

Commitment

One may be quite far along on the path, but if one meets a beginner who sincerely seeks guidance, then one should help without reservation. If such a beginner were to come to you, what would you say? This is what I said to someone today:

"The time of beginning is one of the most precious times of all. It can be very exciting and full of wonderful growth. The first thing to do is to make up your mind that you are going to go the distance.

"When I first began, I made a lifelong commitment. I determined that I would learn from my teacher for at least seven years. Now, it has been much longer than that, but the essential element is still the same: commitment.

"But commitment needs something else in order to be perpetuated. It needs discipline. This is the perseverance to keep on when things are tough. Adversity is life's way of testing and perfecting a person. Without that, we would never develop character.

"Rice suffers when it is milled. Jade must suffer when it is polished. But what emerges is something special. If you want to be special too, then you have to be able to stick to things even when they are difficult."

"Commitment and disciple -- these are two of the most precious words for those who would seek [a spiritual path]."

--Deng Ming-Dao, 365 Tao: Daily Meditations

Knowledge vs. Understanding

Understanding is like water flowing in a stream. Wisdom and knowledge are solid and can block our understanding. In Buddhism knowledge is regarded as an obstacle for understanding. If we take something to be the truth, we may cling to it so much that even if the truth comes and knocks at our door, we won't want to let it in. We have to be able to transcend our previous knowledge the way we climb up a ladder. If we are on the fifth rung and think that we are very high, there is no hope for us to step up to the sixth. We must learn to transcend our own views. Understanding, like water, can flow, can penetrate. Views, knowledge, and even wisdom are solid, and can block the way of understanding.

--Thich Nhat Hanh, The Heart of Understanding

Barometer Questions:

- 1) How many people are here for their first Big Book Study or weekend Big Book workshop?
- 2) How many people here have been through all 12 steps using the Big Book at least once?
- 3) How many people are:
 - a) currently on their 4th step or about to start it?
 - b) currently making amends?

Open Mind

"When we hear [spiritual teachings] or study [spiritual principles], our only job is to remain open. Usually when we hear or read something new, we just compare it to our own ideas. If it is the same, we accept it and say that it is correct. If it is not, we say it is incorrect. In either case, we learn nothing. If we read or listen with an open mind and an open heart, the rain of the Dharma will penetrate the soil of our consciousness. While reading or listening, don't work too hard. Be like the earth. When rain comes, the earth only has to open herself up to the rain. Allow the rain of the Dharma to come in and penetrate the seeds that are buried deep in your consciousness. A teacher cannot give you the truth. The truth is already in you. You only need to open yourself -- body, mind, and heart -- so that his or her teachings will penetrate your own seed of understanding and enlightenment. If you let the words enter you, the soil and the seeds will do the rest of the work."

--Thich Nhat Hanh, from "The Heart of Buddha's Teaching"

Definition of "allergy"

Allergy - "a condition of unusual sensitivity to a substance which in like amounts does not effect others and is characterized by systematic disorders."

Going nowhere... FAST!

"There is a story in Zen circles about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly, and it appears that the man on the horse is going somewhere important. Another man, standing alongside the road, shouts, "Where are you going?" and the first man replies, "I don't know! Ask the horse!" This is also our story. We are riding a horse, we don't know where we are going, and we can't stop. The horse is our habit energy pulling us along, and we are powerless."

--Thich Nhat Hanh, from "The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings"

Addicted

"The ego is addicted. Within this part of my mind, I believe I am alone, so naturally the craving to unite with something else is enormous. The mistake I made was uniting with a harmful substance that had nothing to give. However, if I remain in my separate self after giving up the substance, my addictions merely shift. The reason that transformations were so quick in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous is that the "members" were clear that the aim of the program was to move from the mind that serves itself to the mind that serves others. The mind that serves others cannot be addicted. But if my focus is on strengthening and defining the separate self, I will never know the joy of the mind that serves."

--Hugh Prather, from "Spiritual Notes to Myself"

The Ultimate Dance

"Truth cannot be defined, although it can certainly be experienced. But experience is not a definition. A definition is made by the mind, experience comes through participating. If somebody asks, "What is a dance?" how can you define it? But you can dance and you can know the inner feel of it. God is the ultimate dance." --Osho

7 Questions to ask a prospect before starting the Steps:

Considerations to ask the group at the end of the Friday evening session (after Step 1):
Take these questions into meditation between the time we end Friday's session and when we come back at 9am Saturday morning.

