

# Here's How

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## One Day at a Time

### One Year–But One Day at a Time

BY TOMMY

One year. 365 days. 21,900 hours. 1,314,000 seconds. Yesterday is the past, so I will forget it (but not the lessons it taught me and the scars of hard learned wisdom it gave me). Tomorrow is the future, so I won't worry about it. And today is a gift, and that's why I call it a "present." I am cherishing the moment, the monotony of the seconds ticking by as the sun rises on a day filled with optimism and opportunity.

I choose to unwrap this gift and receive all that it may bring to bear. My every waking decision, either wise or foolish, altruistic or selfish, constructive or destructive, godly or ghastly, freeing or imprisoning, courageous or fearful, bold or timid, faithful or faithless, judgmental or gracious, merciful or condemning, running into the light or retreating towards the shadows shall SURELY bring ripples of consequences into the next day, to the ones I'm supposed to love, and sow seeds that will either bear good fruit or thorns and thistles.

With my past, ever grasping at my heels, and my future, always a mirage calling for my ever whimsical attention span, I cannot and will not lose focus on the here and now. Today I rest and resist not the steady ticking of the clock, the rhythmic beating of my heart, the steady breath of my lungs all reminding me to stay RIGHT HERE RIGHT NOW...1 second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds...59 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes...59 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours, 24 hours. And another day fades like the morning dew. Another mercy coming, another mercy to start afresh, and another mercy to start anew.

So today I live but one second, one minute, one hour, and certainly no more than One Day at a Time.

Have a blessed day my friends and unwrap THE GIFT OF TODAY.



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## Football and a Game Plan for Recovery

BY RICK H.

Well, its football season again. A few days ago, I was watching a Chicago Bears pre-season game. I am a huge NFL fan and a die-hard Chicago Bear fan. I'm predicting (like always) this will be a good year for the Bears.

Watching this game got me thinking about a Bears game several years ago that caused me to reflect on the stages of recovery. This analogy is like many I get regarding real life situations and how they relate to alcoholism. I don't know why I get these thoughts or inspirations but they mean a lot to me and are spiritual in nature. I am grateful to God for giving them to me.

So on to the analogy. The Bears are playing who knows what team. Something very unusual for the Bears defense is happening. The opposing team is running successfully against their defense. Play after play. Not mildly successfully, major advances. Eight, ten, fifteen yards a clip. It's getting worse by the minute. The Bears are not adjusting, can't figure out what to do to stop this. But noticeably they are not calling a time out, not adjusting their strategy, just doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. That's insanity and all can see it. I'm screaming now for them to call a time out and make a change. But it takes forever to happen. More damage on the field, more yards piling up, and despair is setting in for the team and their fans. We can all sense where this is going. Downhill, spiraling out of control. How is this going to stop?

Then it happens. The coaches call a time out. The defense is called together and radical change is made in strategy. When they come out of the huddle, they move to an eight-man front. They have decided to do whatever it takes to stop the run. They can't think about all the implications of what this means for other aspects of the game. They must focus first on the major problem at hand. Take all necessary measure stop the run. If they don't do this one thing, all other strategies don't matter. All other plans don't have any value or future. They will just go down the tubes and get crushed. They in essence have surrendered to the situation. They have moved out of denial. They have become willing to change. They have understood that they must make this task their number one priority. Right now, before it's too late. ... Then they can assess what comes next. What other adjustments need to be made, what other plans need to be developed, what the next priorities are. But they must stop the dysfunction, unmanageability and certain disaster now...stop the run, right now at all cost.

Sorry, not sure how they fared that day. I think they won but that's not the important thing. Not the moral of the story. What I can tell you for sure is that they stopped the run. Immediately, without question or debate. They did what they had to do to stop the run. It was their number one priority. Without doing this, the entire game was lost.

