sure as heck don't.

Sometimes he didn't listen to my problems when I wanted him to. Then he used to praise other people and he'd never praise me for anything! And I'd work my buns off trying to merit his approval. I did all kinds of things just to get his approval, just to have that rotten old goat look and me and say, "That was pretty good kid". Now that didn't mean a bloody thing to anyone else in the world, but it meant the world to me. I would have felt wonderful, and he didn't do that. But somehow or another he was always there when I really needed him. It is amazing (maybe just coincidence), I

Reflecting on Relationships

would be in real trouble, and I'd phone and he'd be there and he would answer the phone, amazing.

The sponsor-sponsee relationship like any other goes through the various stages of development. Through friendship, where the person is more important than the activity. Except that at the same time the activity is highly important when you are in AA, because everything in the relationship centres on the AA program, on the sponsor-sponsee relationship. So that the sponsor-sponsee relationship emerges into a special kind of intimate relationship. One that is definitely spiritual in character, this is something new for an alcoholic. The beginning of a spiritual relationship with another human being.

It took me a long time to realize what was happening because I did not recognize, I had no point of reference, I did not know what was happening. I did not know the things I was feeling and why I was paying so much attention to this person who physically was not attractive. Good God, he looked like he had been run over by a Mack Truck, his nose was all over his face. We used to tell him, Ross, why don't you get your nose fixed, he would point from one side of his face to the other and say: "I did, it used to be over there".

This relationship is spiritual because both parties are constantly guided by the spiritual principles of our program and like any intense intimate relationship the sponsor-sponsee relationship takes time to develop because it involves deep sharing by both parties. If your sponsor is really your sponsor, and by that I mean, if you are a Pigeon and you have a sponsor that you want to be your sponsor and you give him a

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

chance, you communicate with him and work with him, that sponsor will work with you. He will respond to you and that you will discover is the basis for a very deep relationship.

It will become the basis of a vital spiritual experience at depth. If I am your sponsor I am willing to share my entire experience with you if that will help, all my experience, strength and hope, and most other things that I might have at the time, like time. I'll share my time with you.

Money? What about money? Well, my experience is that you have to be careful about sharing money. If I have money, I have no great objection to sharing it at all. Except you can't do it on a service plane, it has to be on a spiritual basis. What is the difference between service and spiritual?

In spiritual sharing you have to make sure that the Pigeon is not relying on you or your money, but relying on the Power. If I step in between that person and the Power, I am not doing that person any service, and if I do that with money I am wrong. I'll hurt him, and I've done it.

I am not talking about something that hasn't happened in my life, I could give you specific instances. I could name you dates and times and people who were involved. I got a guy out of jail, I was so bloody proud of him, he was out of jail for two weeks, he stayed sober, and he got a job. He used to come to see me at my office maybe once a week, and I was really proud of this guy. It came Christmas time and now he was out a couple of months. I dived in and jeez boy, we bought a Christmas Tree, a turkey, and

Reflecting on Relationships

presents for his wife, and his kids and they all went to his home and he was doing just great.

Two days before Christmas his wife phoned me and said "Did you give that so and so a Christmas Tree and a turkey and presents and all that?" I said (you know, I am real happy), well yeah, isn't it nice to have a Christmas like that? She says, "Well it was, until he got drunk and he took them all out and sold them, and now we got nothing."

I hurt those people, I'm feeling so good about it, and I'm hurting those people. Why? Because I was teaching that guy to rely on me, not The Power. I wouldn't do that anymore. So I have to be careful not to let self get involved in these things. I must not let the Pigeon be dependent upon me. I've got to let him depend on the Power. Because Bill tells us very clearly in the book that material well being always follows spiritual progress, it never precedes it.

More than one, is it okay to have more than one sponsor at a time? Why not? I had three at one time, Ross Mackenzie M., Thomas Wright B., and Charles Axiom C. Chuck was quite a guy, a very spiritual guy. I used to tease him about it all the time. He would say an Axiom is a spiritual truth. I'd say how did you get that name? Axiom, what a name.

But I didn't plan that, it is just how it worked out in my life. I didn't plan to get Ross, I never asked Ross to be my sponsor. He told me he was my sponsor, first night, I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know what a sponsor was, and I sure didn't ask Tom, Ross called Tom over and said Tom this is Tom and he is your other sponsor. I said oh, I got two, he said yeah.

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

And when it came to Chuck, I couldn't ask him, I didn't have the guts. I didn't think I merited that for, he had all kinds of people chasing him. I couldn't have gone to him and said, "Chuck would you be my sponsor?" But he sponsored me and that is just how it worked out.

Each one of my sponsors had a different role, I see that now. I didn't see that then, but now it is clear that each one fulfilled a different function. To me that is just evidence of how the Power has been managing my life. Not just since I took Step Three Action in the program, not just since I came to AA, but, as I now see it, since the day I was born, and maybe before that, I don't know.

Bill had more than one sponsor, a lot of people don't know that, because in the stories he always talks about Ebby T. as his sponsor. And of course everybody always looks at each other and say "ooh yeah" but Ebby got drunk. Sponsors are just people, they are not invested with the holy grail. They have just as many defects as the sponsees do and good sponsors will know that. Yeah, Ebby got drunk, and Bill spent a great deal more time sponsoring Ebby that Ebby ever spent sponsoring Bill. But you see Ebby was the guy that called on Bill. Ebby was the guy that brought Bill the message.

If he hadn't done that, who knows where would Bill be. You and I certainly wouldn't be here at this meeting. So we can't be too critical about people like that, and I have to realize that. And as far as I'm concerned, Ebby was doing God's will. It was the Power that decided I'm going to use frail imperfect human being Ebby to carry this message to this frail

Reflecting on Relationships

imperfect human being Bill. That will be the start of something that will be effective for those of my kids that are afflicted with Alcoholism. And it worked. So we have to be grateful for that.

But Bill had another sponsor. Bill was a guy that didn't stand up if he could sit down, and he didn't sit down if he could lie down, that is just how Bill was. And he did his best thinking when he was lying in bed.

A lot of people say oh yeah but Bill had a depression, he suffered from a depression, when he wrote the Twelve and Twelve, you know he had a nine year depression. That burns me up when I hear that. Because it's not true. In my mind what is true is that Bill had a means of communication with a Power greater than himself, with a God of his own experience and he was paying the price for what he was getting, for the message he was getting. Bill sat down and wrote that whole Big Book when he was three and a half years sober. How many people do you know that could have written a book like that or like anything when they were three and a half years sober?

Do you know how many geniuses we've had in Alcoholics Anonymous since 1939? We have had hundreds of geniuses. We had a guy by the name of Howard H. out of California, Howard was a hell of a guy. Howard would come into a meeting and say, "I am the smartest man in this room", and of course you know what alcoholics are like, the whole bloody room would say, "Oh yeah!"

But you see he graduated with a PhD when he was 15 years old. From the University of Victoria in British Columbia even though he was born in California. He

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

had an IQ that was so high it was never accurately measured; it was measured somewhere between 206 and 212. He had made myriad inventions. But by a strange trick of fate he became the officer in charge of all alcohol supplies for the American Army during the Second World War. And by another great coincidence he became a member of AA about 1948. What a guy! Just one of many geniuses we've had in AA. None of whom has written a Book, at least, not an AA Book.

I believe Bill was paying the psychic price. He was paying. He was being purged so that he could receive the message and pass it on to you and me. Now probably you think I'm telling you something about Bill Wilson. And that Bill Wilson paid a price, a spiritual price, psychic pain for his spiritual growth in the program. I am telling you also about my experience and about yourself.

Don't think you are going to come into Alcoholics Anonymous and suddenly become a spiritual guru. It ain't going to happen. If you are going to grow spiritually, and you will if you stay and do the things we ask you to do. You will pay for it. You will have pain, it's painful to give up self, it is painful to give up obsession. The obsession with self doesn't leave easily or painlessly.

So anyway, let me go back to my story about Bill's second sponsor. Bill is in bed and is suffering flu-like symptoms and its in November, and its in New York, and its raining, sleeting, snowing, raining, it's a rough kind of a night. Windy, and its like 10:30 p.m. and old Tom the caretaker, (they never would have been able to run the Fellowship without old Tom, remember - would you like to make a note of that someplace? It's

Reflecting on Relationships

important. "Without old Tom, we couldn't have made it". If you look at page 116 in *AA Comes of Age* you'll see that it says "Old Tom was right". That sure ain't changed much.)

Anyway old Tom was downstairs and there was a knock on the door, and Tom goes to the door. And there is a guy with a floppy hat, rain and snow all over him and kind of awkward looking, and he talked funny and he said that he wanted to see Bill. And Tom was trying to send him away. And the guy said: "I'm not going away, I came all the way from St. Louis, I want to see Bill". So Tom said: "alright, come on in for a minute and I'll see if Bill will see you."

So Tom clumps upstairs and says, "There is a guy down there, I think he's drunk and he wants to see you". And Bill replies, "What, 10:30 p.m. good God I've been busy all day with drunks, do I still have to deal with them now at 10:30 at night?" Tom says: "well you know, he says he came from St. Louis", he's pleading the guys case for him, you know. And Bill says: "okay, send him up then". This guy comes up the stairs, he coming up "clump, clump". Bill is thinking "oh lordy, is this guy really drunk!"

The guy comes in the doorway and looks at Bill and Bill looks at him. He has got these eyes bright like diamonds, but they are crossed, he's kinda cross-eyed. And he looks funny. And the rain is dripping off of his hat. And then he opens his coat, and Bill sees a Roman Collar. He is a priest. Bill says come in and sit down and when he came in to sit down Bill saw why he had made all that noise coming up the stairs.

He was lame. He was handicapped. It was Father

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

Ed Dowling, S. J. from St. Louis, Missouri. If there was ever such a thing as a non-alcoholic member of AA it would certainly be Father Ed, because he was an AA miracle. And that night he and Bill sat down and started a conversation that lasted for more than 25 years. Bill later did a Step Five with Father Ed. Bill called Father Ed a spiritual advisor.

Father Ed had been to journalism college; had been all through the seminary, had graduated as a Priest and been ordained sent out to a Parish and didn't believe a damn thing. Oh intellectually, he knew all the arguments, and all the theory, and all the theology, and all of that. And although he assented to it he had no faith of his own.

Later he said an amazing thing. He said: "I came to believe by watching what happened to you people in Alcoholics Anonymous. That is where I got my faith". Now isn't that something?

You see, the grace of God can work with and upon anybody. You don't have to be an alcoholic. You just have to take certain actions. We said that every action can either lead toward more connection or more separation. Every action has the potential for that. And somehow or another Bill, by whatever miracle, came up with a set of actions, twelve in number, that are totally positive, that totally lead us toward connection.

Connection with others, connection with ourselves, and connection with the Power. I look at that and sometimes I say to myself I wonder what it would have been like if the Ten Commandments had been couched in different language, instead of the "Thou

Reflecting on Relationships

Shalt Not", what if they had said "Thou Shalt". Negative things tend to turn us away. It might have been a whole different history of the human race.

So we should be bloody grateful for what Bill found and what Bill gave us. He did a Step Five with Father Dowling. Some people even say that Bill wrote the steps but never did them, but that is not true, Bill worked hard at the steps. That is what he was doing when he wrote the Twelve and Twelve. He had a little group working with him,

Tom Powers, the former president of the American Atheistic Society was one of them. And if you know someone who has a tape library you can buy tapes of Tommy Powers. Hell of a guy. I remember him because he drank the same brand of Scotch that I did. I immediately bonded with him. You know what drunks are like, little Tommy Powers.

And Bill is most of the way through Step Five and he's not getting what he is looking for and Father said to him, "Bill, what's troubling you?" Bill said "Well I'm hoping to get some kind of satisfaction out of this Step Five of mine. Is there to be no satisfaction?"

And Father Dowling came right back at him, just like that -- and said, "No, none, not ever. No satisfaction." Then he looked at Bill with sort of a quizzical almost a smile, on his face and he said "Just a kind of divine dissatisfaction". Just enough dissatisfaction to keep us moving, to keep us growing. To keep us walking up the Steps.

Chuck always maintained that everybody he met was his sponsor. That used to make me laugh

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

because he'd never say he owned a sponsor. He used to say, "Everybody I meet is my sponsor; some teach me what to do, and some teach me what not to do". "And I'm not at all sure which is more important to me; they are both important to me".

So if I were to go by Chuck's standard, I've had lots of both, if only I'm willing to watch and listen. Lots of people have told me what to do, I've seen their lives in AA. I've seen great faith and great courage, faith that would amaze you from some little drunk.

I'm thinking of a guy from Neepawa that I'd known for quite a few years, I'd known his wife and his daughter. He came in to Winnipeg for an operation. We knew it was game over for this guy, no question about it. I went up to see him in the hospital a couple of times.

It was amazing because I had gone up there to try to bolster him up, and hell, it was exactly the opposite. He was cheering me up, he was trying to make me feel better. And he went through the operation and sailed through it. No doubt he had faith, I tell ya, and this is just a little guy from an AA group in the country, nothing special, just an AA member. But you see, he was one of God's kids and he knew it.

Sometimes I'm not willing to watch or listen and I want to go ahead and have my own way anyway. And when I do that it always costs me, always. There is a good rule in sponsorship that I like to follow, it is called "Men sponsor men and Women sponsor women". I don't know if you have ever heard that in AA? We used to talk about it, but we don't hear much about it anymore. But it is still a rule you see. There are

Reflecting on Relationships

exceptions of course, I admit that. But not many.

You know it is the things that we don't know that make life so interesting, not the things that we know. Women coming to AA very often don't like and refuse to relate to other women. They get a man sponsor. I have had that happen to me, but I always try to get them a woman sponsor as soon as they can accept them.

There are many simple reasons for that, there are things that women talk about that men don't know about, they are too dumb. They have such an idealistic exaggerated picture of what a woman is. And miss the real worth and the real values. It is also my experience that when sex gets involved in sponsorship, sponsorship goes out the window. Ain't no longer a sponsor, ain't no longer a Pigeon, its a totally different relationship.

Marty Mann was a gal, generally accepted as being the first woman in AA, and that's not really true. Florence Rankin was first, but Florence unfortunately didn't stay sober, she did for almost three years and then something happened in her life, something got between her and the Power and she went into a depression. As a matter of fact she committed suicide.

Marty stayed on and became a great favourite of Bill, she wrote the book Marty Mann's Primer on Alcoholism. I don't know if you've read it, but you should. Particularly if you are a woman you should have read it. And she headed up an organization called the National Council on Alcoholism that did a lot of good work for Alcoholics Anonymous, and paved the way, did many things that AA itself couldn't do,

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

publicity wise and things like that.