1. *Do you want to live?*
2. *Do you want to quit drinking for good?*
3. *Can you quit drinking on your own power?*
4. *Can you absolutely rely on what the people in the Big Book say about themselves and the experience you can have?*
5. *Do you believe to show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book?*
6. *Do you want what we have (p. 58) and are you willing to go to any lengths to get it (p. 76)?*
7. *With you, is to drink to die? (p. 66)*

These questions can be asked sometime during the first and second visit of a 12-step call, when "qualifying" a prospect before starting the work in the Big Book. (Note: at the end of the initial 12-step call, you have given the prospect the Big Book to read.) Ask the prospect each question, one at a time, and wait for his/her response. If the answer to any of the above questions is no then we cannot ask the next question and we cannot go any further.

Breathing in Love

"Love is always new. It never becomes old because it is non-accumulative, non-hoarding. It knows no past; it is always fresh, as fresh as the dewdrops. It lives moment to moment, it is atomic. It has no continuity, it knows no tradition. Each moment it dies and each moment it is born again. It is like breath: you breathe in, you breathe out; again you breathe in and you breathe out. You don't hoard it inside. If you hoard the breath you will die because it will become stale, it will become dead. It will lose that vitality, the quality of life. So is the case with love - it is breathing; each moment it renews itself. So whenever one gets stuck in love and stops breathing, life loses all significance. And that's what is happening to people: the mind is so dominant that it even influences the heart and makes even the heart possessive! The heart knows no possessiveness but the mind contaminates it, poisons it. So remember that: be in love with existence! And let love be like breathing. Breathe in, breathe out, but let it be love coming in, going out. By and by with each breath you have to create that magic of love. Make it a meditation: when you breathe out, just feel that you are pouring your love into existence; when you breathe in, existence is pouring its love into you. And soon you will see that the quality of your breath is changing, then it starts becoming something totally different to what you have ever known before. That's why in India we call it "prana", life, not just breathing, it is not just oxygen. Something else is there, the very life itself." --Osho

Slipping out of Mind

“Meditation is not a solution of any problem in particular; it solves nothing. It simply helps you to get rid of the mind, the problem-creator. It simply helps you to slip out of the mind as a snake slips out of the old skin. Once you know you are not the mind the great transcendence has happened. Suddenly all problems become insignificant; slowly, slowly they evaporate. You are left with a profound peace; a great silence prevails. This silence is the solution. This peace is the answer, the answer of all answers.” --Osho

Advanced Guilt

“I must have done something wrong before I was born to upset God or He wouldn't have forced me to be born. My Original Sin was self-induced. I feel very guilty about whatever I did and I feel guilty about feeling guilty. I feel guilty about the things I'm going to do in the future. My birth itself makes me feel guilty. Somehow I should have been able to spare my mother the pains of childbirth. I feel guilty about not fulfilling the potential that my parents and teachers said I had. I feel guilty about HAVING the potential, and guilty about not knowing what the potential was for. I feel guilty for not having the courage to do certain wrong things that others enjoyed doing and then I could feel some real guilt. I feel guilty because I'm always doing the things that God doesn't want me to do and that is because I don't know what He DOES want me to do, which makes me feel guilty about not knowing what God wants me to do. Therefore, I feel guilty about having done whatever caused God to not let me know what He wants me to do. As a result, I feel guilty that this can never be changed unless God let's it be changed, and He won't until I stop feeling guilty which causes me to feel guilty about FEELING guilty. But I feel guilty about wanting to get rid of this guilt because I know I'm supposed to have this guilt. I'm supposed to have this guilt because I really am guilty. Guilty of what? Why guilty of all the things that make me feel guilty. Why do you ask?” --Sandy B.

Self-examination Prayer

(Adapted from St. Augustine's Prayer Book)

Before self-examination (inventory) say this prayer:

"O Holy Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding and of knowledge, Come to my assistance and enable me to make [my searching and fearless, moral inventory]. Enlighten me, and help me now to know my sins [my defects, shortcomings, and harms to others]. Bring to my mind the [wrongs], which I have done, and the good which I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by [self-will... or self-loathing or hated]. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, knowing how deeply they have wounded [my relationships with God and my fellow man]. [Help me to be free of all guilt and to be willing to right all the wrongs I have committed.] [Please help me see the Truth.] Amen."

Who's that SOB?

Dated: 7/10/2001

Column 1: I get annoyed at Kathy (*my wife*)...

Column 2: ...when she asks or insists that I should go to the doctor.

Column 3: "Who" gets annoyed?

- a) **The husband** - I know best and my wife shouldn't tell me what to do. I should tell her what to do.
- b) **"Physician heal thy-self"** - My body will heal on it's own. Time and rest are the best medicine. I know what's best for me.
- c) **"The man"** - Real men don't need doctors.
- d) **"The spiritual man"** - I'm so spiritually evolved I don't need medical help.
- e) **"Accountant"** - Doctor's visit = \$\$\$\$. Unneeded spending. Doctors / medication is over-rated / over-priced.
- f) **"The employee"** - I'm entitled to sick days. I'll only feel worse by going to work.