### Bottle of Booze

BY AL

*The room is full but I'm all alone.*

*My feelings are numb and I can't go home.*

*I drown my thoughts in a bottle of doubt.*

*I'm suffocating in misery. I can't get out.*

*I try to breathe but my lungs stop up.*

*Nothing matters till I fill my cup.*

*Today was a blur and yesterday was the same.*

*Everyone's pissed and I'm to blame.*

*I'm thirsty as hell and can't be quenched.*

*I'm sweaty all over, my clothes are drenched.*

*My body shakes, my stomach quakes,*

*And to top it all off, I have a huge headache.*

*I have no money to stop the pain.*

*No emotions. No shame.*

*It's hard to live dazed and confused,*

*But that's life in a bottle of booze.*

Okay so the moral of the story. You probably already see it. When we were drinking, life was totally running over us. We couldn't stop it. All our attempts to stop it failed—over and over. Same plan (like not drinking during the week, drinking only beer, leaving after two), same result. Our situation was worsening, disaster looming. Everyone (our fans) could see it and were begging for us to call a time out. They said do it before it's too late and the game's over. We needed an entirely new game plan, a new strategy, new tools and a new way of addressing our life's problems. But none of this would happen if we did not surrender and call a time out. Talk with our coaches, our sponsors and mentors. Connect with our Head Coach, our Higher Power. Stop the insanity of drinking to medicate and escape for a few hours. Do this first, immediately and with total focus as a first step.

Then we can (and we do) address future needs and issues. In a sane way, without the constant chains of alcohol and obsession; without the continual and gnawing insight that disaster is looming and is sure to come.

And where does our new game plan, our twelve step program of recovery, lead us in order to continue onto this better life; a saner way of living where we can obtain a level of emotional sobriety as well as physical? A place where we can actually be still and experience being comfortable in our own skins?

First to a Higher Power, then with His help and the assistance of others, to the identification of the exact nature of our wrongs. That is, our character defects that cause us to continually seek escape from ourselves. The flaws that drive us to escape through our addiction. Fear, anger, resentment, lust and selfishness lead the way along with any other negative traits that moved us farther away from our God and fellows. We eventually become willing to let these go while humbly asking for their removal.

This strategy puts us back on the field of life with a new plan. A new approach. And most importantly a focus and understanding that first, most importantly, with total commitment, we will stop the most important thing we need to stop—our addictions, and then move on to a new life of promise and hope, fueled by the Twelve Steps of recovery.

Go Bears! Go my friends in recovery!

## The Great Reality Deep Within

BY BOB S.

As I venture through each passing day, I try to watch for those ever-reoccurring defects of character such as repeating angry thoughts, self-centeredness, unreasonable fear, and all the rest of it. Of course, Step Ten (p. 84) tells me to ask God at once to remove these dangerous obstacles when they crop up, but without conscious contact with my Higher Power I am lost—those little devils jump in the driver's seat long before I realize they have taken control, rendering me minus a fit spiritual condition. Lest I soon reconnect with the aforementioned Power I will be treading on dangerous emotional territory. But where is this mysterious power? The Big Book provides a surprising answer: "We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us," (p. 55) Please note the words, Great Reality, are capitalized denoting God! Bill is not theorizing here; he is describing spiritual results from AA history.

In other words, I already possess the power to face and be rid of reoccurring sobriety-threatening emotional states, as they crop up, so long as I make use of the Intuitive cognizance offered by this mysterious, yet ever-present, God Given Reality. Reality implies Truth. An alcoholic cannot drink on the Truth! An alcoholic can only drink on a lie. Page 87 tells us: ". . . we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of Inspiration. We come to rely on it." Living out of this inspirational Truth, albeit only spasmodically, has allowed me to remain emotionally fixed and stable regardless of outside influences—at least enough that I haven't had to drink since my very first AA meeting.

Simply living in the spirit of the Twelve Steps, in some mysterious way, brings forth this inherent Self, my true Self, as a most welcome intuitive guide. That is to say, clean house in all day long (Step 10); pray throughout the day (Step 11); so I may be of maximum service to God and my fellows all day long (Step 12). In short: "Out of self. Into God. Into Others." (Rev. Sam Shoemaker) . . . and to parrot the famous 1940s Cleveland Indians catcher, Rollie Hemslie: "AA opened the door, but I had to walk in!" I have to 'walk in' each and every new day to revive and continue my conscious contact with the 'Great Reality deep down within,' if I want to remain happy, joyous and free of booze.



## A Family Disease

SUBMITTED BY ART H. WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR  
(ANONYMOUS)

This was written by a daughter of an alcoholic who just couldn't get sober and stay sober. She wrote it on an airplane en route to prepare for her father's wake and funeral:

I knew this day was coming for quite some time. In fact, my children have outgrown multiple outfits that have been reserved "in case something happens to Papa". My father was affected with a disease that can bring devastation and loneliness. Alcoholism is a disease that affects not only the person who drinks, but everyone else in their world. They call it a "family disease" and certainly its effects will be felt for generations. Alcoholism leaves unspeakable wreckage and profound pain in its wake. It robbed me of a typical father-daughter relationship and stole a grandfather from my children.