So Marty and Bill were great friends. And when I was on the General Service Board, (by that time Marty had passed away, she had gone and we all missed her of course, she was dynamic, she was a little human dynamo) the NCA elected a guy as President who was some kind of a fancy social worker, he was a promoter type guy. The first I knew about it there was a meeting at AAWS (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services). You know all about that of course. It owns all the publishing rights and does all the publishing and hires all the people that work at GSO and does much of our world services and stuff like that. And AAWS Inc. had invited this social worker from NCA to come and talk at a meeting.

Somehow or other I was at a Board meeting in New York that weekend, and I just happened to go to that AAWS meeting. I wasn't invited to the meeting, I wasn't supposed to be at the meeting. But you know I am a nosy guy and I got a chance to go to the meeting and I went. I wasn't going to miss it if I could help it. I had heard about this guy, and being an alcoholic, my opinion of him wasn't that great. A non-alcoholic social worker wasn't going to impress me, I could tell you that. I go into the meeting and this guy gets up there and puts on a remarkable presentation and he's very eloquent.

All the girls, secretaries of GSO, all of whom are friends of mine, were all going and awing and saying "oh isn't he wonderful" and "isn't that a dynamic idea" and "bla bla bla". The proposal he is making is NCA is going to perform certain services for Alcoholics Anonymous that Alcoholics Anonymous could not

Reflecting on Relationships

provide for itself. Of course, on a contract basis for money, AA is going to pay NCA to do this. And he's telling us he is already providing service to the American Medical Association (AMA) and he has a little chart with boxes and one of the boxes is AMA and another box is AA.

And I don't like AA in a box. So with all these accolades, I could hardly sit still. Finally, when I couldn't sit still another minute I put my hand up and started waving it. Bob Hitchins, who was the then general manager of GSO is chairing the meeting, and Bob is frowning at me and shaking his head like that, you know saying sit down sit down. So I knew I was on the right track so I shook my hand a little harder and finally the guy stops and he looks at me and says:

"Sir, did you have a question?"

I said "Yes I do, may I ask it now?"

He said "Well, yes okay".

I could tell that he wasn't thrilled with my request. So I said to him "Well, specifically what services are you planning to supply to Alcoholics Anonymous that Alcoholics Anonymous cannot supply for itself?" Of all the possibilities that he could have answered, the answer that he came out with floored me. I nearly fell off my chair, and I think every other alcoholic in the place did also. You know what he said?

"Sponsorship". His answer was Sponsorship!

I said "How does that work?"

Well he said: "We have everything in a computer. For instance, if you get a 35 year old red headed lady alcoholic we crank up our computer and we come up

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

with a 35 year old lady."

I said "What are you going to do when you come up with her?"

He said "Well she is going to be the sponsor."

I said "Who said so, First Lady said so?"

Everybody started laughing. It don't work like that. Broke up the meeting, never heard from this guy again. Bob Hitchin's didn't talk to me for 6 months. But that is how it works you see. You have to have the courage of your convictions. You have to believe in what AA is all about, and you have to have some kind of understanding of what sponsorship is. And it is a very special relationship.

What does a sponsor look for in a new baby and new Pigeon? Well, meetings, that is one of the things I want to know right away. Is this guy I'm sponsoring going to meetings? Does he go to lots of meetings? Does he come only to the meetings at my group, or does he go to lots of meetings besides, and so get lots of meetings. Will he discuss the program, or does he just want to talk about his family and his job and his health and his kids and his girlfriends and stuff like that?

I want to talk about the program. Does he try to apply the program to his life? Will he work at the program? When he is asked to make an inventory, will he go and make the inventory or does he just fudge it, just talk about it but never show it. You never get to see his inventory, because you know he has never written it down. I want to see that inventory. I don't want to know the detail of what is in it. I just want to

Reflecting on Relationships

see that it is in an inventory. That you are really doing what you say you are doing.

Will he discuss his history? Where he comes from and where his family is and all that, will he give you a chance to get to know him? Is he willing to take instruction, will he take suggestions? If you say to him well I really think it should be like this? Will he say okay and then go ahead and do it, even though maybe he doesn't think he should do it and doesn't really want to do it, is he that willing? And then of course, will he discuss matters with you before he takes the action? Or does he go and get himself in the glue and then come running and say look what happened, please help me out.

Can you meet his family? I like to meet the family, I like to meet the wife, I like to see the kids. You can tell a lot by seeing the kids, you don't have to go talk to them, just watch them. It wasn't hard to look at my kids to tell that their father was an alcoholic.

My little 3-year old daughter when I came in, she ain't three no more, now she is married and has two big sons. But when I came to the program she had every evidence of my Alcoholism, all the symptoms, she had all that. And thank God you taught me through this program to love my family. And I was able to do that and communicate with those kids. And in a year, year and a half, those things were gone.

I like to take a look at a Pigeon, somebody I'm sponsoring, maybe 6 months or a year down the road and just sit down and go over some of those points, and look at that and see how they are doing. I like to check over the Bedevilments in Chapter IV of our Book

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

with 6- or 8-month sponsee. Are they getting to meetings? Working at the program? Family, stuff like that. Because if those things aren't happening, I'm not doing a good job as a sponsor and I want to know that.

Carl Jung who was a very gifted Psychologist/Psychiatrist, Professor at the University of Geneva, in Switzerland, said there were two people he could not work with.

The first one — a pathological liar. So I knew right there I didn't need to go see Dr. Jung, because that is what I was when I got here. I wouldn't tell you the truth if I could possibly avoid it. If you asked me what time it was, if it was 5 after 9, I would say about 9 o'clock, or not quite 9:30, but I wasn't going to commit myself to anything.

And the second kind he couldn't work with was an intellectual snob. Because they don't take any action, they know it all, they already know it all. You can't possibly work with them, you can't tell them anything. I've seen people like that come into Alcoholics Anonymous. First hand, I've seen people like that come into Alcoholics Anonymous.

Even they will get better if they attend meetings and if they read the book and they work at the steps and carry the message, and get active around their group. If they'll do those things, in time, it takes time, TTT, Things Take Time, they'll improve. Of course Jung was referring to extreme cases, and I think I was an extreme case, because I most certainly was an emotional basket case when I got here. I had absolutely no EQ. Emotional Quotient. It was Zero!

Reflecting on Relationships

So the great needs of the sponsor, for those of you who are sponsoring, this is just my experience, my ideas, it didn't come out of any book, you won't find it anywhere except when I am babbling away about it. But you see it all goes back to those basic communication skills. That willingness to listen and the ability to go down inside of ourselves and find out what we are feeling and come up and put a name on that and then share that with somebody. That is a way to start off communication, in every relationship it starts like that.

So what a sponsor needs is firstly patience, and boy I did not have any of that when I got here. I'm a little more patient now. Time, I'll take the time, if you want to work at the program I'll take the time. Experience in the program; that helps. Nobody ever started out as a good sponsor. People say, "I couldn't sponsor anybody because I don't know anything about it". You're damn right you can. Just take the time and learn. Make your mistakes, your going to make your mistakes. Isn't that awful?

And then the four rules that we get in the Chapter "*To Wives*". Firstly never be angry, don't tell anybody what they have to do about their drinking, we don't tell, we share.

Chuck always said that about Clancy. He'd say Clancy isn't even a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Clancy would be somewhat annoyed and say, "What do you mean?" Chuck would say, "Well in AA we share, you don't share, you tell, you tell people". Good thing he did though, if you'd have seen some of the people Clancy was sponsoring.

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

And balance, keep it balanced between our life and our sponsorship. And, of course, prayer. Those are the four things in that chapter. Avoid expectations, don't decide what your sponsee is going to do. If I have a Pigeon, by this time he is going to be like that, and that, and that, no, no, no, no. Let them fly, they have to learn to fly, let them make their mistakes. It is all dependent upon the ability to share.

I note that the Poet said, "To thine own self be true and thou can'st not then be false to any man". Of course to be true to our self, we have to be true to our real self, that is the real person inside of here, and that means self discovery. And this is the doorway to the new life that Bill has promised to us. Bill says a new life will be given to you, a new life and a new happiness. Something we have never known before. And that all comes out of the simple AA Program that my sponsor gave me years and years ago. Ross taught me that there are five basic things. And they are indispensable.

1. *Don't drink;*
2. *Meetings, meetings, meetings;*
3. *Read the Book;*
4. *Do the Steps (he never would let me say take the Steps, it was always, do the Steps);*
5. *Last, and most important --- carry the message.*

That is the process which when followed, and practiced, is absolutely promised and guaranteed to lead to the discovery of self and the discovery of the Power. And those two discoveries are one and the same thing.

Reflecting on Relationships

Bill tells us clearly that we have to earn our sobriety. He says a price has to be paid. Remember that paragraph on page 13 or 14 or whatever it is. "Simple but not easy, a price had to be paid." And he says that the first part of that price is the destruction of self-centredness. It is the destruction of self-centredness! Not the destruction of self. But the destruction of self-centredness.

Now that is the difference between the actual Being and the Obsession, you see. That is the price, that is the beginning of the price and it's the same for everybody here. Firstly, it involves the destruction that we are talking about, of the obsession. We alcoholics are self-obsessed and in AA we give the obsession of self a name; we call it Ego. So when in this series I say ego, I mean obsession with self. And when I say "Ego" in this series, I am not using a professional technical term utilized by some psychiatrist like Jung or by some School of Psychiatry. I am talking about AA. And to me in my AA language, "Ego" equals self-obsession, they are identical in my terminology.

The basic fundamental problem of the alcoholic is not booze. It is the obsession with self -- "Ego". If you look back at your life, as we all do in AA, and all the steps that we go through, you will readily see that we were in trouble with life long before we took a drink. Boy, that was true with me. I was never comfortable in life. I was never part of what the other people were a part of. Even in my own family.

I had a good mother and father. I had a good brother and two wonderful sisters. Thank God I still have my two sisters. They are wonderful. My sister Betty became a Chartered Accountant when it was not

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

a popular profession for young ladies. And she had a difficult time trying to get a job and keep a job. The guys were quite willing to have her around the office, but not for her ability to be an accountant. But she was a good auditor and she made it.

Anyway, when I started to drink, when I found booze, I didn't find a problem, I found an answer for my problem. Booze permitted me to start to feel comfortable in my skin, which I never had before. Oh, there were times when I had felt good; but not an ongoing basis by any means. I was always at odds with life.

The difficulty was that when the booze was gone, the answer was gone. It is the same for many other substances. If you are behind the acid, you've got an answer, but when the acid is gone, the answer is gone. When the coke is gone, the answer's gone. And we are the kind of people that have to find an answer that will stay with us.

Thank God, we find that in Alcoholics Anonymous. We come to find an answer that goes in and out with us. Where we go we take it with us. Just like we took our problem with us everywhere we went. When we find that answer, and start to get comfortable in life, it makes everything much better.

You will find that the experience of the Oxford Groups, Dr. Silkworth and The Doctors Opinion, Bill and Bob, and their experience. The First One Hundred in the program and all the early and present old timers; pioneers and leaders by example, have all told us and showed us over and over again, not only that we must find and rely upon a Power greater than ourselves, but

Reflecting on Relationships

they tell us that the only thing that can divide us from the Power is human Ego, the obsession with self. That is what separates us from life.

And of course, being cunning, baffling, powerful, you don't get rid of that obsession so lightly. When the booze is gone, it doesn't mean that the obsession is gone. When we first get here the booze is gone, but the obsession still remains. We are obsessed with self. And the booze is gone. So being cunning, baffling, and powerful we transfer the obsession from booze to something else.

Boy have I had lots and lots of experience with that. I am not a psychiatrist and I am surely no psychologist. I am just another drunk like the rest of you guys, but I had to find a way to see what my Ego looked like and how it functioned, how it worked, and why it shut me off from the Power. The Power that I had to have, I had to have that Power or die. There's no choice in that.

So over many years, maybe twenty, I struggled with the problem and finally I found an answer, or the answer found me, I don't know which it was. I was one or the other showing me clearly why and how the Ego shuts me off, how that works in my life. Now it's just an answer for me, and I don't want anybody here to adopt that at all. It's not part of the AA program. It's part of my program. But as we work at it, and look at it and as it unfolds, if it makes any sense to you and if you can use it, go ahead, be my guest.

Now what I was trying to do and what I was going to do was to set up here at the top of the figure (See the fold-out at the end of Chapter Four), a depiction of

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

how I envision the Obsessed Ego. The self-centred Ego, the Alcoholic Ego. In my mind it looks something like a practice golf ball. Perhaps you have seen those little practice golf balls, they are plastic, and they've got holes in them and you can hit them and they go to beat the dickens for maybe 4 feet and then fall. They don't do anything but let you practice hitting a ball.

My Ego is shaped like that, it has an impervious shell just like plastic with the odd hole in it here and there. So communicating with me in the presence of my alcoholic Ego is very difficult. People for years tried to tell me, "Tom, you shouldn't drink like that". I'd say, "What are you talking about?" They'd tell me, "You don't drink well." I'd say, "You guys are nuts." They'd say look at Joe, and I'd look at Joe, and Joe was the kind of a guy that would have 3 drinks and say "Had enough, I've got to go home".

When I'd just had three drinks, I was just getting warmed up. I was more interested in three bottles, I could outdrink Joe from here to Thursday, and they are telling me that I can't drink? I wasn't ready to listen to that, because they weren't getting through to me. They would fire a thought at me and it would hit the Ego shell and bounce off. People call that denial. Well maybe it is denial, I don't know, but that is how it was with me.

But every once in a while one of the thoughts they communicated to me would hit one of those holes and it would come right in and stab me in the heart. And it might be some very simple question that life would ask me, like that one in the depiction. Now that came right through, there was no protection from that. That came right through that hole and stabbed me right in the

Reflecting on Relationships

heart, "what happened?", and I froze to my toes.

I am an alcoholic, I know how to answer that. My answer is very appropriate, I would fire right back, and if my answer happened to go back out through the same hole and strike the person that asked the question in the first place, we had a war going. Because my answer would be something smart like "Go to hell, none of your damn business, why don't you mind your own business, get off my back, who the hell do you think you are?"

Why? Because I am motivated by all those things that are shown there, inside the depiction of the Obsessed Ego, like anger, resentment, and fear. Wonderful motivators like envy, jealousy, lust, and greed.

And you stop me and you say but wait a minute Tom, those things sound kind of familiar. Are not those what we call defects of character? I say you can call them defects of character if you like but that is not what I call them. I call them Children of the Ego. They are the Children of the Ego and they are accompanied by depression, remorse, guilt, shame; things that you and I have always felt. And the dread of every alcoholic, loneliness. Everybody here knows about loneliness and knows what it is. You see, there is no escape for me from that shell of obsessed alcoholic Ego. I'm trapped in there, and it's impossible for me by and of myself to get out of the trap. Chuck used to say "we're caught in a trap we cannot spring" and here it is.