What's the fear(s) behind the masks in column 3?

I fear what could be the result of a doctor's visit (fear of the unknown) I'm not current/educated with how my job's insurance works therefore I fear going to the doctor. I fear making an effort. I fear losing/spending money. I fear getting completely well because I'll be expected to go back to work. (Ha!)

Needless to say, once I saw this truth (even then I wasn't happy about it at first), I slept on it and the next morning I got the "corrective measures"... and had a blast reading this stuff to Kathy. LOL!

Stop, Drop & Roll

A friend laughed today when I told her the Big Book's 10th & 11th Step tools of:

PAUSE, ASK, & TURN are a lot like when your body is caught on fire and we're instructed to:
STOP, DROP, & ROLL

PAUSE when agitated or doubtful. (p. 87, Step 11)

ASK for the right thought or action (ask for the truth). (p. 84 & 87, Steps 10 & 11)

TURN to someone you can be helpful to. (p. 84, Step 10)

vs.

STOP the fear (which causes agitation and doubt) from driving (ego) you.

DROP the SOB's ("States Of Being"; who I think I am, but really am not) which wear the many masks of fear.

ROLL away from the "selves" which burn me and toward someone I can help who's also "up in the flames".

“Enter the Silence Often”, A White Eagle Meditation

"Dear Ones, enter the Silence often. Be still at least for a short time each morning and night. Surely God is worthy of a little attention in your busy life? Whenever you can, withdraw from the crowd and seek contact with that divine life, which you will recognize in yourself as a vibration or feeling of peace, of love, and of great light. You can carry that light in your heart as you go amid the crowds. "In your meditation, think often of the beauty of God, the love of God; and as you do so you will begin to feel in your heart a pulsation of love, divine peace, and kindness towards the whole world, and see God manifesting in all life, in all form. Those who thus 'practice the Presence of God' can enter a crowd, or a room full of people, and consciously or unconsciously they are radiating light, they are projecting the light of the divine spirit. This is the healing light, the light of the world. Christ through Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.' I AM. The Christ in you is the light of your world and the light of mankind. "Seek the will of God, and not self-will... God into the silence; seek there, and then when you have found it, let it manifest in your own lives. Put aside all temptation to harbor unkind or critical thoughts. In their place let there be consideration and thoughtfulness, remembering the difficulties that all, including yourselves, have to encounter. This is the law of Christ, and this is what Christ did through Jesus of Nazareth. Go ye and do likewise and you will have nothing to fear. Instead you will unfurl your wings and rise into the world of great joy and peace.

--White Eagle (in the Fall 2001 White Eagle Newsletter for the Americas: On Eagle's Wings)

Native American Code of Ethics

Rise with the sun to pray. Pray alone. Pray often. The Great Spirit will listen, if you only speak. Be tolerant of those who are lost on their path. Ignorance, conceit, anger, jealousy and greed stem from a lost soul. Pray that they will find guidance. Search for yourself, by yourself. Do not allow others to make your path for you. It is your road, and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you. Treat the guests in your home with much consideration. Serve them the best food, give them the best bed and treat them with respect and honor. Do not take what is not yours whether from a person, a community, the wilderness or from a culture. It was not earned nor given. It is not yours. Respect all things that are placed upon this earth -- whether it be people or plant. Honor other people's thoughts, wishes and words. Never interrupt another or mock or rudely mimic them. Allow each person the right to personal expression. Never speak of others in a bad way. The negative energy that you put out into the universe will multiply when it returns to you. All persons make mistakes. And all mistakes can be forgiven. Bad thoughts cause illness of the mind, body and spirit. Practice optimism. Nature is not FOR us, it is a PART of us. They are part of your worldly family. Children are the seeds of our future. Plant love in their hearts and water them with wisdom and life's lessons. When they are grown, give them space to grow. Avoid hurting the hearts of others. The poison of your pain will return to you. Be truthful at all times. Honesty is the test of one's will within this universe. Keep yourself balanced. Your Mental self, Spiritual self, Emotional self, and Physical self -- all need to be strong, pure and healthy. Work out the body to strengthen the mind. Grow rich in spirit to cure emotional ails. Make conscious decisions as to who you will be and how you will react. Be responsible for your own actions. Respect the privacy and personal space of others. Do not touch the personal property of others -- especially sacred and religious objects. This is forbidden. Be true to yourself first. You cannot nurture and help others if you cannot nurture and help yourself first. Respect others religious beliefs. Do not force your belief on others.