I implore those of you today with this disease to reach out for the hand that is extended toward you. You know who you are. I know that when this disease has hold of you nothing else and no one else matters. I have seen how deeply you suffer and I pray that you have a "moment of

clarity". That you may see the pain you cause and that the road you are traveling only leads to where we are today. I pray that today is your moment of lasting clarity. Surrender. Ask for help. You can do it — one day at a time.

Some people say that my father's life was a wasted one. I tell you it was not.

He loved being a police officer and many felt safe because of him. He was a natural leader. He was a hard worker and taught me what it was to have a good work ethic. He was a friend to many and befriended many who shared in his darkness.

I find comfort in knowing we were the brightest parts of his life. We were always there even if he couldn't see us through his darkness. He was not alone. I look forward to the future and go forward in peace. I know we did all we could to help him fight this horrible battle. May he find the peace and serenity that he could not find on this earth. If you are struggling take the hand that is reaching to you. Stop the cycle of pain. Start living!

## The Killing Kind!

BY MICHELLE D.

*It got so bad, so quick this time.  
I was so sick, and had lost all life lines.  
But there was still one, who knew before I.  
My road before me...IT WAS NOT TIME TO DIE!  
I never thought I'd be lying in the hospital again.  
Not really knowing how long it had been.  
On day three, I finally came to,  
With tubes in my arms and my veins a bright blue.  
Hopeless and empty, I lay there in bed.  
Visions and places stuck in my head.  
Doctors and nurses and my husband by my side,  
I tried to escaping reality, but the facts did not lie.  
In and out of consciousness I cried and I dreamed,  
There was a 'calm' though, inside me, and serene it just seemed.  
No more struggles, and no more pain.  
Surrender I did and came out of the rain.  
When the fifth day came, I was detoxed they said.  
A lady came in and stood by my bed.  
She was quiet and calm and asked me that day,  
"Do you remember me? I'm from AA"  
I vaguely remembered and said, "It doesn't work!"  
No sooner came those words, that I felt like a jerk.  
She gave me a list and said, "NOW, get to one!"  
We're here for you honey, so please don't run.  
She left and then the Doctor came by.*

*He told me right then that I almost died.  
He said very firmly, I had to abstain.  
If I drank he doubted, I'd make it back again.  
With his unimaginable news I'd received,  
My pancreas almost burst, It's a malicious disease.  
This statement came true, right then in my mind.  
This disease really is the KILLING KIND!  
A long time ago, I heard them say,  
Death, Insanity or Jails, will be there someday!  
Quicker than most people would normally think....  
But it's true, could have happened, if I continued to drink.  
It is four years now, and sobriety's stuck.  
I can tell you right now it's not about luck.  
Today I know that God has great plans.  
He told me to reach out, and take your hands.  
Now you are the ones I owe it all to!  
I would not be sober, if it weren't for you.  
With all of this gratitude I feel in my heart,  
Thank You, my friends for a blessed new start.  
The rest is a 'daily' thing that I'll live.  
My blood, sweat and tears, now I must give.  
It was hard coming back, to be the new girl again.  
But today life is good because of you God,  
My family and friends.*

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## HEARD IN THE ROOMS

Maybe there was a time or two or a hundred when you were really down or on edge and a certain meeting put you back right. Or maybe you heard a comment in the rooms that made a big impact on you. Share what you have heard in the rooms that has helped you through!

### Heard at the All Chicago Open

Did you go to the ACO? Hear some great leads? Enjoy the incredible energy of THOUSANDS of AA's joined in Fellowship?

Tell Here's How about it in our next issue. Send submissions to: [hhcommittee@live.com](mailto:hhcommittee@live.com) or Here's How, 180 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 305, Chicago 60601 or [hereshow@chicagoaa.org](mailto:hereshow@chicagoaa.org).

## Concrete Head

BY MATT S.

When your Dad is a concrete contractor, and all your older brothers are “concrete guys” the chances of becoming anything other than another “concrete guy” were pretty slim. After high school (which I barely passed because of alcohol use) I took my rightful place as number four son, and enrolled in “Dad’s” college. He called it “the college of hard knocks”. You see, it was expected you were going to work for him and traditional college was out of the question. But I would get an education here like none other. I would learn to pour concrete, all the while learning (at a faster rate) to pour alcohol down my throat on a daily basis. Over the years, it was not only the concrete I worked with that was “formed” then “set up” and eventually becoming “hard” but so too were my bad habits — and one of them was consuming large quantities of alcohol.

