

# A New Holiday Perspective

## Bringing Joy to the Less Fortunate

By Rick R.

How appropriate it seems that there are twelve months in a year, and we have twelve steps in the program. November is often referred to as the Gratitude month, due to the celebration of Thanksgiving. The joy of good living is the theme of Step Twelve, and it blends right in with the Christmas holiday season in December and ending with the New Year's Eve celebration. This time of year, does bring joy to many of us but it also brings *distress to some of the less fortunate ones* who have yet to be blessed with the gift of sobriety and peace of mind, *in and outside of AA* During my drinking days I used to be extremely uncomfortable about the holidays. I never knew how to act around normal people unless I was half smashed. When invited by one of my siblings to Thanksgiving dinner, I felt like *a charity case* and would rather just hang out at the bar where I felt safe. I never got into the spirit of reaching out to others. My family always celebrated the different holidays, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas, and I would always (due to my discomfort) put a damper on it by complaining about the tacky gifts that people would buy for each other at Christmas and the mad rush to go shopping and the commercializing facade that it had become. Any excuse was better than facing *me* and the miserable wretch I had become.

After being sober for several years, it occurred to me that I still had some of those same attitudes, and that I was still holding on to them to some degree largely due to the inconvenience of it all. I explained this problem to a dear friend once, and he asked, "*Does the rest of the family enjoy the holidays?*" I said yes. He then said, "*Why don't you just take a back seat and just watch the joy in their eyes as they experience these things.*" I did exactly what he suggested and when I started to observe my wife and two adolescent girls and *the childlike innocence and happiness it brought to them*; it gave me a whole new appreciation for this time of year. It brought *tears of Joy* to my eyes, and I no longer wanted to be the grouch, putting a damper on the joy that they were having. I have been following this line of thinking ever since and it has changed my whole perspective concerning these things.

This change of attitude has inspired me to apply the unselfish lessons that I have come to understand and now I spend the holiday season filled with Joy. *If it works like that for the holidays, then why can't I bring it with me for the rest of the year?* This has been my mission ever since my friend suggested it, and I am always looking for the opportunity to brighten the lives of people less fortunate than myself. I try to do these things *anonymously and without fanfare*. I also try to consider the discomfort that I used to feel when I was the one on the receiving end of a charitable gesture. I am careful to do these things in a way that *preserves the dignity of that other person*. I do not have to wait for the holidays to do these things. Every day is a holiday in and outside of my home, and you can believe me when I say; I reap more than my share of the joy. I hope this brings a new perspective to those who, like me, had trouble enjoying this time of year and I hope you all have a joyful Holiday Season, and many more.