And I feel apart from God, and from life. Now there is no life apart from God. God is life, we know that, so there is no life apart from God. But there is experience

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

apart from God. Given that all of that self-obsessed Ego is in God, but we are not experiencing God because we are in that confined atmosphere of the obsessed Ego. That is where we live, and that is all here inside of us.

When life fires a simple question at us and we can't answer, we fire back and we say. "You hate me". But it doesn't go anywhere, it just fires over to the other side and hits the inside of that shell and then it ricochets back over here and I'm saying, by this time I'm saying to myself everybody is against me. "You're all against me". And then it rebounds back and stabs me in the heart again. And it says poor me, poor you, poor Tom, everybody is taking advantage of him. And I get into a lot of self pity and crap and corruption. And that inward anger that is boiling around in there, ricocheting around like ricochet rabbit all over the place is a lot more complicated than that.

Inward anger is the cause of depression. I didn't know that, but a psychiatrist told me that, Werner Hunzinger explained that to me. He said, "You are angry, that is why you are depressed. You're angry". I said what do you mean? He said inward anger, yeah, inward anger. That whole obsessed Ego is filled with inward anger. Then we take a look at what the Healthy Ego would look like.

And here it is, in the bottom of the depiction, it doesn't have an impervious shell, it's kind of floppy and soft and fuzzy, something like a tennis ball, maybe, a floppy tennis ball. And there is lots of flexion to it and give. No resistance there, not a lot of resistance there. So life fires a question at me like "what happens?". It comes through that fuzzy layer, and in that fuzzy layer

Reflecting on Relationships

there are certain qualities that were totally absent in the Obsessed Ego.

And those qualities are like compassion, understanding, love; the things that Francis of Assisi talked about. Compassion understanding and love. Let me not worry about people being compassionate with me, let me be compassionate with others. Let me not worry if you understand me, let me be understanding of you.

Connect that with the simple basic communication skills, of going inside and seeing and naming the feeling, communicating the feeling and then shut up and listen to what the other person says, that is where compassion and understanding come in. It is all connected.

Incidentally, I think St. Francis of Assisi must have been, was an alcoholic. Did you know that, he was? But this is what happened to him, he became the recipient of a vital spiritual experience at depth, one of those rare ones that Jung told Roland Hazard about, and, he became the founder of the Franciscan Order, that is how that Order got started. By a drunk, that didn't have to drink anymore, that got his Ego changed from Obsessed to Healthy.

So life fires that question at my Healthy Ego "What happened?" And it goes through that maze of love and compassion and understanding and reason and judgement and concern and confidence and faith hope and charity, and we send the answer back. And the answer is, "I was wrong". "I was wrong." You are not going to find many drinking alcoholics giving that answer for anything. I never admitted I was wrong one

The Sponsor-Sponsee Relationship

time in my life.

Old Ross used to laugh at me. He had a high pitched giggle. I hear it sometimes still, and I look around to see if he is there. He'd make fun of me, he'd say "Yeah Tom, once I thought I was wrong, but I was mistaken." He'd laugh at me. But you see I am comfortable with that, with an Ego that is not obsessed with self. The Ego isn't gone, we don't destroy your ego. Life doesn't destroy your Ego, life doesn't destroy your "self". It's the obsession that goes, the obsession with self. We become free of obsession.

Now, that is a process that does not happen to many of us in one weekend. Most of us experience the progress that we were talking about in the first meeting of the series. Where we may go from a casual relationship, a superficial relationship, to a companionship.

You are learning — some people say you are learning to love yourself. Well, I am not comfortable with that. I don't think it is like that. I think you have to relate to yourself, you have to get to know yourself. And then we may go from that companionship relationship through friendship with self. It seems remarkable that they teach us to be friends with everybody else, but they never teach us how to be friends with ourselves. We don't know how to get along with ourselves. We have to learn that. And that is a long journey from (Obsessed) to (Healthy) to go from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. That takes time, patience, work and a lot of help from our Higher Power.

You have been one amazing group tonight. I've

102

Reflecting on Relationships

laid a lot of material on you; and some of it kind of heavy stuff, maybe, for some of you. And you have sat there and just boy oh boy you are amazing. We've got one more meeting to go. They promised me 4 meetings, or I promised them four meetings, there ain't going to be five, there are only going to be four.

So the next meeting which is going to be next Wednesday night is going to be the Journey from the obsessed Ego to the Ego that is free and unobsessed. It is the process of becoming "one with" -- that is -- one with God. And that is what Jung talked about a long time ago. He had such perception and insight when he was interviewing Roland Hazard.

When Roland came back to him the second time, Jung said to him, "You are an alcoholic, there's no treatment for the likes of you, none at all. He said what has to happen with people like you, there has to be a vital spiritual experience at depth because your problem is spiritual, that is to say, of the spirit. You are the kind of people that are self-obsessed and somehow that obsession has to be lifted or you are going to die.

That is us, we are all a little Roland Hazards in our own light, so either we get our obsession lifted or good night sweetie. Lights out, its over.

Thank you

103

Chapter Four

Human Ego:
Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

I would like to start tonight in the same way that we've started all our meetings with our little prayer:

Dear God, let me set aside everything I think I know about You and me and this program and these steps, for an open mind, and a new experience with You and me and this program and these steps.

Sure thank you.

Now you have received, by courtesy of my absent Pigeon, Brian V. (who bullied me into doing this series and didn't bloody well show up at the last meeting with some lame excuse), but he did these hand-out sheets for me anyway, so I'm very grateful for that. What we are looking at here in this depiction is a representation of a human ego; the alcoholic ego; the obsessed ego. This is my ego, I don't know whether it fits you or not, but if it fits, you are welcome to it. But it sure fits me. A TV fan might say "If it fits -- you must commit!"

See the diagram at the end of this chapter

On the one hand is the *Alcoholic Obsessed Ego* (shown at the top of the fold-out) that I came here with, and that I had long before I ever got to take a drink, so that I was in trouble with life before I started drinking. When I started drinking, I saw alcohol as an answer, it

Reflecting on Relationships

made life more bearable for me. It made me seem to become part of life.

And then when I had to give the alcohol up, I was amazed that when I gave the alcohol up, I didn't give all my troubles up, all my problems, all my living problems. I was still having trouble living. Of course the reason is very simple as you see, the obsession remains. The booze is gone, but the obsession remains.

And if you recall we looked, during our second meeting we looked back over the relationships that would be formed by an obsessed person, a person obsessed with self, self-centredness Bill called it in our Big Book, and if you remember, we went through those seven points, comparing, or rather contrasting, the obsessed ego and the healthy ego in a relationship.

The first point the magical thinking, the unreal expectations. With this sort of thinking we feel we know exactly what our partner is going to do before we even meet them. We know what they are going to say, and what we are going to say, and they will say this and we will say that, and it will be wonderful.

And then if you look at the healthy ego you see that person doesn't think like that. The healthy person goes by the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. And that person would take the motto "*First Things First*" into consideration, and give the other person a chance to express themselves, when they meet that other person. It may start out firstly as a superficial relationship, and then, if it continues at all, it may develop into a companionship where the activity is more important than the person. And then as it grows

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

through that, it can grow into a friendship, where the person is more important than the activity, and we gave examples of all of those things.

And then as time goes on it may blossom into an intimate relationship, at whatever level of intimacy. And one of the examples of an intimate relationship that we used was sponsorship. And of course another example of an intimate relationship would be romantic love. And every alcoholic knows all about that, because we are the most romantic lovers you ever saw (as we imagine), up here (in our mind), that you ever saw.

But, of course, with magical thinking we don't stop to realize that romantic love on the one hand is balanced with certain responsibilities on the other hand, when the relationship develops in a healthy way. And we said that any relationship that is based on sex, if sex is the basis of a relationship, 90% of the time that relationship will fail. It will end up in a cat fight, a clashing of obsessed egos, and it will be awful.

We went through and considered the intense ego -- gratification that comes with sex, out of a "love equals sex" relationship. Whereas by contrast the healthy person with the healthy ego goes on the basis of Easy Does It, and takes time to develop things. Then of course the person who is suffering from the Obsessed Ego cannot be honest because fear declares that if we are honest the relationship won't last. The unfortunate people in "love equals sex" relationships have to be dishonest.

They have to make up stories and they have to exaggerate things, and they are always smarter and

Reflecting on Relationships

better and richer and better looking, and better dressed, and everything else, then they really are. They are not really as they represent themselves at all. Now, if you get two obsessed people trying to relate to each other, hey, you are going to have a hell of a lot of fun.

But the healthy person doesn't bother with that, the healthy ego says no, we go on the basis of *Live and Let Live*. And we deal on the basis of honesty. You have all been at AA long enough to know that the golden key: the magic golden key, to sobriety, in the sense that we use it, is rigorous self-honesty. That is number one on the hit parade. Without that, nothing can be lastingly accomplished.

So the healthy person goes by the principle of *Live and Let Live, Live and Let Live*. The healthy person doesn't have to keep up that compulsive over control. The healthy person accepts people as they are, until they prove themselves to be something different. And that lack of trust that the obsessed person gets into, because they can't trust the other person. We know that we don't control them perfectly, and therefore we can't trust them. So from that we get into the whining and the self-pity and that gives rise to lots of conversation.

I get lots of calls from people who want to tell me about that s.o.b. that they are married to or that bastard that they have got, or whatever, and you know, it's just self-centredness, the ego obsessed with self. And I don't want to talk about that. Sometimes they get mad at me and say, "Well, what am I going to talk about?", "What can we talk about?" they ask. Naturally I want to talk about the Answer. I want to talk about

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

the Program. I want to talk about the Healthy Ego and how you get to develop that. So we went all through that.

The Obsessed Ego, is always desperately seeking satisfaction; ego satisfaction, and, of course, Bill says it's a divine impossibility to satisfy the human ego. Why? Because the only final lasting satisfaction it could ever have would be to become equal to or greater than God, to be God. There is a Power, but it ain't you. And kids, that ain't going to happen. That is never going to happen.

We live in a crazy world where God is dead, but Elvis is alive. And Bill tells us very clearly in step Three. He says, the first thing is we have to quit playing God. Now do you see why Bill put that in there? Because that is exactly what we have been doing. It is self-worship, we are obsessed with ourselves. But the Healthy Ego doesn't want that, it doesn't want to be God, doesn't want to manage and control everything. The Healthy Ego lives for love and service.

That is what Dr. Bob talked about in his last message. That is all he talked about in his last message. He says, "Everybody knows what love is", I could have kicked him in the shins because I didn't know what love was, and "Everybody knows what service is", and I had no idea what service was. I didn't understand that service is giving of self, without a price tag, for free and for fun, and just for the sheer joy of giving of self. Of what of self? Of time, of effort, of ideas, of whatever I have that is me.

Bill says that the real purpose is to fit ourselves,

Reflecting on Relationships

and you will remember this, to be of maximum service to God and to other alcoholics, right? No. To God, and to the people about us, in other words, to every single person that we relate to in our life. That is what we are supposed to do. That is how we base our relationships, they are based on that, maximum service, firstly to God, and then to all the people that we relate to.

So once we are in AA, we can't try to change a superficial relationship overnight into an intimate relationship, with declarations of undying love and passion that, you all know that story, don't you? To obtain instant sexual gratification, or spiritual; it won't work in spiritual gratification either. In checking it over, you remember what we said about actions, every action tends to either, leads us to closer connection or to more isolation. So we have to be very careful with that. But that Obsessed Ego is always looking for gratification.

Now if you just take a quick look at that little depiction of the egos. Take a look at the Obsessed Ego. And notice the outer circle is a shell. It is like a practice golf ball and it has holes in it, so if something from outside of us, outside of self, tries to get through to us, it is most probably going to hit that hard shell and bounce off. People don't find us easy to get to. They find us hard to know. And you would wonder, you would say, well what could that hard shell be composed of? Well, what would create that hard shell? And the answer to that is very simple. Prejudice. Prejudice. Pre-judging.

We are prejudiced against the church, we are prejudiced against marriage, we are prejudiced against

responsibility, we are prejudiced against anybody having their way but us. We are prejudiced against anything that threatens our ego. It is a solid mass of prejudice, and nothing can get through that.

And what exists inside of that Obsessed Ego? Well, that is kind of interesting because life will sometimes fire something at us, like maybe a question or something like that, and that question may come in through one of those holes. So there is no protection from it, it just comes straight in through the hole and stabs me in the heart. And the question might be something really complicated and difficult to handle like, "Where are you going?" Or, my wife's favourite question that threw me completely, I never did figure out an answer to it, I've never answered it yet. I'd come home after an absence of three or four days, and she would say, "where were you?" How the hell are you going to answer a question like that? If I'd known where I was, I would have come home. I didn't come because I didn't know where the hell I was. I never did answer that question properly. I answered it like this guy does here, like I does here.

The question comes roaring in and strikes me (that's me at the middle there), and then the answer goes, in this case right back out through the same hole; and the answer is something you know that a really clever alcoholic would think up, like "Go to hell". I mean there is an answer, uh? Deal with that. But the question doesn't stop there [at me]. You see, it ricochets around inside of that shell of ego; it fires out "Leave me alone", and then it bounces across the other side of my Obsessed Ego, and my reaction is, "Everybody in the world is against me", and then it ricochets up at another angle and comes right back

Reflecting on Relationships

and stabs me in the heart. And now it says, "You hate me". And the result is that the entire inner shell of ego that I live in is filled with anger, rage, and resentment.

How many times have you heard that somebody in the group is having trouble and they are angry. What are they angry about? I don't know, have you ever talked to a person like that? Ask them why are you so bloody mad all the time, what is it? My wife used to ask me that, "Why are you angry all the time?" Hell, I didn't know, I couldn't answer her. I didn't realize that it was inward anger. And the result of that, as any psychologist will tell you, is depression.

Are you depressed? There are two kinds of depression, physical depression or mental depression, which ever you want to call it, and spiritual depression. The mental depression is from inward anger, I am not good enough, I am not adequate enough, I am not this, I am not that. I'm less than. And the spiritual depression is -- "I am not worthy". I am not well, that is okay for you, God would smile at you, smile on you, but I am not worthy. I am bad, I am a sinner. God could not only never love me, nor ever even give me the time of day, but because I'm so unworthy He's probably out to get me. Chuck always called that "spiritual lack". The lack of any conscious relationship with a God of my own.

You know that television show, they have that little song that they play, it is a police show of some kind, "Bad boys bad boys what you gonna do when they come for you", that's the alcoholic. Damn it, that is our theme song, we love that one, we sit in the bar and hum it. You may go, "I am bad", right. Because underneath all of that there is fear and panic, and if

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

you look, you will see how that goes down into anger, rage, resentment.

