

asac action

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Celebrating Recovery Month

September is Recovery Month. This is the 20th year of celebrating people in recovery. This annual observance helps people realize that substance abuse is a national health crisis that affects all of us and that addiction is a treatable disease. Treatment changes peoples lives. Following is one person's story:

Hi my name is Vicki. I am an average 47 year old with two daughters and a good man that loves me. I own my own home, car, and other non-sequential material things. I have been with the same corporate company for 14 years and I am an alcoholic.

I didn't have a bad childhood, nor did I suffer abuse of any kind. I let the pressures of everyday life build up until I couldn't stand it anymore. At first I started drinking just to relax after a long day or to enjoy a party with friends. But as the pressure built, I drank to numb the thoughts of the outside world.

I didn't go to bars or pubs; I went to the grocery store and picked up a bottle or two. Then I would go home and start to drink. I would drink until I didn't remember going to bed. I drank to forget the things I didn't get done or get started. What was bad was the drinking was the reason I didn't do the things I needed to do or use to enjoy doing. I became a recluse. Except when I had to leave to go to work or some function at school. I let my children down more than I care to admit to. The hurt that I caused them I am still trying to heal.

So one night while I was drinking myself stupid, I started crying. I didn't want to live like this anymore. I called my best and strongest ally and told her I needed to get help. She said she would check into it for me. She did some research and came to me with information and numbers for ASAC. I didn't remember calling her so I was a little surprised when she gave them to me. I told her I wasn't an alcoholic that I just needed to slow down my drinking. She told me to check it out. So I continued to drink, telling myself that I was cutting down, I was just making my drinks twice as strong. Finally my kids said they wanted me to get help. They didn't want me to end up like my mother, also an alcoholic.

So I took the necessary steps to get into ASAC. I started seeing a counselor every week while I waited to get in and I just proved to myself I couldn't do outpatient because after my sessions, I would go home and drink. I went to ASAC. I had no idea what to expect. What I saw was a lot of other people just like me trying to get sober and stay sober. Wow, what a surprise! I was put right into the daily runnings of rehab. I received my room assignment, unpacked, and began my treatment.

That was the beginning of the hardest and best day of my life. I took it upon myself to change. I didn't know how, but couldn't wait to find out what all these other people knew. Why they seemed so happy. I didn't realize that alcoholism was a disease. ASAC helped me understand my disease and what I had to do to return to sanity. It isn't just the 12 step program but the support you receive from the counselors and the other residents and peers. Their understanding of what I was going through and what I needed to do to help myself to change my thinking and the way I lived.

Forty-seven days as of August 28, 2009, and I am still sober and taking each day as it comes. I could not have done this alone. I thank God for the people of ASAC and what they did for me. Making that phone call was the best thing I ever did. Thank you ASAC, I couldn't have done it without all the support I received there and even now that I am out and back in the real world.

A Message of Support for Alcoholics

"Why are you doing this?," my friend asked, tears lining his face.

"Because I'm an alcoholic, just like you," I said.

"And coming for a visit, hopefully to help you, is part of what I can do to stay sober," I added.

Why had I answered the phone call from someone in need, who said she was desperate, and didn't know what to do about the man lying here in bed in front of me? He's a mutual friend and they both needed support. The thought that I might be able to provide some small measure of that for him, and by extension for her, is one reason, ironically, that I am a grateful alcoholic. Choosing to stay sober, maybe I could help a fellow sufferer of this progressive and chronic disease.

I accept myself as an alcoholic. Most of my fifty-plus years I've been sober. I drank a lot my first year in college, then tapered off, completed my degree, got married and raised a family. For thirty years, with a few exceptions, I drank very little if at all. I started imbibing more booze in my mid-forties, and within a couple of years I was getting drunk almost daily. Some statistics suggest women can reach the third, or chronic stage of alcoholism within seven years of starting to drink heavily. I was probably in year three, headed toward more.

During an emotional intervention in my home, my family asked me to enter residential treatment and I stayed there for 28 days. I've been sober since Jan. 15, 2005.

I've been able to write and publish a lot about my experience, and I am very grateful to the people who have made that possible. This brings me back to my friends who needed help and were able to ask for it because I had been public concerning my very private drinking, in the Alcoholics Anonymous tradition of using my first name and my last name's initial. The man who was lying in bed nearby was once a vibrant, energetic person, always articulate, and someone who still had a great sense of humor. He was now clearly very seriously ill and needed medical help quickly, more than I could provide. But I could listen and I could talk to him as someone who understood much about our shared disease. So I did, and he agreed to go for treatment later that day.

