



You Are Not Alone – How Recovery International Helped Me Stay Sober

My name is Bob and I'm an alcoholic. I am also a nervous person and it helps me to address both issues in Recovery International—for me a beautiful blend of the two programs.

In former days I can remember thinking to myself while alone drinking in a bar, "You should be doing so much more with your life." Well, today I am, but the road has not always been easy – it never is.

I joined Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in 1984 and I was on my path to wellness at long last, but it took several years of focus to stay on Sobriety Road. My major stumbling blocks were depression; anxiety and my anger had turned to rage. I struggled, but I lived and breathed the 12-Steps. I got on my knees and prayed until one day someone, seeing my challenge, suggested I visit Recovery International. Maybe it was a "God shot." I was certainly ripe for the picking.

When I attended my first Recovery meeting, it was like someone told someone else to call ahead to make sure to "tell him everything he needs to know about depression, anxiety, anger, helplessness and fears." I felt like I had found a home and a family that understood, much like I felt when I first found AA. Wow! There are others just like me. I am not alone.

Through the years when AA's "turning it over" and other slogans don't work for my symptoms, I pull out some Recovery "spots" from my toolbox. If that tool or spot doesn't work I put it back and use another AA and/or RI tool. I do this until I find just the right tool that works. At last, I found a way to stop compulsively drinking and take control of my insecure thinking and my life.

AA and RI are alike in so many different ways. AA has taught me to "don't sweat the small stuff." RI deals only with trivialities, and as one long-time AA/RI person pointed out, "Trivialities are the small stuff when we don't take ourselves so seriously."

Several other AA/RI people have offered the following: Recovery frequently talks about "doing the things that we fear and dread to do," while AA asks us to do the footwork or "row the boat ashore." AA's "easy does it" is not much different from Recovery's concept of "commanding the muscles to relax." "Restraint of pen and tongue" is similar to "commanding the speech muscles to speak or not to speak". "Go into action" is akin to taking things in part acts or simply "plan, decide, initiate and act."

When that black cloud of depression hovers over me, or the anxiety and temper drives me close to using and abusing, I find "turning it over" actually means I must take some action steps, like moving the muscles to use some objectivity and to change my insecure thoughts to secure ones. This takes a will to effort and a will to bear discomfort.



I've noticed along the journey that when our heads get so clouded with depression, anxiety, temper and hopelessness, we often reach out and seek outside help –the professional who can prescribe a medication that will help us over the hump of our difficulties. It doesn't mean we will be taking medication all of our lives, it means we need a little help for a little while. That is where the dual diagnosis meetings of Double Trouble, Double Trudgers and some professionally facilitated dual diagnosis meetings are so valuable. In these meetings the consumer is not judged and no one is taking his or her inventory. These beneficial groups are growing at an amazing rate. AA has approved literature for those needing extra help. The pamphlet is called, "The AA Member – Medications and Other Drugs."

A long-time friend and one-time counselor of AA and RI told me years ago that Recovery International. is different from AA in that Recovery is actually the spoon and fork to get into the problem and toss it around until the solution is found or the symptoms cease. She often told her recovering clients to "go to Recovery meetings." She said, "I tell them to go to Recovery so often that I hope they hear it in their sleep."

I have come to believe that "turning it over" equates to taking action steps and commanding my muscles to move when the muscles are telling me they can't and won't move. At those times, it is the resoluteness of the muscles that can retrain the brain to where the brain responds by saying, "Oh, you really can do the things I thought you couldn't."

Steps one, two and three of Alcoholics Anonymous claim, rather simplistically, "I can't, he can, so let him." A long-time AA friend reduced the 12-Steps down to a single word for each step. Step One is about getting "Honest." To admit there is a problem, whether it is an addiction or a mental challenge, is the first step to wellness. Step Two is about "Hope." Abraham Low Self-Help System's founder, Dr. Abraham A. Low, also addresses this when he says, "there are no hopeless cases" and that "helplessness is not hopelessness."

Step Three is about "Faith." We learn in Recovery that there must be a conviction behind our spotting technique – a faith that the Method will work in our lives. Steps Four, Five and Six are frequently about "Courage with Integrity and Willingness." How often do we hear the repetition of the spot, "Have the courage to make mistakes in the trivialities of everyday life." Both AA and RI give us the motivation and the courage to change – change beliefs and attitudes.

Step Seven equates to "Humility." In this area, Dr. Low states, "To admit one's limitations is humility." He also says, "The road to humility leads through spotting to the determination to abandon the craving for the divine thrill of knowing better." AA speaks directly to humility in Acceptance of the Big Book.

Steps Eight, Nine and Ten address, "Responsibility, Brotherly Love, Justice and Perseverance." The Recovery International Method is all about self-help. We accept the responsibility to change; even though we may hate change, we do it because we want to do something healthy with our lives. Recovery stands for "realism, good common sense and an unspoiled way of life." We practice, practice, practice.



Step Eleven deals with "Patience and Spirituality." It is likely that none of us in AA or RI got this way overnight and we will not get well overnight. We must acquire the will to patience to grow at our own pace.

Finally, Step Twelve is about "Charity/Understanding and Service." As we grow in both programs we gain a greater understanding of ourselves and being tolerant of others. Self-leadership directs us to be helpful to others.

The Serenity Prayer offers three tools that we can use anytime, anywhere. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." The Recovery Method tells us we cannot control the outer environment; only influence our own inner environment by using the skills of the Recovery Method.

Today I do what it takes and sometimes it takes a lot of doing. – Bob Dey

Bob Dey is a long-time participant in both Recovery International and AA. He lives in Los Angeles where he has been an RI Group Leader for many years. He is a former member of the RI Board of Directors, Area Support & Training Committee, and is a previous Chair of the Marketing Committee.