It is no bloody wonder that Bill tells us in Step Four that resentment is the Number One Offender. And here is what Bill says about resentment. This is interesting. Bill says, "from it stems all forms of spiritual disease". You see why now, because in resentment we are totally separated from the Power. Now of course if you look at this depiction, you will see that there is God, God, God, because God is everywhere. In, out, up, down, there is no life apart from God, all life comes from, God is life, so all life comes from God. No life apart from God, but there is experience apart from, and that is what we are living in, in the Obsessed Ego.

If you want to see a picture of hell, here it is, you don't need flames and cinders and burning and all that, you know, devils with pitch --- You are the devil. You've got the pitchfork. You are sticking it in yourself. This is why Bill says, "There is One who has all Power and that One is God. Now of course I can't say there isn't a devil. Maybe there is, I don't know, I am not a theologian. All I know is that if there is a devil, I don't need to worry about him because he hasn't got any power. God has the Power. All Power. All Power Bill tells us.

And prejudice, ahhh, we love that. So we lather the whole inside of that shell, we plaster it with prejudice, and it gets to be thick and thick and you can't get a damn thing through it. And then that gives rise to all those neat little things like envy and jealousy and greed and lust and sloth.

Reflecting on Relationships

Lust incidentally deals with a lot more than just sex. For a long time I thought lust and sex were sort of -- I was going to say bed mates but I better not say that -- partners, like they went together. No, no! Lust is an exorbitant longing for whatever. It could be for food, it could be for clothing, it could be for money, it could be for anything. Trying to get more than your share, trying to bloody well (I hope it is not food), trying to get more than your share.

So, on re-examining all of those neat things that we have just looked at, somebody says, well hell you are talking about the seven deadly sins. I don't know what sin is, so I can't talk about that, but I know what the hell these things are, because I have had every one of them, and still do to a degree. I am a human being. I am never going to be totally, totally rid of them.

These things can make me crazy in a hurry. They are the children of the ego. So if you want to get rid of anger you can work on it as long as you like, you ain't never going to get rid of anger. I used to tease friends of mine who are Oblates. I would tell them "That is the Oblate way to do it". You know, work on anger, work on fear, and pray to beat hell to be rid of fear and envy and jealousy and all that.

Ah, see, I was raised by the Jesuits, and the Jesuit way is to get rid of the Ego. If you get rid of the ego, you get rid of the children of the ego. So you don't work on any specific defect, hell we all got defects and we are always going to have them, and we all have Egos too. Just work on your Ego, and reduce that and see what happens.

If you may recall, Bill suggests in our Step Seven

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

Prayer that we ask God to remove every "single" defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness etc. It is my belief that Bill meant the Obsessed Ego when he said "single" defect. If God removes the obsession with self from our Ego we'll be left with a healthy ego. And in the healthy ego the anger, resentment, fear, jealousy etc. defects are not present or at least, minimally present. To me, the Step Seven Prayer is a powerful Ego Buster.

There are some other neat things inside of that shell of ego that we keep to ourselves. We think nobody else is like this, we think it is just us. We feel unique, and of course, we are, because we are trapped and imprisoned inside that shell of the Obsessed Ego. So of course we can't relate to other people. Remorse, boy when we feel remorse, we don't just feel a little bit of remorse, we dive into it right up to our necks. And guilt, we don't feel just a little bit guilty, we want to go and confess to everything, you know.

Where do all those people come from that turn up at the police station and confess to crimes that they never committed? Who do you think those people are? Where do you think they were the day before they were at the police station? They were not in church, I will guarantee you that, they were in some booze can somewhere lapping it up, playing the hero.

Alcoholics do a lot of funny things. I once had an alcoholic client confess to a murder and get arrested just to get even with his girlfriend. And it took several lie detector tests and three months to get him out of jail and back in mommy's loving arms.

And shame, that is a big deal with alcoholics,

Reflecting on Relationships

shame, particularly women alcoholics. Lack of trust, of course, how can we trust anybody? We are contemptuous, because our ego, that is the way it works. "It's either look at me, look how wonderful I am", or "look at me, how terrible I am". We are never in the middle, we are either way up there or way down there, so we have both opposites you see. Contempt, I am smarter than him, I am better than him, I am faster than him, all that crap. And self-pity, oh boy.

So you see, one problem, the line says underneath that ego, one problem that includes all problems. So it is not as complicated and as complex as we would like to make it. "Oh, nobody could understand me. Why not" "Have you got a different kind of ego?" Yours doesn't work like this? If so, please draw me a picture of it and bring it up and let me have a look, I'll wait. I'm pretty convinced this is how my ego looks, and this is how my ego works, and this is how it feels to be inside that mess. That's my Obsessed Ego. It is hot in there, and nothing can get through.

And then we look at the Healthy Ego, which is no longer obsessed. The obsessed ego has been smashed, and has fallen apart and gone down, and out of the ashes of that crushed ego arises, little by little, the vestiges of a healthy ego, as action is taken and time goes by. This is why you don't get sober in 30 days. You know, treatment centres are very big on that. Shoot, I even saw one in Atlanta that guaranteed, on television, 10 days, guaranteed sobriety. I thought I would die. Wouldn't it be great if you could go somewhere and somebody could turn a switch or something and you would be wonderful? It ain't going to be like that. That is dreaming, just fantasy, it will never be like that.

But as the Healthy Ego arises, it is pliant and it is flexible, and is penetrated easily from the outside, so even God can get in. And suddenly there is a Power in our lives that was not there before. And inside of that ego, I use three words, I use Life, Good, God. I think they are all the same, I think they are synonymous. I think Life is good, God is life, God is good, I use those three words, to me they mean the same thing.

And now when the question comes firing in at us, "what happened?" It comes in through that flexible fuzzy tennis ball type shell of ego that protects but doesn't prohibit. And inside of that have arisen great strengths because there is Power in there now. Compassion, understanding and love, honesty, reason, respect, confidence, trust, and if you are in Alcoholics Anonymous, anonymity belongs in there.

It ain't no longer me first. The law of sacrifice applies, and we can take the whole Twelve traditions and put them right in there. Anonymity says that principles apply before personalities, and it is on that basis that I start relating to other people, on the basis of principles, and humility.

Humility is a very scarce commodity, if you think you got it, you ain't. We had a guy years ago, a big guy, his son was a professional football player, and he was the first lifer to be paroled, after having been sentenced to life in prison as an habitual criminal. He has knocked over every Credit Union in Saskatchewan. He knew all the RCMP by their first name, ol Bertie, and he was a hell of a guy. We got him out on parole, and he stayed sober and he got a job, and it was wonderful. He would come to jail with

Reflecting on Relationships

us, come to institutional AA meetings with us and he would walk in and he would say, "I am the humblest man in this room". We would all die laughing. He drove a great big Cadillac. He was something, but he wasn't humble. But he was sober by God, and he did fine.

Gratitude. Here is the place for gratitude. This is the place for gratitude, not standing up in a meeting and saying "I am a grateful Alcoholic". No kidding. That impresses the hell out of me, if you are so grateful, how come you have to tell me about it? How come I can't see it for myself. Don't tell me, let me see it.

Sharing and caring. This is the way we live, sharing and caring. The sharing comes first. Remember what we said about how our relationship starts, you go down inside and get a feeling, put a name on it and bring in out, communicate it to someone, and then listen. That is the sharing part. The caring part comes afterward as we listen to the other person tell us how they are feeling, what their feelings are. Now we start to feel connected, because our feelings connect us.

But our ideas and judgments separate us. But feelings connect us, you see. And that is where we start to care about the other person. If they are hurting, we will share with them and try to help where we can. And faith hope and charity, come in there, charity, love, it is a form of love, just love, that is all.

Life fires a question in through that soft shell, "what happened?". And I have the time to think about it because I am using time to my advantage now, and

I'm no longer consumed by self. And I listen to that honestly, and I reason about it. I respect the other person, I am not going to try to BS them, I am going to try to answer them truthfully, because honesty is part of my package now. The key part of my package, I have to be honest with you. And the answer is 'I was wrong'. Hey, can you imagine an alcoholic bare faced saying, "I was wrong"? You might go over and smell his breath. That ain't natural for an alcoholic. But I tell you something. It is for a Healthy Ego.

What is wrong with that? See, -- tell the truth, just the bare naked simple truth is good enough. It doesn't have to be better than that. That is good enough you know. So you see this gives us One Answer. One Answer. To avail ourselves of the healthy ego instead of the obsessed ego and like it says at the bottom line there, "One Answer that includes All Answers".

So it is just like Dr. Harry Tiebout told us years and years ago when he wrote that paper for the American Psychiatric Society that is recorded at page 311 in AA Comes of Age, where he described the kind of people we are. Harry accurately describes what an obsessed ego is like, and states that the obsessed ego will at all costs try to preserve itself. So it does not matter to the obsessed ego what the cost is. Lying? No problem. Stealing? No problem. Dishonesty? No problem. That obsessed Ego always comes first, and insists upon maintaining that position to the bitter end.

So here we are, left with, "One answer that includes all Answers". That is why Bill says in the Big Book, that this book contains an answer that will solve all of your problems. And people look at that and say, "How can that be? That a simple program like this can

solve all my problems? How is it possible that one answer would solve all of my problems? I must have a thousand problems.

We used to have a big guy in this group. He must have weighed, I guess, 250 pounds, maybe more. He was a big tall kid, hell of a nice kid, and he showed me his book one night. He wanted me to write something in his Big Book. So I write what I always write, 'Carry the Message'. Why, because that is the most important thing in Alcoholics Anonymous, carry the message. You notice how many things I say are the most important things in Alcoholics Anonymous? And as I looked at his book I saw that it said, 'God has ten thousand answers for our problems'. I said, "Who wrote that in your book?" He said, "I did". I said "Where did you get that?" He says, "I heard it in a meeting". I said, "You like that?" He said, "Yeah." I says, "So you need ten thousand programs, we only got one program." "Well, yeah I know, but, he said, it means God has an answer for every problem." I said, "God has one answer, because we only have one problem." I said, "Take that out of your book". (Laughter) He is big enough to eat me, but he took it out of his book.

We don't need ten thousand answers. One God, One power, one problem, one answer, that simple enough for you? That is what this says. That is exactly what this says. So forget about working on anger. Well I am just trying to be honest. Sure, I know how hard you are trying to be honest, don't kid me. See, one problem, that bloody ego, and we have to somehow or other move from the Obsessed Ego at the top in the depiction, to the Healthy Ego at the bottom. And tonight, that is what we are going to talk about.

So the question is, 'How do I get from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego?' The simple truth is that there is no way that I can ever do that -- by myself. Why? Because I am powerless. I am an alcoholic, I am powerless. Are you powerless? Bill says that in our book. Powerlessness is our dilemma. That is the dilemma of the alcoholic --- *powerlessness*. Have you accepted that? Have you really accepted the fact that you are totally and utterly powerless by yourself?

Well you are going to have to, before you can go from Obsessed to Healthy. That is why Step One is so important in our program. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol (and everything else). Our lives were unmanageable -- by us. Not by God, but by us. Lack of power is my dilemma and I had to find a Power (which obviously has to be greater than I am, Bill says), which power can and will, oh, isn't that something.

I sit in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have either read or heard or read that preamble to Chapter Five in 39 years, I bet ya, 20,000 times, maybe more. And I sit and listen to some new alcoholic, who is maybe 10 days sober, read that, and I watch the hair on my arms stand up, because (C) says *God could and would if He was sought*. Of course God could, God can do anything. The miracle is that He would. If He were sought. It's not for nothing. There is a condition there, and that is the condition. If He were sought. You prepared to do that? You can't hang on to that Obsessed Ego and do it. You have to give that up if you are going to try that.

I got sober by the grace of a loving God, and it is only by fulfilling the conditions for sobriety, that I can find freedom from the obsession. That obsession of self. And rid myself of that obsession, that is the only way that I am ever going to do it. And the conditions for sobriety are simple, they are four fold.

First, number one, the most important thing in Alcoholics Anonymous, surrender. Not acceptance, oh boy, that doctor that wrote that acceptance thing in the big book, what is it, 449 or 526 or something or other. He said that if you just accept everything you will be fine and you accept, accept, and oh shoot, you forget to accept once.

That doctor is a friend of mine, Paul O. I was on a conference with Paul in San Diego about 10 years ago and he was talking to some people there and I joined in and we got to talking and he admitted to me that he has changed a little bit since he wrote that. He is not so big on acceptance anymore. Now you know what word he uses? Hah. Surrender, surrender, surrender, and again and again, surrender.

Chuck was Paul's sponsor too, so I got to know him pretty good. There is a big difference between acceptance and surrender. Acceptance is passive. In acceptance you don't do anything -- you passively accept. But to surrender you have to take action -- you have to do something. Surrender involves the destruction of the Obsessed Ego -- we have to work at our program.

Two kinds of surrender, the big surrender we make when we come in the door, when we fall in the door stinkin' and shakin', and freezing and dying. You get a

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

little bit sober, a little physical sobriety, and then the daily surrender follows that because surrender is not something you do one time. I don't think that there is anything that you do in Alcoholics Anonymous one time. Because it is a way of life.

Surrender, surrender, and secondly willingness, enough willingness to take the action. To take the actions that are recommended to us in the Big Book and thirdly, enough honesty to see myself as I am where I am; to really look at myself and see what my condition is. In other words, see myself in that Obsessed Ego.

And then the fourth condition, enough self-honesty to do something about it. What do we have to do, what is it that we must do? There is something we must do, Bill tells us that. He says, "After awhile we had to face the fact that we must". That is his word, not mine. It is mine now because I believe it, it is a must. "Adopt a spiritual way of life — or else". Does that sound like a choice to you? When somebody says to you damn better or else, is that a choice?

I was in a meeting not long ago and I heard somebody saying, (I've heard this many times in Alcoholics Anonymous). "It is so wonderful to be in Alcoholics Anonymous now that I have the Power of choice restored to me. Apparently thinking that the Power of choice has been restored to them. And I always wonder what choice they are talking about? You got options or something? Where did you get them? As long as I had choice, it was my choice never to come to AA, and I never did. I would have died out there in left field if I hadn't run out of choice. But mercifully, I ran out of choice, and it was only then that

Reflecting on Relationships

I was able to come to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Because choice is an ego word. Choice means I like, I don't like, I need, I don't need, I want, I don't want, I, I, I, I, I. Ego. Look at it. When you were drinking, did you drink out of choice? Oh, shoot. Well sir, very nice to see you in our hip slick and cool bar, what would you care to drink? Oh, I drink Johnny Walker Red Label. Oh, I am sorry sir, we don't seem to have any Johnny Walker Red Label tonight. Oh, that is alright, give me Black Label. But we don't have any Black Label either. Well then give me whatever the hell you've got. Drank out of choice? Right? When I wanted, how much I wanted, the kind I wanted, who is kidding who.