The moment I had my first taste of alcohol at the age of ten, I knew I liked what it did to me; I got a “buzz” and as plain and simple as that sounds, that was all there was to it! At first a buzz came from just a single drink, then two, then three, then ... I don’t remember. What I do remember is, eventually, I would not take a single drink into my body until I knew there was enough to finish the job. Toward the end, you couldn’t offer me a beer or two, unless I knew what your supply was, and how long I had to relieve you of it! Because you see, it was always about finishing the job; I learned that with my Dad and brothers at work. It was the rite of passage; pour a lot of concrete, drink a lot of beer.

At first I was just working like a man, and drinking like a man. It didn’t take long however, to reach the point where I was neither working nor was I a man. I was working to drink, and drinking to work. More frightening though was the fact I was learning “justified drinking” Working long hard hours nestled me in comfortable denial. ‘I work hard. I deserve to reward myself,’ was my constant refrain. Making good construction money surely didn’t help. My pay check became the ultimate enabler, used to fuel an adolescent seemingly hell bent on his own destruction.

Years passed in a time-warp blur of black-outs. I ran out of “foxhole” prayers; I had no plan, no life, no solution. I had only the shovel, the very first concrete tool I ever used, and all I could do was dig. It was all I knew, keep digging a hole, never mind I might reach China, just keep digging somehow I’ll figure out how to stop, or better yet moderate. I just wanted the madness to stop! What I didn’t know at that time was, all I had to do was put down the shovel!

I was twenty-eight years old when I met my wife and got married. At last, the solution! That was it, I was just lonely! She’ll fix everything! She will make me a better person. I had some hope. I began to moderate, mostly because I didn’t want my drinking to scare my new bride off. But it wasn’t long before a wife, three kids, and a failing business were all the “justification” needed to resume the alcoholic merry-go-round. In fact, they became the new “reason” why I had to drink. It was as if I had never stopped at all. I was right back where I was, shovel in hand, ready to do what all “hard-headed” concrete guys do, drink till you dropped.

This is where my drinking turned insane, and nobody or nothing mattered except me getting “that buzz” on. Primarily a beer drinker, with the occasional shot of booze, I rationalized that liquor was quicker and did a better job, so I drank less beer and more booze. It was here I began my camouflage drinking. This was where you would nurse (in front of those you wanted to deceive) a beer or two all night, while excusing yourself to the bathroom to hit from your pint. I thought it was a great plan except for a couple little details. One, I did not anticipate the rise in my tolerance, and soon it required greater quantities to achieve the buzz which by now had lost its luster. And two, I usually over shot the mark, and got plastered, making a fool of myself one more time.

The slide from here into total destructive alcoholism was fast and furious. I needed help fast or I was going to lose everything, including my life!

Beaten and battered I strolled into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous one December night in 2006, after well over thirty years of doing the same thing (shoveling) over and over while expecting every single time, different results. I was ready to receive the message from the others who came before me. My once impenetrable “concrete head” began to slowly become pervious, able to absorb the recovery concepts laid before me. I put my shovel down that night. I ceased fighting everyone, and everything.

My “stinking thinking” had been the culprit all along. I learned this in the rooms of A.A, along with the fact that my present sobriety is a gift that God gives me daily so long as I ask for it! No one can make me pick up that shovel again except me.

So long as I let my higher power God, on a daily basis, do the driving and I take his direction graciously from the back seat, I will remain safe in his care from that next first drink!

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# Here's How

The Chicago Area Service Assembly's Newsletter needs your stories.

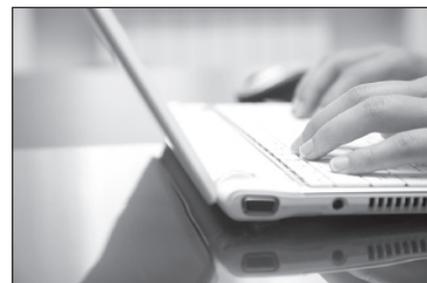
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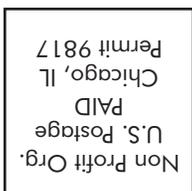
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