**A Higher Power That Will Not Abandon Me**

***She denied her need to self-medicate and then found she couldn’t stay sober. She couldn’t accept her dependence on alcohol and believed the negativity of those around her.***

I am now sixty-two years old and two months ago, I celebrated one year of sobriety. How my life has changed! Today, I know that I am loved, I have new friends in the program and a new sponsor who has shared her life with me and shown me how to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have come to know a new freedom and a new hope. I have never in my life known the joy I now feel. I am so grateful that my higher power never gave up on me. In fact, my higher power has seen to it that I have a new family in A.A. I am surrounded by positive friends who love me. I have a new purpose and I now respect myself. It wasn’t always that way.

Drinking and using other mind altering substances played a role in much of my adult life. I might quit for a few months at a time, but again and again, the pain of life would take me out. I was often in a constant state of mental, emotional and spiritual pain. I was often in physical pain. Over the course of my life, I was in two significant relationships. In both cases, the men I chose to be with were alcoholic. I once “white-knuckled” it for a year - in between these two relationships. I was thirty-eight at the time.

In both relationships, what I wanted always came second. I believed these men when they told me that I wasn’t an alcoholic - statements that likely had more to do with their denial and their desire to have someone around to care for them when things were rough. I had denial too, and it kept me sick for much of my life. My fear of being alone lead to staying in abusive relationships. My fear of not being a part of something, lead to excessive drinking which lead me to jail and mental health institutions.

When I was forty-eight, I finally left the abusive relationships and asked for help. I had relocated to Hawaii, but still found myself homeless, desperate and scared. A psychiatrist had given me a diagnosis of “bi-polar” ten years earlier. A diagnosis, I had chosen to “treat myself.” Now, with professional help, I was encouraged to attend A.A. and was prescribed a medication that actually helped. I got clean and sober and enjoyed a quiet life on Maui for ten years. I had my own place, a job and I attend A.A. meetings and had a sponsor. Things were going good. Sometimes, I think it’s most important for me to “pay attention” when “things are good.” When times are good it can be easy “to rest on my laurels.”

As everything was going better than I had ever known, I decided to move across the island to another town. I was doing so well I didn’t get a new sponsor, quit going to meetings and became less and less grateful. I heard in a meeting once someone say, the “ism” in alcoholism stands for I Sponsor Myself. My mental health began to suffer, I started feeling those old feelings of uselessness; depression soon reappeared and in my miserable thinking I chose again to pick-up. Soon a battle raged within me. I knew life could be better, I had experienced it but now I felt lost, alone, hopeless. The bottom, I began living within, was dark and I feared that I would die, if I kept drinking and using. My mental and spiritual health were failing.

I remember, the day I finally, prayed, “God help me! Help me find a way out of the compulsive and obsessive way of life.” In a quiet moment, it occurred to me, “Shawn, go back to A.A and ask for help.” I went to a few meetings and even quit for three months, but relapsed again. I still was so afraid of people, but at the “Maui Sunset Meeting” after sharing my story, I met a new sponsor who encouraged me to make the meeting my home group. These women gathered around me, they encouraged me and made me feel like I was part of something positive. Something I could trust. My sponsor lead me through the steps and showed me how to be of service. I now know, that I do not ever have to return to a life of abuse, loneliness or desperation. I can “walk in the sunshine” knowing my higher power and A.A. will not abandon me.

Today, I keep it simple, I attend meetings, I share, I check-in with my sponsor and I’m involved in service. To find this new life at sixty-two is amazing. I am so grateful and now I know I’ll I’ll be O.K. I am loved by a higher power and by a fellowship of wonderful people but every day, I need to do the “footwork” of recovery and not think I can do it all by myself.