I drank because I was compelled to. I drank because I had a disease which compelled me to drink, and then condemned me to death if I did. That is called alcoholism. And that is what we got. So I did not drink out of choice. Then I come to Alcoholic Anonymous. And when I get here they say to me, oh, "That is okay Tom, now you have a choice, you can do whatever you like". Right? That ain't the way my book reads. My book says, "Not my will, Thy will, God's Will". Do the right thing, be the best member of Alcoholics Anonymous you can possibly be. That is the rule. Not choice. That is that damn ego again, raising its head and saying, that is okay, it is alright now. It ain't.

Faced with this problem of travelling from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego, if you look at your depiction, you will see that there seems to be a faint line from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. Two lines. Like maybe a road, a way, a path. Maybe.

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

Picture this in your mind. A little drunk, almost physically sober, is huddled in the prison of his obsessed ego, shivering and shaking and full of fear. And he turns to the AA member standing with him, beside him, and he says to the AA guy, "I want to get out of this mess, I want to live in that healthy ego, where you live. How do I get there?" The AA guy says, "Simple, but not easy". You have to follow down this path, thoroughly. This path leads from Obsessed to Healthy. And the little drunk says, "What path?" I don't see any path. And the AA guy says, yeah, I know, the path is invisible to you right now. It is an invisible path to you, but I can see it clearly. I have been over it many times. Just come with me, do what I do, and after a while the path will visibly appear to you, and you will be able to see it for yourself.

In time, if you continue, you will be able to meet new people, like you are right now and help them to follow and find the path. *You don't find the path and follow it, you follow the path and find it.* Because it starts out as an invisible path and we can't believe it until we do it. That is how you get from Obsessed to Healthy. That is how you get there in a nutshell. And all you guys know that. And that is how this works and that is why this works for an alcoholic when nothing else does. It is miraculous. It beats any wonder drug hollow.

Now what about relationships? Back to that. Well it all stems from this invisible path you see, so it is really all one thing. Because relationships are never going to be successful for us until we get rid of that obsession of the ego until we rid ourselves of that Obsessed Ego and start producing a Healthy Ego.

Reflecting on Relationships

Then we are going to be able to relate. But they can all go together as long as we are in the program, and working the program.

What about your relationships in and about the group? That is a good place to start because that is where our relationships start, with the likes of us. That is where all my relationships started, in and about the group. It was the group that took me to the Retreat House to do a retreat. Trying to do a Step Four and Five with that little priest who explained to me, Tom, your problem is not in patience, you don't love your family enough. He told me, "It is love, lack of love, that is your big problem".

In other words, the Obsessed Ego. It was greatly over balanced. And I had to put that all aside and start a program of love with my children. And that taught me a great deal about love, because my children were suffering from Alcoholism, it is a family disease and they were evincing all the symptoms of active alcoholism. My little girl, I told you about her, stuttering, and stammering and bed wetting and nail biting and eye blinking, and within a year that just about all but disappeared, within two years gone completely. She doesn't ever remember it now.

Anytime you are uncomfortable in a relationship, whether it is personal, outside of the group or in the group, there is a rule to follow. (Boy, we have lots of rules in AA, lots of rules – Well, not really that many.) We have a code, Love and Tolerance is our code. We don't have many rules, but this is a rule. And it always brings positive results, and here it is, "*Enlarge your spiritual life.*"

And immediately we get a picture in mind of prayer somewhere, and maybe we have to go and kneel down and bless ourselves and repeat all kinds of prayers, and, no, no, no, no. This is an action program. But prayer is an action word, we will get to that in a bit. So our rule is, "*Enlarge your spiritual life*". Here are a couple of ways in which you can do that.

Firstly, make friends in the group. If you want friends, first, you be friendly. Make it your business to meet everybody in your group. Be a greeter, we used to have greeters, they would go to the door, they had little hats, they had like Christie Stiffs, you know those straw boaters, and they would meet people at the door. "Hi, Hi, Hi. Boy you are welcome in this group, come on in, new guy go and sit there, I'll get you coffee".

One night a guy comes in and he is from Carolina or somewhere, he says oh I've been sober for 27 years, well that is alright, come and sit down, here are a couple of new comers you can talk to them. Make people feel at home, make it your business. This is the business of AA. Make it your business to meet everybody in the group and be friendly with everybody, especially people newer than you. But remember, long timers need love too. So be friendly.

Secondly, do something to serve the group. Do something to serve the group, you don't have to ask anybody. Just go and do it. You know the best job in the group? The guy that makes the coffee. That is the best job in the group. Why? Because he gets to meet everybody in the group and he knows everybody by their first name. He knows what kind of coffee they would like, and what they don't like, they take milk or sugar or whatever, he knows all that stuff about them.

And gradually, he gets to know a little bit about their life and about their feelings and about their family and about their sobriety. The coffee guy has a prime job.

Next best job in the group is secretary, because secretary looks after all the cards and stuff like that, and gets to know everybody too. Knows their dry date and gets to know all their phone numbers and stuff, so it is a good thing to do.

But the guy you know, who sets up the chairs in the room, he is an important guy, looks after the room, whatever, if you want to enlarge your spiritual life, stay around after the meeting and clean up the room. The group will love you. Do it with a smile and the group will just think you are fabulous. They will say, jeez, he's a nice guy, what a hell of a guy. We have a guy in this group right now, who came to this group and became part of it years ago because we had a round up, and he came to the round up. At a certain part of the evening, the chairs had to be removed off the floor because there was going to be a dance, and he was moved by the holy spirit. God moved him.

God told him, hey, there are some good looking gals around this place, you are going to have fun dancing. But you ain't going to have fun dancing till the chairs are put away. And he dug in and he worked like hell and put the chairs away and, first things you know, he is a member of the group. He has been a member ever since.

Carry the message. See how this works, see, if you are willing to do some little thing. God will make it His business to put something in your road that will make it worthwhile. Whatever you do, it might just be

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

a little thing, it will have value. The Power will see to that. So when you see something that needs to be done, just do it, don't wait for a written invitation, and don't hang around for applause, because you ain't going to get any. We just do it for free and for fun and because we want to. Always be ready to help, if asked, even the menial task, that is beneath you, you know we are all vice-presidents at heart, so most menial tasks are beneath us. But remember, one thing is not more spiritual than another. So little jobs are important.

There is a Saint called Saint John of the Cross, about whom they wrote several articles that are really about humility and service, as he was renowned for his humility. He was not a learned man. Not highly educated, he was a brother, he was not even a priest. He didn't work in the front office and deliver stirring religious sermons. He was not even a cook, he was a dishwasher. He didn't even wash the dishes, he washed the pots, he was the potlicker. How low can you get. But he did it with such humility and grace, that now he is called Saint John of the Cross, because everything he did, he did for God, for his love of God. And that was his total answer. So you can emulate that, you don't have to become a holy Joe, and oh I am doing this for God. Do it for AA. Do it for yourself, but do it. Join a committee.

When somebody reads out in the meeting that we are going to answer phones this night, go answer the phones. The problem, you see, is spiritual. It is totally a spiritual problem. Not partly. I have to kind of giggle a little bit when somebody tells me they are having trouble with the spiritual part of the program. I look at them and I say, "Oh, that is interesting, tell me, what

Reflecting on Relationships

part of the program are you having success with"? The physical part, one two, one two, right.

And we weren't the first people to see that, Carl Jung knew that, he knew that before Bill ever had his experience. He knew that three or four years before. I don't know when he first knew it, but he certainly knew it when he saw Roland Hazard because that is exactly what he told Roland Hazard. He said: "your problem is, you are what is known as an alcoholic. And that is a spiritual problem. And you have to find a spiritual answer." And Hazard said, "Well how am I going to do that"? And Jung said, "Well I can't help you there, I am sorry, I just know that for the likes of you what is necessary is a vital spiritual experience at depth." He said "I've heard of cases, I know of cases where that has happened and a life has been totally transformed."

And when I told you that last week I was thinking of such a case, I was thinking of St. Frances of Assisi. The guy who founded the Franciscan Order. Old Francis was a rich man, son of a rich family, gave everything away, gave his life for service. For service, love and service, he was totally changed overnight, like that. Like Bill. Roland ran into the Oxford Groups and found an answer that seemed to work for him. He never came to AA. I don't know the whole story, I just know that there is some mystery there. I have seen a copy of his death certificate and there is always a big argument about whether he was sober or not sober. I know he got sober, and if he got sober, I know how he got sober.

Jung told Roland a very interesting thing, he said you are an alcoholic, and said Jung, so far as I am aware, there is no treatment for the likes of you,

Human Ego: Obsessed Ego/Healthy Ego

anywhere at any cost. Roland was a very, very rich guy, and he could have paid any amount of money, \$100,000, \$500,000, \$1,000,000, \$2,000,000, wouldn't have mattered to him, he had it. But you can't buy sobriety, see, and Jung told him that. We are not into treatment in Alcoholics Anonymous, we don't have any legacy of treatment, we have a legacy of sobriety. We have a legacy of recovery, I mean to say we don't have a legacy of sobriety, we have a legacy of recovery, a legacy of unity, and a legacy of service. So we are into recovery.

What is it that we recover? Well, Bill tells us it is a spiritual malady, Bill says, "In every man woman and child is the fundamental idea of God". It is in every one of us, but it is covered up and we are separated from God and from ourselves by and with this Obsessed Ego. The Power can't be found in there, so what we recover is that sense of God with which we were born. That came with us. That came with us you see. So the fundamental idea of God includes the fundamental relationship.

It includes a relationship with God and a relationship with all of God's kids. It is one and the same thing. I am not going to come here and relate exclusively with God. I have to come here, work my way into the group and start to be friends with people in my group and work with people in my group, and communicate and relate to people in my group. Then gradually I relate to and with people in my family at home. And that spreads out to all the relationships that I should have in my life, and eventually through that, through my relating to people, I automatically relate to the Power. It is all one and the same. You see that?

Reflecting on Relationships

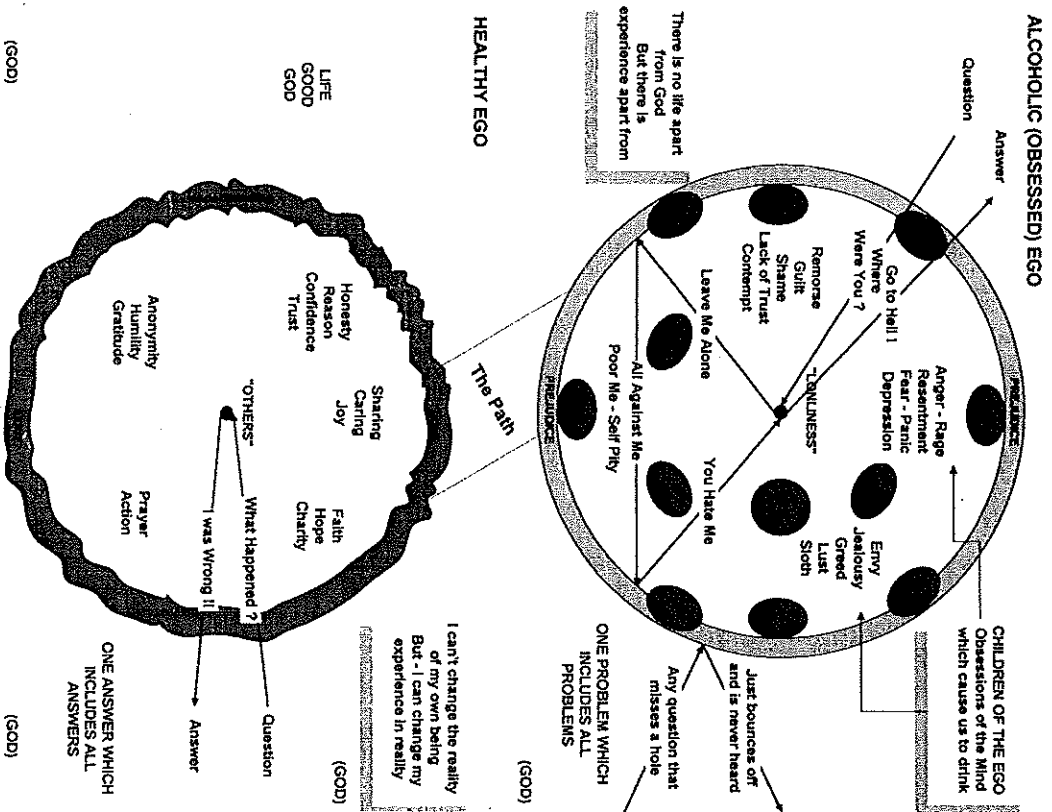
Bill says we are reborn (not born again). He says we are reborn, recovered, reborn into a conscious relationship with that Power. See how important relationships are? Now every relationship starts in the same way, including spiritual, that is an intimate relationship. I don't find this difficult to understand, I believe that what I am talking about is what the Christians talk about when they say the birth of Christ in me and the birth of Christ in you. I think it is one and the same thing, and I think it has to happen to everybody, not just Christians. The discovery of self. The discovery of the Power, whatever name you put on that power, I don't think it matters a hell of a lot. So to become conscious of that relationship with God I have to enlarge my consciousness and learn to be more conscious of life itself. To enlarge and expand my livingness.

Now you guys have been fantastic and I am not going to finish tonight. I am sorry, I have got too much left to cover tonight.

Thank you.

Notes

The top part of the figure on the right depicts the Obsessed Ego, and it looks like a practice golf ball. It is plastic, has an imperious shell, and has holes in it. The Healthy Ego is depicted in the lower part of the figure and is floppy, and soft, and fuzzy; something like a tennis ball. As discussed in the text, the fuzzy layer of the Healthy Ego has qualities like Compassion, Understanding, and Love. The path from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego is depicted by two faint lines proceeding from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. The journey from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego is undertaken by following the path as outlined in the text in Chapters Three and Four.



The Higher Power Relationship

This is Number 5 in a series that was supposed to go three and at the most four. But I promise this is it, 5 is the end, the Magic Number. We have been discussing some ideas, some concepts pretty close to the livingness of Alcoholics Anonymous, the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and of course different people have different thinking, different ideas about that.

I was thinking this afternoon about Macbeth. You remember in the Shakespearean play Macbeth, that when Lady Macbeth died and Macbeth was all broken up about it, of course because he had committed a murder at her behest, and he was feeling pretty low and pretty guilty. And he made that famous soliloquy, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow; the weary time creeps on apace"; and then he said, "Life is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing". Wow, what a concept, eh! I identify with that, that is how I felt and related to life when I was drinking.

But in this series we covered several basic concepts concerning the subject of relationships. If you remember we started out by examining some of the differences between a functional family and a dysfunctional family and decided that in the functional family, children are raised with the ability to communicate. To go down inside of themselves and see what they are feeling, put a name on it, come up and share that with other people and then listen to

The Higher Power Relationship

what other people were feeling, and in that way connect with the other person.