Support for an alcoholic can never be understated.

Alcoholics suffer from a disease. We are not evil people. The illness is not our fault; research increasingly indicates genetic components. We do have a choice, to be drunk or sober, and the more support we receive, the higher the likelihood of longer sobriety. I have received tremendous support from many sources, often unexpected. I've had strangers approach me on the street, or send me letters, and email, having heard about, or read what I've written about the shameful, very personal and difficult subject of my alcoholism. I am humbled to hear from them, and very thankful. They help keep me sober.

I know there are many people who simply dismiss alcoholics and addicts, as folks who are beneath contempt. I have compassion for those who feel that way, and who, as a result, often make no attempt to understand this disease. Because addiction touches most families in one way or another, I write and talk about this disease, for the benefit of anyone willing to learn.

For alcoholics, the A.A. program works for support, following treatment, whether residential or outpatient. The third tradition of the 12-step program states, "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." Basically, it's a three-pronged, balanced program involving body, mind and spirit. Anonymity is part of the program, dues payments are not. People meet for the purpose of sharing their experience, strength and hope and everyone can relate in some way because they have the common denominator of alcoholism.

There are also Aftercare programs, which differ from A.A. in some ways. They are facilitated by a trained substance abuse counselor, who was a substance abuser also, at one time in his or her life. Peer counseling, during treatment and afterward, works best. Sometimes, addicts and alcoholics are required to attend these meetings, and even do homework. Many people come just because they want to, and the message, spoken by many who sit around the table, that a sober life is a better choice needs repetition. I go to a great aftercare meeting each week, because I want to listen and learn. One of the guys at my meeting has been coming for 14 years, staying sober. Another was sober 20 years, then "went back out," as we say, and now is trying sobriety again. Alcoholism, addiction in general, is an insidious disease, indeed.

There are family, friends and co-workers of the alcoholic who can provide tremendous support. A kind word or simple gesture of trust can go a long way toward keeping someone from "stinkin' thinkin'." A woman I know in my aftercare program said her daughters now trust her again to take care of their children, her grandchildren. She speaks with humility when she says they not only didn't let her do that when she was drinking, but they barely communicated with her at all. She seems pleased that life for her is changing for the better.

Support means hope. Hope that a friend who called for help will start a sober life. Hope that I can maintain my own sobriety, that I may continue to learn, and to pass that knowledge on to others. In A.A. circles, we say that to keep it, you have to give it away, which applies to much in life.

So, here's to the strength that support provides, for anyone in need.

I could drink to that, but, for today, I prefer to just write about it.

Abbi S.

A Deadly Combination

Maudi Walton, Prevention Specialist II, Clinton

Several recent studies have proven what people in the substance abuse prevention field have already known. Drinking and driving is always a dangerous and deadly combination for anyone, but intoxicated teens are over-represented in alcohol related driving accidents. Young people between 16 and 24 years old represent 14% of the U.S. population but are involved in over 28% of alcohol related driving accidents.

The over-representation of young people is in part because they:

- are relatively inexperienced consumers of alcohol
- have a false sense of being invincible and immortal
- are relatively inexperienced drivers

Even when their blood alcohol levels are not high, they still are involved in more driving accidents than other drivers with similar blood alcohol levels.

Now, with the explosion of cell phones and the ever expanding technological feats that these phones can perform, parents have another added fear – intoxicated teens driving and using their cell phones! Combining the distraction of cell phone use (even hands-free) and intoxication increases the risk of rear-end crashes, according to recent research.

Parents, here are some facts that our young people need to know: it is never okay to drink and drive and don't engage in a prolonged phone call while driving. Pull over to the side of the road to talk.

Parents are the #1 influence on a child's behavior, values and decisions about drinking. Yes, and about driving and using cell phones also. Being a good role model and setting a good example is imperative.

Always remember, what your children see you do today, you will see them do tomorrow. 46% of teens reported that their parents are their primary role models. As our young people head back to high school and college, please remind them once again to be a safe, sober, courteous and responsible driver.

Source:
www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

**Make sure you come home safely
this homecoming.**



Stay substance free this homecoming season.

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