

The Toothache

There was a little boy in the Fourth Grade who was a really good baseball player. The big baseball game is tomorrow and the coach says, "Now Johnny, it's absolutely essential that you get eight hours of sleep tonight so that you're well rested for tomorrow."

So the boy goes home, gets to bed early, and wakes up after only four hours sleep because he has the beginnings of a little toothache. The little toothache gives him an occasional twinge of slight pain. The little boy thinks, "I should call my mom, she'll come in and give me some aspirin, and I'll be back to sleep in no time."

He knows that that's what he should do but he doesn't do it. Instead of doing that, he waits to see if the pain is going to go away by itself. He waits a little while and the twinges begin to get a little more painful and a little more frequent. He thinks once again that he should call his mom but he plays this "let's wait and see" game for two and a half hours until he realizes that it won't go away. Finally, he calls his mom, gets the aspirin, and goes back to sleep. When he gets up in the morning he's only had five hours sleep and doesn't do very well at the game.

So the question is, why didn't he call his mom right away? Why would he delay two and a half hours and THEN call his mom?

The answer is, YES he knows that his mom will take care of him by bringing some aspirin, but he ALSO knows that she won't stop there. The next day when he's at the ball game she'll make a DENTAL appointment. He'll go to the dentist's office and the dentist will ask, "What is the matter?"

The little boy explains that there is some pain with a certain tooth. "Oh, we can fix that," says the dentist, "and while you're here, we're going to look at every tooth in your mouth." He calls in the dental assistant, takes some x-rays, and when he comes back he let's the boy know that there are other teeth with problems, and the little boy doesn't get out of there until he has perfect teeth.

The little boy didn't want perfect teeth, he just wanted two aspirins. That's all he wanted. That's why he didn't call his mom right away.

And so it is when we come into AA. I didn't want to try all these Steps, decide to turn my will and my life over, do a massive inventory, become entirely ready, and set right wrongs. I just wanted to not drink. My not drinking is the same as that little boy's two aspirins.

But the only help, the only provider of not drinking, is a Higher Power. The only help that is available is Perfect Help. So when I ask for help I'm going to get Perfect Help. I don't know if I want Perfect Help, which is what our ego will do to prevent us from getting well, and so the struggle begins where we start seeing that MAYBE we have not put in perspective what our life is all about. Maybe we thought getting promoted and becoming the President of our company was our top objective. We come into AA and we are forced to face something - the clash between our human side (the ego or our lower side) and our spiritual side (our Higher Power).

But all we came here for was to not drink. But the only way to have the gift of sobriety is to engage, to the best of our ability, in the struggle to go against the ego and to go ahead and try to become a better person by being guided by our spiritual side, our Higher Power.

Sandy B.