In the dysfunctional family of course those skills are not acquired, they are not learned, so by the time you and I get here, (I am not making any comment about our families) we are dysfunctional.

I look at my family and I don't think the family was dysfunctional. It was me that was dysfunctional, you know, if the family was, I made it that way. But we get here without those skills and so we have to take a little time, follow the AA program, because the AA program does that for us. And I am sure that as we went along you were recognizing how the program works in our lives in helping us to acquire those skills. And then we looked at the basic communication skills that people need to operate emotionally, intellectually, and in relationships, and how we go about forming the basis of all relationships.

We did that little experiment, just to demonstrate what those basic skills are and how they work. We talked about communication and it was pointed out that when we feel heard we feel connected. If we do not feel heard, we feel isolated, we feel left out. We feel unique, we feel different and that was me, the alcoholic loneness I experienced was such that I was alone even when I was with my own family. But heard and connected reduces isolation, and it reduces stress. As a matter of fact, in medical experiments it has been proven that heard and connected reduces illness.

There is a doctor whose name I cannot recall who now has written a book about using those communication skills to actually reduce heart disease

Reflecting on Relationships

without surgery and without medication. Because mind and body are one, so if you treat the mind, the mind will automatically treat the body. That is not a miracle, it is how it works. And he has discovered that; and he's following it and teaching it and many people are benefiting from it.

And then we talked about the difference between communication and ventilation. Communication is where you express your feelings so that other people can hear and they in turn express their feelings to you and you share that. When there is sharing the caring naturally follows. Whereas in ventilation you just want to get your feelings out. It is just anger, you don't care where it goes, you just spew it all over the place.

We used that little example of the kids in the forest and how the police came and chased them out and how the fireman came and chased them out and nothing happened, the kids were right back and starting more fires and raising more hell. And then the lady who went and communicated with them and just talked to them. And talked to their emotions and spoke to them about the animals and the birds and the little beaver that were building their lodge and raising their young, and the kids settled right down and the neighbours all wondered what the hell had happened. And they came and said to her "What did you do to those kids?" Well, she didn't do anything to them, she communicated with them.

And we saw that feelings connect us. That is a basic principle. Feelings connect us, ideas and judgments separate us. When we speak to someone judgmentally and say Thou shalt not, you shouldn't do this, why do you drink so much, we lose them, and

The Higher Power Relationship

they are gone. But when we Twelve Step somebody and say to them "I know how you feel". "I felt like that" "Here is what happened to me". "I did this and this and this" and they can see immediately that we know what we are talking about on the basis of our own experience. They connect with us and we get their attention. And they come here to our meetings and sit with us, and do the things that we do and sobriety follows. Happy sobriety follows. So shared ideas may bring our minds together, but shared emotions join our hearts. In AA sharing feelings is called "The Language of the Heart".

And then in the second meeting we pointed out that just because you remember something and can repeat something does not mean that you know it. And I remember saying those of you who are taking notes, take this down; "you only know it when you can live it". If you can live it, you know it. You know it, not up here in your head, but down here in your gut where you live. And then we talked about relationships being a framework, like the lattice of a sweet pea garden. The sweet peas grow up the lattice and our sobriety grows up the lattice of relationships. And as our relationships improve and strengthen, so does our sobriety, you know.

And then we talked about the various levels of relationship, the Superficial level where you just meet someone casually, like you may go to a golf course and pick up somebody to play with you, maybe someone that you have never seen before. You go out and you play 9 or 18 holes with them, you may never see them again, you enjoyed it very much, very nice people, and that is the end of that. Or it might be a clerk in the grocery store or a mechanic at the garage,

Reflecting on Relationships

or the guy that delivers your mail, or whatever, it is just a casual, superficial relationship. You might not even know his or her name.

And then comes the Companionship level of relationship, where the activity is more important than the person. I gave the example of the guy that I used to go see movies with, and I would call him up and say let's go and see this new Bronson flick and away we would go. Or if he was busy that night and did not want to go, I would say, "Okay, that is fine I'll call somebody else", and I would call somebody else. And I would go to see the movie. I didn't necessarily want to see him or her or whoever it was, I just wanted to see the movie.

Because one level of relationship leads into another, it all starts off at that Superficial relationship level and of course after communication, it may change into Companionship, and then that in time may change into friendship where the person is more important than the activity. In that case I want to see you, I want to spend time with you. So I phone you up and say let's go and do this or that, whatever it is. And that person may say "No, I don't want to do that, I was thinking of going to the book store tonight, there are a couple of new books out and I wanted to see if they are in the store. That is what I want to do." "Oh well, that is okay with me, I would like to go to the book store too". I may not really want to go to the bookstore, but I do want to spend time with that person, that is friendship.

Of course there is some kind of commitment in friendship, either spoken or unspoken and that person becomes sufficiently important in your life that you

The Higher Power Relationship

don't walk out on them. If you are their friend, you are their friend. If that friend gets in trouble you support them, you don't walk out on them. That would be a sometimes friend, that is a summertime friend. To be a real friend, real friends support you when you need that support. So friendship deepens and in time of course, if things are right, it could deepen into an intimate relationship.

There are several kinds of intimate relationships and we talked about that. We pointed out that it could be romantic love and eventually what they call nowadays "living together", or there is no proper name for that relationship. I wish we had a decent name for it. In law we used to call it "common law relationships". I never liked that term because I don't think that there is anything common about it. It is a very special relationship and it contains a lot of commitments and often those are real world commitments, and not just ordinary simple things like paying the rent and the food and things like that, of course, that might be a kind of partnership.

But there are deeper intimate relationships than that. And if children should result from that union, then you have a whole new problem because you have got commitments to the children and you have relationships to form with the children and every one of those children are different, and it is amazing. My wife and I had nine children and they are all different. They are all individuals, everyone has their own characteristics, and little idiosyncrasies and little likes and dislikes, and it is intensely interesting. It is really something to see and even more interesting to experience.

Reflecting on Relationships

And then we gave another example of intimate relationship, in AA Sponsorship. That becomes a very intimate relationship and to my mind, not only intimate, but spiritual. I think it is a spiritual relationship, and of course we talked a little about spiritual relationship and that is what we are going to be talking about tonight. The spiritual relationship with The Power. The Relationship, you know. But there are many spiritual relationships. Marriage is a spiritual relationship, your relationship with your children is a spiritual relationship and there are deep commitments there, very deep, that is well beyond companionship. That is beyond friendship, that is blood to blood and heart to heart, and that is life to life, you know. And then we talked about the obsessive nature of alcoholics and what an obsessive relationship might be like and what a healthy relationship would be like and we set out seven characteristics of an obsessive relationship and compared it to how a healthy relationship would act, would conduct itself. And I'm sure you remember those things.

We mentioned the two great blunders in life:

Firstly, the failure to commit, to make a commitment, if you stop to think about it, you know, sooner or later you are going to make a commitment. Life demands a commitment and will demand a commitment of you, whoever you are because it is a necessary part of relationship. Even in companionship there is some kind of a commitment. A minor commitment perhaps, which may deepen into their friendship. By the time we get into intimate relationship, it is a deep, deep commitment.

Secondly, the refusal to let go. And we gave the

The Higher Power Relationship

example of God standing there, as I picture this, you know like a little kid, God standing there with great gifts in His hands of health and prosperity and peace of mind and wonderful relationships and a rich full life. And we are standing there with our hands full of our problems, our crap, a failed marriage, a lousy job, a selfish way of living and God says to us, "What is the matter with you?" "Look at all the beautiful things that I have for you and I can't give them to you because you won't let go of that junk that you are hanging on to. Get rid of that and you will be able to accept these things I have for you". And I might be standing there saying, "What is the matter with God, why does He give everything over to him and nothing to me, why does he give everything to her and nothing to me? He does not want to give it to me, He has it in for me". But the reality is that He can't give me His gifts if I won't let go of the dross.

In the third meeting we talked about sponsorship. The whole meeting was about sponsorship. Sponsorship is a very special relationship, and one that you and I are privileged to participate in. That is a very special relationship, my God we are lucky to have had that experience. That is the most wonderful experience in life. The things that I have been taught by people that I have sponsored, by new people that I have sponsored, are amazing to me.

At our fourth meeting we talked about the characteristics of the Obsessed Ego and we talked about that hard shell of ego and all of the things that are encompassed in that, our ego. And we mentioned all the children of the ego, the jealousy and the rage and the anger, the resentment, the loneliness, the fear, all those, the remorse, all of those things.

Reflecting on Relationships

And then contrasting the Obsessed Ego with the Healthy Ego, how resilient that is and how easy it is to communicate with that kind of Healthy Ego. We said that we can't communicate with an Obsessed Ego because of that shell, that Obsessed shell is rigid and hard and impermeable. It is made out of prejudice. It is our prejudices that limit us, that hold us in and we can't get by them. We are prejudiced against the church. You can't talk to me about God, you are prejudiced against the church. You can't talk to me about solace, we are prejudiced against marriage. You can't talk to me about women, and women's status in society and how they should be treated, And our children, you can't talk to me about any of those things. Because I am limited by my prejudice, I won't listen to you. I can't hear you.

And then we talked about how to get from that Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. And how important it is for each one of us to see and recognize our own powerlessness. I am powerless. I have no power, my problem is lack of power, and that is what makes it absolutely necessary for me, the alcoholic, to find The Power. To discover a power that will solve my problem. I can't solve my problem, I tried to solve it for 42 years and it bloody near killed me, and if I had tried a little harder, it would have killed me.

And we talked about the path, the path that we follow from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego. And how that is an invisible path to us when we first get here. Somebody says, "Come along with us. Come down this path". And we say "What path, I can't see any path". And the guy says "Yeah I know you can't see it, but I can see it. I have been over it many

The Higher Power Relationship

times, so you come with me and just do what I do and follow along. Walk with me." And we did that and we walked along with that person and did the things that they were doing and joined in the group activities and worked at the Steps, and little by little the path became visible. It became comfortable to walk on that path and we went back and forth on it many times, not alone by ourselves, but with other people, always with other people.

And then we talked about relationships in the group and relationships to the group. How we relate to each other in the group, and how we relate to the group, and to ourselves, and we talked about some of the important principles. One of the principles that we talked about in relationships in the group is "Mind Your Own Business". That is an ancient principle, it was discovered on the walls of an Egyptian Tomb when they dug into this pyramid to find the Tomb, there on the wall they saw these letters, MYOB. That means, mind your own business.

It's a part of the motto, *Live and Let Live* — just do your job and let others do theirs. Important principle. Add to the group, be friendly, there, hey, how about that? Isn't that something to think about, be friendly. If you want to have friends, first you be friendly. You know it is hard to make friends with somebody that does not want to be friendly. Did you ever go to somebody's house that has a dog, and the guy says, "Oh, she is a pet, you should see her playing with the kids, she is a pet". And you go to put your hand out and the dog goes, arrrr. Oh yeah, good, sure, quite a pet you got there.

I'd like to say something about certain differences

Reflecting on Relationships

between men and women, I like this, because it is a little game that we used to play at my house, and it might be helpful to some. There is a school of thought that maintains that many of our instincts are actually vestiges of characteristics that have been with us since people lived in caves.

In those days men were hunters and women were gatherers. This school says that man the hunter tends to focus and zero in on one thing at a time, pretty much to the exclusion, of all other things. You can see that in your own home today, if you catch the husband watching television. He doesn't just watch television, he gets into the television. It gets his whole attention, and if someone speaks to him he does not hear them, he doesn't hear nothing, he is in television. But, women who are the gatherers, of course are attentive to whatever is going on around them all of the time, so they like to talk when they are watching television.

That kind of creates a problem between husbands and wives because the husband keeps saying things like, "Shut up, I am trying to listen to this damned program" or "there is a game going on for god sakes". And she says, "But I just wanted to tell you what Dolores said". You know.

And the hunter when he is driving his car, he is not just driving his car, he is on the trail. And he is searching for something. If he is going to somewhere that he knows, he can go right to it, right to it, could be the church, the stadium or the store, or a friend's house or whatever. But if he is searching for his quarry, some might say he is lost, he is totally focused and he can't break off the hunt. And his little gatherer sitting beside him says, "Why don't we ask for

The Higher Power Relationship

directions?". And he says, "Shut up, I know where I am for christ sakes, just two streets over and left and I will be right there. I know that cause I see the elephant tracks on the street".

You see, the little gatherer, she knows that if you can't find the berry patch, you ask, people tell you yeah, there is a berry patch, you just go down by that brook and there it is. So you stop and ask for directions. Of course, the directions that are relayed by the gatherer to the hunter are not always clearly given and are not always clearly understood, and that sometimes leads to a Counsel of War in the front seat of that automobile.

Social studies indicate, (this is interesting) social studies indicate that men use about 2000 words in a day, but women use about 7000 words in a day. So when women ask the hunter "what is the matter with you, why don't you want to talk, you don't ever want to talk", she needs to realize that he has not run out of thoughts or ideas or love for her. He just used up his 2000 words. He has got nothing left to say. And he needs to know that the gatherer isn't just nattering on about inconsequential things, she has got some of her 7000 quota left over, and she has to use it up.

What happens on the telephone, gatherers have long conversations. Gatherers observe in lengthy detail, everything around them, that is how you gather. Hunters are always looking off down the trail, way down there, they don't see close detail, they don't know anything about that. When two gatherers meet, they spend 20 to 30 minutes, an hour, half a day, discussing their hair-do's and what they are wearing,

Reflecting on Relationships

and what their shoes are like and health and relationships. When two hunters meet, they grunt.

But Hunters make good golfers, because they can focus on the ball from tee to green, and grow impatiently frustrated when gatherers stand on the green to discuss their new hat, or new shirt or new shoes or whatever the other one has on that night. And the hunters say, lets go. When two hunters fight, its verbal of course, it is sharp and it is loud and it finishes up with cuss words and they glare at each other, and it is over. It is over, and when it is over they look at each other and they say, let's go have coffee, or let's go have a beer. It is like the fight never happened, you know, try it.

But when two gatherers have a fight, a verbal brawl, have it out, it may not ever be over. It might be rather quiet and polite, followed by many retellings to all their friends, "and I said to her and she said to me, and I told her this and she said that, and boy I really got her with this one". It might not ever be over. They might still be talking about it five years from now, and the husbands cannot understand what the hell is going on. The husband may say, "That is ancient history, forget about that". "But you told me Charlie was a schmo". "Well, he is, but he is not a bad guy". The hunter gatherer list goes on and on, take shopping, now that is a dandy, you know. The gatherers are natural born shoppers, they love it. The hunter does not.

