



The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety

by Bill Wilson

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*(Also see: **A Letter From Bill W. on Depression**, from the memoirs of Tom Pike, an early California AA member, which is strikingly similar to this AA Grapevine Article, "The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety.")*

I think that many oldsters who have put our AA "booze cure" to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the **next major development in AA—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.** (When did this happen?)

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance—urges quite appropriate to age seventeen—prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since AA began, I've taken immense wallops in all these areas **because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually.** My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, **and how very painful to discover finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse! (See page 114, 12 & 12) – God goes before everything – seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness) Wilson had 23 years when he wrote this!** Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy, and good living—well, that's not only the neurotic's problem, it's the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us AA oldsters have come to. **And it's a hell of a spot, literally.** How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden "Mr. Hyde" becomes our main task.

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones—folks like you and me—commencing to get results. Last autumn [several years back - ed.] depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I've had with depressions, it wasn't a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, "Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release depression?" By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer..."It's better to comfort than to be the comforted." Here was the formula, all right. But why didn't it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. **My basic flaw had always been dependence - almost absolute dependence - on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like.** Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away. (The process of Getting rid of old ideas)

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. (The Apostle Paul's Secret)

Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. **And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.**

For my dependency meant demand—a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words "absolute demand" may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and

quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. ***It is most clear that the current can't flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is. 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Also Step 7 – the value of suffering – Humiliation and the final crushing of our self-sufficiency!***

Spiritual calculus, you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any AA of six months working with a new Twelfth Step case. If the case says "To the devil with you," the Twelfth Stepper only smiles and turns to another case. He doesn't feel frustrated or rejected. If his next case responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn't feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his one-time prospect is sober and happy. And if his next following case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance) then the sponsor is most joyful. ***But he well knows that his happiness is a by-product—the extra dividend of giving without any demand for a return.***

The really stabilizing thing for him was having and offering love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In the first six months of my own sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not a one responded. Yet this work kept me sober. It wasn't a question of those alcoholics giving me anything. ***My stability came out of trying to give, not out of demanding that I receive.***

Thus I think it can work out with emotional sobriety. ***If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand.*** Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

Of course I haven't offered you a really new idea—only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own "hexes" at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

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IDOLS

“This is the step that separates the men from the boys”. Any person willing to try repeatedly step 6 on all his faults is a man who is sincerely trying to grow in the image and likeness of his Creator.” Chapter 6 of the 12 and 12 says

In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on... that masters or rules us (Ps. 119:133), or that we serve (Matt. 6:24).”Ken Sande ..¹³³***Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.***

“An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as God. All sorts of things are potential idols, depending only on our attitudes and actions toward them...Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God’s existence or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly good...An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero- anything that can substitute for God.”Richard Keyes

“The human heart is a factory of idols...Everyone of us is, from his mother’s womb, expert in inventing idols.....John Calvin

19"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money. (MATTHEW 6)**

Philippians 4

for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

When the Lord divided Canaan among the tribes of Israel, Levi received no share of the land. God said to him simply, ***“I am thy part and thine inheritance,”*** and by those words made him richer than all his brethren, richer than all the kings and rajas who have ever lived in the world.

And there is a spiritual principle here, a principle still valid for every priest of the Most High God.

The man who has God for his treasure has all things in ONE. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they will never

be necessary to his happiness. Or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel a sense of loss, for having the SOURCE of all things he has in ONE all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight. Whatever he may lose he has actually lost nothing, for he has it all in the ONE, and he has it purely, legitimately and forever..... THE PURSUIT OF GOD by A.W. Tozer

THE GUY IN THE GLASS

Dale Wimbrow - 1934

When you get what you want in your struggle for pelf,
And the world makes you King for a day,
Then go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what that guy has to say.

For it isn't your Father, or Mother, or Wife,
Who judgment upon you must pass.
The feller whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the guy staring back from the glass.

He's the feller to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the guy in the glass is your friend.

You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years,
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the guy in the glass.

Ezekiel 33

The LORD Appoints Ezekiel To Stand Watch

¹The LORD said: ²Ezekiel, son of man, warn your people by saying:

Someday, I, the LORD, may send an enemy to invade a country. And suppose its people choose someone to stand watch ³and to sound a warning signal when the enemy is seen coming. ⁴⁻⁵If any of these people hear the signal and ignore it, they will be killed in battle. But it will be their own fault, because they could have escaped if they had paid attention.

⁶But suppose the person watching fails to sound the warning signal. The enemy will attack and kill some of the sinful people in that country, and I, the LORD, will hold that person responsible for their death.

⁷**Ezekiel, I have appointed you to stand watch for the people of Israel. So listen to what I say, then warn them for me. ⁸When I tell wicked people they will die because of their sins, you must warn them to turn from their sinful ways. But if you refuse to warn them, you are responsible for their death. ⁹If you do warn them, and they keep sinning, they will die because of their sins, and you will be innocent.**

More about Alcoholism

We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, **which is God.**

Belief in the *power* of God, plus enough willingness, honesty, and humility to *establish and maintain* a new order of things were the **essential REQUIREMENTS**. Simple, but not easy. A price had to be paid. **It meant the destruction of self-centeredness.** I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all. (A.A. Page 13, 14)

“Remind the *potential* newcomer that their recovery is **not dependent upon people. **It is dependent upon their *relationship with God.*” (A.A. Page 99)****

“Burn the idea into the *consciousness* of every newcomer, that – they can get well – regardless of anyone. **The only *condition* is that they TRUST IN GOD, and CLEAN HOUSE.” (A.A. Page 98)**

Mentorship

(Mentors are not perfect and do not have to be –Bill W. etc.)

You need to go where you can get fed. If you want something someone has you need to expose yourself to their thinking and discipline. You will become and be influenced by who you associate.

Strong mentorship is a key to progress. It fosters and maintains discipline, obedience and continuity of effort. Most people do not succeed because they are *dilettantes*^a and **choose** to be not seriously mentored. They choose their mentors with that in mind (to be left to themselves) or choose to what degree they will submit to their authority or example.

My life is marked by following mentors who guided me into various spiritual “exercises” (which sometimes lasted years) and in submitting myself to their tutelage-usually into areas I did not wish to go.

Most people do not have the willingness to accede to that type of submission. Follow-up - (a continuation of effort through devotion to the task) is rarely realized. Desire and actually going to any length is the key. When the pupil is ready the teacher will appear (but readiness is seen in retrospect through actual effort).

Russell

dilettante noun;

^a *An amateur or dabbler; especially, one who follows an art or a branch of knowledge sporadically, superficially, or for amusement only.*

Still you may say: "But I will not have the benefit of contact with you who wrote this book." We cannot be sure. God will determine that, so you must remember that your real reliance is always upon Him. He will show you how to create the fellowship you crave.

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick... 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.

*Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. **We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny***