

WHAT TYPE OF SOBRIETY DO YOU
HAVE?
WANT?

A.A. members enter into our fellowship in varying degrees. Some are more or less reluctant or passive. Others are happy and even joyous. The joyous ones are the real "rocks of A.A.:" "All members of Alcoholics Anonymous who are honest with themselves are sober. Some of them are reluctantly sober. Others are passively sober. Some are happily sober. Others are joyously sober. Why is there a difference? It's the quality of their sobriety. Sober is sober, you may say. If a person isn't drinking, then he's sober, that's all there is to it. But that isn't all there is to it. A ride on the water wagon will bring sobriety, at least for the duration of the ride. But it's likely to be a pretty low grade of sobriety. It's a reluctant sobriety, the "I-don't-like-this-but-I've-got-to" kind. The rider is so sorry for himself that he won't even talk to the driver. He might just as well be going through a tunnel, for all the passing scene means to him. Some members of A.A. are like that.

Then there's the passive sobriety. This alcoholic has reached the bottom below which he doesn't want to go, so he joins A.A. He comes to meetings, listens a bit, talks a bit, puts enough of the principles to work to keep himself sober, takes only a passive interest in the group, seldom has time for Twelfth-Step work, absorbs as much as he needs and gives only what is brushed from him through contact. He's sober, yes. But he isn't the kind of member that has made A.A. grow, that has enabled A.A. to reach out to the thousands of hopeless drunks and restore them to sanity. He isn't particularly happy or unhappy. He's rather numb about the whole thing. Fortunately there aren't too many members like them.

Then there's the happy type of sobriety. This fellow accepts defeat. He knows that he and liquor don't get along and he takes hold of A.A. with enthusiasm. He seems to grasp the program quickly and shows he is putting it to work. He enters into group affairs and carries his share or more than his share of the load. He attends meetings. He does Twelfth-Step work as it comes and hunts for more. He tends to be a little evangelistic at the heart, later cools off as he gains experience and becomes a solid member of the group. He's pretty happy about the whole thing. He's changed the pattern of his life and his associations. And while occasionally he may long momentarily for the good old days when liquor was fun, before it became a problem to him, he doesn't brood about it and he's fairly well satisfied with his lot.

Many members stay in this class throughout their associations with the fellowship. But a great many more stay in this group only for a while, then slip almost unnoticed into another classification.

This last group is the one which enjoys a joyous sobriety. Those who are blessed with joyous sobriety can't be separated physically from the happily sober ones. No halo hangs over their heads. No particular gleam sparkles from their eyes. Theirs is an inward joyousness that stems from gratitude to a gracious God who has selected them for the great mass of alcoholics for special consideration, a God who might have picked any one of thousands of hopeless drunks, but instead elected to present them with the gift of sobriety. These joyous A.A.'s are humble folk, who know that humility consists not in groveling but in having a true perspective of their spiritual assets and liabilities. These are the members to whom others refer as having achieved, although they'd be the first to deny it. Their lives aren't serene but they have achieved the ability to take things as they come, to roll with the punches, to change those things they can and to ask the God of their understanding for guidance and counsel in all things.

These are the folks who started doing for others because they were told they should, that it was part of the program. But as they grew spiritually, they found that in direct proportion to the amount of good they did willingly and freely, with no thought of recompense, the good things of life both spiritually and materially were returned to them.

Soon they needed no reason for doing good. They now just do it as a part of decent living. They live a day at a time, placing themselves in the hands of a Higher Power each morning to carry out His will for that day; to ask daily to be so filled with His grace that it can be passed on to others. In doing these, they don't think of themselves as anything special. They do only what they think in their hearts they should. We all know them. While they give no outward indication, they stand out everywhere. They're the rocks with which the temple of A.A. has slowly risen. We can all be like them, if only we will put forth the effort. It is up to us."

"7 Points of Alcoholics Anonymous", pages 40-43 by Richmond Walker