So we finally get down to this thing of "The Relationship". If you are having trouble, we said a few meetings ago, in your relationships anywhere, check "The Relationship". Because if your relationship with

The Higher Power Relationship

The Power is right, then you have the basis for whatever other relationship there may be in your life. And of course we can't always have the relationship that we want, because a relationship with another person involves that other person, and we can't change that other person, we can only change ourselves. So if that other person will not change to become the person that we want to relate to, then either we have to change our attitude, and accept the person that is, or abandon the relationship. The person that is. And we must relate to them in whatever way is possible for us, but always maintaining the relationship with The Power, because that is our anchor. It all starts there and it all ends there.

The important part about that is that as we travel down the path that we talked about, thoroughly down the path, we discover that the relationship with The Power, and the relationship with ourselves, is one and the same thing. And that is how we get to be ourselves and know ourselves. And we call that self-discovery. That is our job here. You may say "Well, what is the purpose of life, why am I here, what the hell am I doing here anyway? Am I here to suffer and be miserable?"

No, that is not what God wants for us. We know what God wants for us. God wants us to be happy, joyous and free. God says in our Big Book, Bill, (God speaking through Bill) said "We insist upon enjoying life", enjoying, and you can't enjoy misery, and you can't enjoy hell. If you are going to enjoy life, it must be an enjoyable life. One in which you can express yourself fully and completely as a person. And that is our job.

Inside of each and every one of us is a pattern of

Reflecting on Relationships

who we are and what we are. And it is my job in my life to fill my pattern, the pattern of my Being, to the very extremes, to the very limit. And I suspect, and this is just me talking, you don't have to believe a word that I am saying, but it is what I have found and what I have seen, and what I feel. It is my feeling that I may not be able to finish that job here. It may come later, it may come in the next experience, or the one after that, or ten after that, but that doesn't matter.

It doesn't change the reality of the situation, you see. It is a truism that I cannot change the reality of my own Being, I am what I am, I am who I am. This is what I am, this is who I am, and I can't change it, just like old Popeye said. "I am what I am and that's all I am". That is each and everyone of us can't change that.

But, thank God, through the efficacy of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I can change my experience in reality. I can't change the reality of my own being, I don't think even God can do that; God is What and Who He is. Or What and Who She is, or What and Who, He, or It is. I don't know that. Nobody knows that. So I can't change the reality of my own Being, but I can change my experience in Reality. And I do that by going from that Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego that we looked at last week.

We learned to surrender the crap suffered in the Obsessed Ego for the joy and serenity of the Healthy Ego. And you and I as members of Alcoholics Anonymous are tremendously blessed, because we have a formula, a simple formula. Twelve Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts of service, and our experience in the Fellowship. And all of that put together, brings us

The Higher Power Relationship

into the reality of life, changes our experience and makes it possible for the likes of you and I to fill out to the full, the pattern of our own Being.

My old sponsor Chuck C. said that alcoholism is four-fold: it is physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, but that the problem is totally spiritual. The illness is physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, but the problem is totally spiritual. And he said that it was a spiritual unrest, and that my spirit is restless, irritable, and discontented. Because it can't communicate, it cannot express itself, it can't relate to anything or anybody. And he would use a few lines from that great American poet Longfellow to illustrate that point, he would say,

***"Not in entire forgetfulness;
Nor yet in utter nakedness;
But trailing clouds of glory,
Do we come from God; Which is Our Home".***

Carl Jung, one of the world's great psychiatrists, before AA was born told Roland Hazard not only that he was an alcoholic, but that the problem was totally spiritual. He told Roland the only hope that you have is to have a spiritual experience at depth. A vital spiritual experience at depth, because there is no treatment for Alcoholism.

And as far as I am aware, there has never been a treatment discovered since those days, since Jung lived. There is no treatment for alcoholism today. We in AA don't talk about treatment, we talk about recovery. We have a legacy of recovery, we have a legacy of unity, and a legacy of service, and those are the magic words, you know. And it is interesting to

Reflecting on Relationships

note, that in the conversation that Carl Jung had with Roland he referred to the alcoholics continuing search for Reality -- for God. Jung quoted a Psalm, the 42th Psalm, and he said "Let me illustrate it to you like this";

***"As the Hart panteth after the water brooks, so
panteth my soul for thee, oh God".***

So we see how it goes that people, how Chuck, who was born and raised in the program, and Bill and Ebbie T. and people like that, the Oxford groups, Sam Shoemaker and people of that ilk, tell about this thing. Totally spiritual, the problem and the answer totally spiritual. So it is difficult for the likes of you and I, who have Obsessed Egos and have all of those problems in our enclosed shell of prejudice, to communicate with The Power.

But you see AA talks about recovery, and the book says that every man woman and child is born with the fundamental idea of God. And I think that fundamental idea and fundamental relationship are the same. I think that is what an idea is. It is a relationship. You see. And that is what we recover. We recover that Fundamental Relationship which has been covered over, you know, by all of those ego things, and we become conscious of and aware of the Power in our lives. We have to be born into that consciousness. That is what Step Three talks about. It says we are reborn. And so we are born into a conscious relationship with a God of our own experience. I think that has to happen.

I think that is what the Christians talk about when they talk about the birth of Christ in you and the birth of Christ in me. I think it has to happen to everybody, not

The Higher Power Relationship

just Christians. To become conscious of a Power greater than themselves. We have to come home to the living God that made us, the Great Reality. To become conscious of that relationship I have to enlarge and expand my consciousness; to be more conscious of life itself, and to enlarge and expand my livingness.

When I first came to AA, my wife saw the path immediately. She said to just go with Ross and a lot of good things would happen to me. And at first I wasn't that eager to go with Ross. But anytime I went with Ross I never got those questions. He'd drive me home from a meeting -- maybe eleven o'clock -- and we'd sit on my driveway and talk until maybe one or two. And I never got asked "Where were you?". I was with Ross and it was okay.

I don't know what we talked about but it was vitally important. We talked about the essence of life, our God, not drinking and being sober. We talked about One Day at a Time and that gradually as the action got taken my whole life changed; and the days went by and the years went by-----I saw that the years will teach us things that the days will never know. There's wisdom in the years.

I don't know how that is, I just know that if you're here and you make yourself available to The Power - that's all. You don't have to do anything spectacular. We find a Power that will solve our problem. We don't find a way for me to solve my problem - we find a Power that will solve our problem. As long as I maintain a closed mind, I will not find that Power. I will be limited, as you see from the depiction of the Obsessed Ego - by my prejudices, by my

Reflecting on Relationships

stubbornness, my self-will, by my fighting everything and everybody.

So I believe that God is Good -- All Good. I don't believe in a capricious God, a God of punishments and rewards. Although I know that many of you do, and you have every right to do that, -- I just have to share with you what I believe and what my experience has taught me. I believe in a God of Love and great Law of Justice without judgment - no judgment -- a great Law of Justice without judgment. So that as I journey down the path from the Obsessed Ego to the Healthy Ego, that path leads up onto the Highway of Life, that you and I travel together.

Bill says its a Broad Highway, it ain't no country lane -- it's a Broad Highway. If I go a bit to the left or a little bit to the right, that's fine. I don't have to be right all the time and try to be always perfect, but just try to be the best member of AA that I can. I've got the right to be wrong and I give you the right to be wrong, and God gives you the right to be wrong.

I believe He's a God of Love and a God of Law, and the Good Book says He's a God of Law and Love. It says that on the one hand all is Love and on the other hand all is Law. And Love is the fulfillment of the Law.

My old Sponsor Chuck used to tell me a story. He must have told it to me 150 times, maybe more. Chuck said that the Ancients told that before the Temple of Solomon stood two pillars. And they had names, they were called Jachim and Boaz and that meant Love and Law. But I don't know which was which. He never said and I didn't ask. So he would

The Higher Power Relationship

say, "On the one hand all is Love and on the other all is Law", Jachim and Boaz. And that in order to enter the Temple of Solomon you have to pass between the two pillars, so as to enter into the Holy of Holies. And I would listen to him avidly, trying to figure out what he was talking about.

I guess I cogitated on the meaning of that for maybe 20 years and I couldn't understand what he was saying. And then one day, Bill tells us that more will be revealed to us, and that little doctor, Silkworth says the alcoholic "suddenly finds himself" and that day it just hit me. Chuck wasn't talking about two pillars, Jachim and Boaz. He was talking about Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yes, on the one hand all is Law - the Program. The 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of Service. The Law and yes, on the other hand, all is Love -- the Fellowship, our families and Sponsorship and the precious, precious privilege of carrying the message. And most certainly we have to have both the Program which is our Law and Fellowship, our Love and the Program and the Fellowship take both with us to go into the Temple, which is the Good Life, the life of Sobriety -- sharing and caring in all our relationships and finally to enter the Holy of Holies, which to me is the conscious relationship, a conscious unity with Life, a conscious partnership with a God of my very own understanding and my very own individual experience.

And, just as Bill and the good doctor said, suddenly it became clear to me. And I could see where I had at times tried Fellowship alone and at other times Program alone. And that never worked. I

154

Reflecting on Relationships

could see clearly that my only purpose is to fit myself, with both, in order that I might be and become of maximum service to God -- yes -- and to the people about me. By 'people about me' I mean, and I believe Bill means, all those people I relate to in my life. So that suddenly it became really clear to me that every relationship in my life, with my kids, my family, my group and all of AA - finally comes down to one simple thing, my relationship with The Power, the Father of Light.

I had it pointed out to me that I neglected to start the meeting with our prayer, so I better start the second half of this meeting with the prayer.

Dear God, let me set aside everything I think I know about You, and me, and this program and these steps, for an Open Mind, and a new experience with You, and me, and this program and these steps.

Sure thank you.

And that comes in at a very significant point because what we are going to talk about now is how we come to form a conscious relationship with The Power. The only way we can come to know anything is by raising the level of our consciousness; that is, to become conscious or aware of things that we previously were not conscious of.

I've told you I was raised by the Jesuits and anybody that went through or lived with the Jesuits knows that you study Logic, Cosmology, Epistemology, and Theology. Well I never quite made it into

155

The Higher Power Relationship

Theology, but Epistemology is the science of knowing, how we come to know and how we come to know is by raising our consciousness. We do that primarily by opening our mind. And that little prayer that we just used, says that, it says let me set aside everything I think I know for an open mind, so that I can become conscious of things that I previously have not known.

That is a great secret. It is not the things that we know that make life so interesting, it is the things that we don't know that make life interesting, you see. Things begin to happen in Step Two. I don't know if you have noticed this, we have been talking about relationships all the way through. We spent most of our time talking about Step One, and powerlessness, and putting ourselves at the disposal of The Power. And of those simple things that we do in Step One. Now here we are talking about getting into a conscious relationship with a Power that we can't see, can't feel, can't touch, and can't understand.

Some preliminary things, some preliminary actions, and Bill says that we need to sweep away prejudice. Now isn't it amazing that he would say that. It is a very significant axiom, because as we described the whole inner circumference of that Obsessive Ego, it is layered with and composed of prejudice. That is what it is.

Our judgments, our prejudices limit us, and we won't get beyond them, we can't get beyond them. Bill in our Book says sweep away prejudice. And if you have ever discussed this Step Two with me before you know that one of the things I highly recommend is for us to sit down and make a list of our prejudices, because I don't think you can sweep away what you

Reflecting on Relationships

don't know, what you don't know exists.

I think that if you are going to sweep prejudices away, you've got to know what your prejudices are. And if we sit down and look at our life, our life honestly, it doesn't take us long to find out what our prejudices are. How are your relationships? You look at your relationships and boy, your prejudices will show up awful fast, awful fast. That is why some of us can't ever get comfortable with God. Cause we are so prejudiced against that idea, and we have reservations and we hang back. That is the ego talking, that is the ego saying, me first, me, my mine, how do I look, how do I feel, what will people think, what will people say. Me first, Ego, I am God. Bill says no. There are three actions.

Firstly, sweep away prejudice. **Secondly**, think honestly, and if you stop to look at it for one second, you can see that if you are prejudiced, you can't think honestly; you are going to think prejudicially. So yes we have to get rid of prejudice or we can't think honestly, and we can't reduce the shell of that ego if we don't get rid of our prejudices. And then Bill says, **Thirdly** search diligently within yourself. Bill gives us those three actions.

Why are those actions so powerfully liberating, and therefore so important, and so necessary to grow? Well, my answer to that is very simple. Prejudice is pre-judging, judging, before I have the facts. That judgment, whatever it is sets up a barrier, a shell of ego, and closes our mind. If I am prejudiced, my mind is closed. Don't talk to me about God. Don't tell me about that. Don't try to convince me that marriage is good. It is all one sided. I am hemmed in and limited

The Higher Power Relationship

by my own judgments and my mind snaps shut, and I can't hear, I can't listen, I don't want to hear, and I don't want to listen. I can't see through the shell. So I can't become aware or conscious of the beauty, the life, the reality, the Power, on the other side of the shell.

That is why Bill puts in the Big Book, what I call 'The Bedevilmments', those eight bedevilmments on page 52 of the Big Book. That is a test, a wonderful test, for untreated alcoholism. Just read over those bedevilmments and it will tell you quickly. Am I coming along, am I progressing, or am I not progressing? Do I still have those things in my life? Then I still have untreated alcoholism.

But here is a marvellous little secret, and it is funny I don't hear this talked about much, and I wonder about it sometimes because it is so significant. We have to have a starting place. And I am asked that question lots of times, "where do I start?". Well the book tells us where to start, Bill puts it in clear language, but we are so caught up in what we think and what we believe and what our prejudices are, that we don't even see it. I put it to you. Look at page 47 of your Big Book. Listen,

"When therefore we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God, this applies to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. AT THE START, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth. To effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood him."

Reflecting on Relationships

Is that a startling point or what? To me it is. So people that I sponsor are asked to sit down and pick out the spiritual terms that are used in the Big Book, like the Father of Light and all those other spiritual expressions like, Creative Intelligence, and the Spirit of the Universe, that Bill uses in the book. Make a list of them and write out what they mean to you; what does that mean to me? Honestly, Bill says, honestly. Honestly asking yourself. This is the start of spiritual growth. Then maybe go back a year later and take a look at that list and see if things have changed. It is interesting, it is fascinating, and go back five years later and see what you think.

And it is very revealing, some of the things, some of the expressions, spiritual expressions that I looked at, that I didn't like, when I first did that years ago, are now almost like terms of endearment, I love them, I love them. They become part of my dearest thoughts of my Loving Father, yeah, that is what He is. Creative Spirit of the Universe. Wonderful. And I love it and it is comforting and it feels so good just to use that.

So these three simple actions begin the collapse of the ego, and the opening of our mind. And with the opening of the mind we begin to see through the shell of ego and expand our horizon. As we get rid of the prejudices, our horizon expands and we become conscious of more and more.

I remember one day I was down in California, I happened to be there for I can't remember why, but I was there, and I had gotten to see Chuck and spend a couple of days at his home in the little City of Laguna Beach. One afternoon, Elsa decided she had to go down to the Post Office to post a package to a friend of

The Higher Power Relationship

hers and Chuck drove her down. He liked to take me in the car because always he had a big Lincoln, always driving down town, it was part of the game.

He always went down Fourth Street, and the reason he went down Fourth Street was because Fourth Street had a hill. He drove along Fourth Street like this and all of a sudden, the hood of the car disappeared and down you went. And I had done it at least a dozen times with him, but part of the game was that it was always a surprise.

That is part of the game, and you were always supposed to yell, arrrr. If you didn't yell loud enough he would turn around and go back up and come down again, so, you know I learned to yell pretty loud. And we would go down the Fourth Street hill, go down to the Post Office. We are sitting in the parking lot at the post office, which is like 10 feet above the Coast Highway, and the Coast Highway is about 10 feet above the ocean, and Elsa has gone into the Post Office.

Chuck never could sit still and be quiet, and he would love to say look over there and tell me what you see, or look out the window and tell me what you see, or whatever. It was his way of communicating. So he says to me, look out Tom, over the Laguna Bay and tell me what you see. And I told him what I saw, a row boat, maybe 150 yards out, a smudge over there which I took to be a cape, and another smudge down here that might be Dana Point, and that smudge out on the horizon there, might be a ship somewhere out there.

And we would talk about that, and then go on back up to the house, first stopping at Albertsons and do a

Reflecting on Relationships

little shopping. To get all the necessities of life like ice-cream, and chocolate cake and you know, medical treatment for alcoholics, and we get back up to the house and Elsa goes in with the groceries, and Chuck and I are left sitting on the driveway.

Again he says to me, look out over the Bay and tell me what you see. Now we are 1500 feet above the ocean, he lives up in the hills, up in Laguna Hills. And now I look and this row boat, my God it is almost on the shore, and I look over there and I can see Dana Point clearly, that is seven or eight miles over there, and up here Cape Fernin, and that is very close. And I look out and there is not a smudge over the horizon, now I can see a coastal steamer, with smoke going up and it has goal post masts, I can see that, it is maybe 5 miles away. And I look out on the horizon and there is Santa Catalina Island thirty-five miles away and San Gabriel and San Clemente down there, I can see damn near to China. And Chuck turns to me and says, "Yeah Tom, you see, the higher you climb the further you can see."

The higher you climb the further you can see, and that is exactly our experience in Alcoholics Anonymous. If we are climbing, we get to see more things. So we climb by sweeping away the judgments which limit us and now we begin to see and feel and realize the value of an open mind, you know. So Step Two isn't about finding God as I first thought; Step Two is about opening our mind. If we open our mind we will come to see what is perfectly obvious, there is no big secret about it, it is obvious. It is obvious to anybody with an open mind.

And why search diligently within? If you remember

The Higher Power Relationship

the third action thing Bill recommended was to search diligently within. What does that do? Well to me that means to search for the truth about me. There is an ancient belief, it was written in Sanscrit in India I suppose maybe ten thousand years ago. It was recorded in the Upanishads, the Veda Upanishad, out of India, and it is copied, or I shouldn't say copied, the same belief, the same thinking appears in the old Tao of China which is four maybe five thousand years old. So these are not new things, these are not ideas that we are learning for the very first time; it was adhered to in the teachings of Budha, Japanese Shinto believes it, and it is followed somewhat obliquely in Christianity.

The thought is that everyone comes into this life with perfect happiness and perfect peace deep within us. We have that; that is part of the Fundamental Idea. The Fundamental Relationship, you see. And the only reason that we may not be experiencing that perfect happiness and the sublime bliss of perfect peace is because we have disturbed the happiness and peace by desire for ego satisfaction.

Self-centred actions, thoughts, judgments, and prejudice. To get back to the state of being where we can experience that happiness and the bliss of peace, we have to recover it, and that is your recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. It was never lost, just covered over, so we uncover, discover, and discard. Uncover the self-centredness, discover the defects, all those things, the jealousy, the rage, the resentment, the anger, the fear, all those children of the ego, and (with God's help) discard them completely because that is what is blocking off the way to The Power.

The Power, God if you like, is the seat or the

Reflecting on Relationships

repository of happiness and peace and that resides in every one of us. *Communication* is necessary in all human relationships, we covered that, and is also necessary in spiritual relationships, relationships of the spirit, spirit to spirit. Sometimes we call that communication prayer. I think every conscious thought is a prayer, I don't think you think anything, or I think anything that The Power is not aware of. You can't have thought apart from God, I don't know if you are familiar with that type of prayer, but I believe it, and I have seen it happen, and it will just take a minute to tell you this little story.

This is a little gal that I sponsored in 1972, we picked her up on Portage Avenue, she was 19 years old, she was a Novice, she came up here to be a novice sister, with the Sisters of The Good Shepherd. We found her lying drunk on Portage Avenue in her own body fluids and people stepping over her. We picked her up and brought her in. Oh that is a hell of a story, she was something else I tell ya. But as time went on she came to our group and she wanted me to sponsor her and I am not that crazy about sponsoring women. But I will sponsor them for a while till they get a female sponsor, but I never could get rid of her. She was something, I'll tell ya. She wanted a relationship, and I talked with her about relationships, how you get them and how you form them, and to forget about the male part of it, the man part of it, think about her part of it.

I suggested she should prepare herself to become the type of person that someone would want to relate to and couldn't help but love, she would become an object of love, a person to love, if she would just prepare herself to do that. And she said "Well I don't

The Higher Power Relationship

even have a decent job, the job I have is piss poor"; she was a very spiritual girl, she was a sister, but she learned to speak English, she learned to speak AA.

And it wasn't very long before she was using the "S" word and the "F" word and all the other words that we use in our AA language. So when she wanted a new job I started telling her. To picture exactly the kind of job you want. Picture the office that you will have, picture your desk, picture your telephone, picture the windows, picture everything that you have in that new job that you want and what you will be doing and picture your salary, picture everything. And we would spend 15-20 minutes, sometimes an hour talking about this job that she was going to have. And she was coming to University to study Accounting at night and doing very well at it, a very smart kid.

She was coming home one night from University and she jumps off the bus and she phones me from the street. I am at home, and she says Tom, I have to tell you this, I just saw the building in which I want my new job to be, it is exactly the kind of building, and she described it. And I says that is good, you go home and pray about it. And she would go home and pray about it, and this went on for 3, 4, or 5 months.

Then she called me one day and she said, "You know Tom, I don't understand what is happening, I went in to an employment agency 2 years ago, and I got no results whatsoever, they never called me", and she said "You know something, they called me today. They want me to go in tomorrow for a job interview." I says "Well you better go kid." "Oh" she said, "I am going, I am going." I said, "Call me after and let me know what happened." "Aw, it will probably be nothing,

Reflecting on Relationships

you know, I have had so many disappointments." I said, "Well, ask, just ask, the great law of ASK."

And away she goes, and I get a call at dinner time the next day. I am home with my family, my kids are there, my wife is there, and one of my kids says, there is a lady on the phone and she wants to talk to you and I think she is crying, but I am not sure, maybe she is laughing. So I pick up the phone and it is my little sister and she is doing both. She is crying she is laughing. She says, "Tom you are not going to believe this, I got a job, and guess where it is." She says, "It is in that building that I told you about on Pembina Highway, and the office is exactly the way I pictured it. I have my own office, I have a telephone. The only thing the salary is \$200.00 less than I asked for." Well that ain't bad to come within \$200.00. So she is in that job here in Winnipeg for about six months and she meets a guy who is with the same company, comes down here from Edmonton and they get married, just like that, in one year from her starting that picturing.

Because you see, it is so important, we don't stop to think about these things. *Thoughts are real. Thoughts are things.* Every thought that you have in your mind is projected into a sea of power, God is everywhere, God is up there, down here, behind you, in front of you, within you, everywhere, a Sea of Power. And you project that thought into the Power.

The power has no choice in the matter, God is love, and God is law. And God operates according to law. His law. So when that thought is projected into the sea of power, the Law seizes upon it, creates it, and brings it into our experience. So that it is vitally important that you have positive loving thoughts, and

The Higher Power Relationship

not negative selfish thoughts because the Law doesn't distinguish, the law is as cold as any law, just like the law of electricity. The law of electricity will light those lights, it will fry my bacon, or it will fry your fanny, the law doesn't distinguish; it is the law.

There is no choice in law, and there is no choice in love, choice is an ego word. I have choice, sure you have choice. Are you an alcoholic? Yeah. So you drank out of choice did you? No, I didn't drink out of choice, I drank because I have an illness, I have a disease. But once you get to AA you have choice, right, no I ain't got no choice once I get to AA.

In AA comes of Age Bills says we exist between two forces, one malign one benign. The benign force God says to us "Do my will, I love you". The malign force, John Barleycorn, Ego, says you damn better do His will because if you don't, I will kill you.

And the little drunk who was so reluctant to do anything suddenly becomes willing to listen under that kind of urging. So whatever we launch into that sea of power is seized upon by the Power, created and brought into our experience. That is the story of Job. Job said "Lo the things I feared the most have come upon me". You bet, you bet, and it will happen to us too.

Anyway, prayer is something that we can do a whole meeting on, we can do a whole meeting on prayer, it is fascinating. But in AA we just use simple prayer, we have lots of them in our book. I like simple prayers like "Show me the way". It just takes a second, "Show me the way", I don't know the way, please show me the way. God knows what I am

Reflecting on Relationships

talking about.

In thinking of meditation, we learn that peace and stress begin in the mind, -- so we have to use our mind. Bill says God gave us brains to use, lets use them. And meditation is the process of quieting the mind, however you may wish to do that. It could be religious, it could be secular, it really doesn't matter. There are many, many ways of doing it, but all of them, all of them that I have ever seen, start with one thing, and that is by paying attention. Being aware, you know.

Increasing awareness and control of the mind, the experience of Oneness and Inner Peace, heals isolation. There are also many health benefits. Of course meditation doesn't bring you peace, your peace is already there, and once you stop disturbing your peace, it can be experienced. That is what meditation does. Quiet the mind.

The first step in every approach to meditation is simply paying attention. Because increasing awareness is the beginning of the end. So focus your awareness, concentrate your mind. The concept of meditation is very simple, it is the practice that is difficult. It is like golf, the idea of golf is very simple, you just hit a ball here, it is on the fairway, to that green, pop it into the hole and that is it. Simple. But the practice is not that easy, believe me, we have to focus, it is fun really.

So try a little meditating, just try to discipline yourself, sit in the chair and tell yourself, "I am going to think about God for the next 30 seconds". If you don't know how long 30 seconds is, if you have a clock that

The Higher Power Relationship

goes 30 seconds, I guarantee you that before you get to 11 seconds, your nose is going to start itching. And you are going to want to scratch it. And you are going to have to teach yourself to leave the nose itch, to hell with the nose, let it itch, I ain't doing it, I am thinking about God for the next 30 seconds, it's like entertainment and it's a challenge. So you see it is the beginning of a relationship like any other, it goes through superficial to companionship to friendship, to intimate, it is all one thing.

By the way Bill's spiritual experience showed. It was evident there was a presence about Bill that I never found in any other man. I remember being at the General Service Conference in 1968. We were in a big room with maybe 150 people and everyone was waiting for Bill to arrive. And they were all standing around, you know what drunks are like. They are all smoking and drinking coffee and telling dirty jokes and hugging and kissing and rubbing up against, and all that spiritual stuff that we do.

And I just happened to be looking at the door, and as I looked, it was three steps up, the doorway, Bill walked in, had on a light grey suit, a blue shirt with a little darker blue tie, and he just walked in and looked. These are service people, this is conference people, this is a dream that he had, that we would have a conference that would carry on the leadership of Alcoholics Anonymous after he and Dr. Bob were gone. And Dr. Bob was already gone, and there was just Bill left as the founding co-founder or rather the surviving co-founder.

Bill walked in and stood and looked. And I could see him, just standing there, and just drinking this in.

Reflecting on Relationships

Nobody rang a bell, nobody gave a whistle, nobody said a word, nobody said, oh there is Bill, nothing like that, but little by little, one by one people turned and turned and turned, towards the doorway and there was Bill, and of course they all started pressing forward. And Bill, his face split into a big smile and he put his hands out like this, and he came down the steps, to meet his family, his spiritual family. And of course they shook his hand and patted him and put their arms around him.

How Bill was ever able to deal with all of that adulation and remain humble, and he was humble. He could have had anything he wanted. His kitchen had a coffee pot that you put on the stove and boiled to make coffee. He could have had the fanciest electric coffee pot just by mentioning it. Ten people would have jumped forward and given it to him, made sure he got one, but he never did. His kitchen was sparse, was not fancy in anyway, the furniture was bare, but that was the way that Bill lived. He was a simple man who had humility and couldn't understand that he was anything special, and didn't think that he was. He just knew he was one of God's kids, and that we were all God's kids and there was nothing special about him. But he had this power, and I saw it happen in Washington when he spoke to the press there.

There is nothing like the Washington press, they are the most skeptical people in the world, they have seen everything, they have seen the Shah of Iran and the King of this and the prince of that, and they are not impressed by anybody. Bill stood up there with his hands stuck down his pockets, the way he used to do, kind of bony shoulders and talked to them about Alcoholics Anonymous for about 20, 25 minutes. And

The Higher Power Relationship

when he finished and walked down from that little podium, they rose like one man and shook hands with him, and said my God Bill that was wonderful.

You see, we know the truth, we recognize the truth, when we see simplicity, when we see humility, when we see power, we recognize that. And he had that presence about him.

I came to Alcoholics Anonymous more than 35 years ago now, not looking for God, but just hoping, because I didn't have any hope, that I might find a way that would allow me to live without alcohol, or pills or goof balls, a day at a time. And I remained to find a bunch of drunks that didn't have to drink anymore, and I found a Fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous that is indescribably wonderful. And a way of life that is immensely more satisfying day by day than anything that I have ever known, in experiencing fulfillment peace and joy. Great joy in giving and receiving (it is one thing, giving and receiving) the love of each and every member of this group and moreover all the other groups that I served before I got here to this one.

I love every one of you guys and gals, you are very special people and I have to love you. For with you I travel the Broad Highway. And I come to see that whatever I have that is worth keeping I pass along.

I have to thank Marvellous Marvin for chairing this series of session, he has been very patient, he only punched me once. And I have to thank Brian, for taping those meetings. He has done a real good job, much better than I thought he could.

And I have to thank you, each and every one of

Reflecting on Relationships

you for coming, because it is nice to go somewhere to talk, but if you guys didn't show up, it would be kind of an empty room. So I want to thank you for allowing me to give this series, I have to tell you that the preparation drove me nuts. I spent a lot of time, I am not a quick study, you know, but it has made me cheerfully aware of my many shortcomings and a few of my longcomings.

***So again thank you, I love you, God bless you,
thank you very much.***