

A Moving and Fascinating Adventure

Our Newfound Knowledge of Ourselves

By Rick R.

As we approach step eight in the (12&12) it describes the AA journey as a "Moving and Fascinating Adventure". In step nine we start, or continue the process of making amends, and by then we realize that the promises are already starting to materialize. It would have been easy to rest on my laurels at that time, but I have been attending weekly step study meetings since I first got sober in 1969 and I couldn't get away from the sage advice that kept repeating itself over and over. In step ten it says "Our first objective will be the development of self-restraint. This carries a top priority rating". Some examples I read are as follows: *Restraint of tongue and pen, drop the word "blame" from our speech and thought (step 4) Quick- temper criticism, Sulking, and silent scorn etc.* These are just a few, but you get the picture. With these things revisited, three or four times a year, as we cycled through the step studies, it kept acting like a rock tumbler and slowly but surely, I adopted new habits which eventually become second nature, and develop into virtues. This helped me to rein in many of those old behaviors that got between me and my peers. I never stop learning these new ideas.

Another one of the things that caught my attention in step ten was the quote "Pain is the touchstone of all spiritual progress" then it finishes off the paragraph with, "How heartily we AA's can agree with him, for we know that the pain of drinking had to come before sobriety, and emotional turmoil before serenity". Can this mean that we can have no spiritual progress without suffering pain? It didn't seem to make sense to me, so I looked up the word "Touchstone" in the dictionary and discovered that a Touchstone is a mineral that assayers used to test the purity of gold. Prior to that, I thought that it was synonymous with *steppingstone*. Now I understand it as, *to measure how spiritual we are when the going gets rough*. Do we revert to our old habits, or do we stick to the principles we have learned in the program?

The next Quote I kept seeing, that piqued my curiosity, was on Pg.90, 12&12, "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are *disturbed, no matter what the cause*, there is something wrong *with us*". The "no matter what the cause" part seemed to throw me a curve ball. I questioned the idea that, if a mother saw her child running into traffic and she wasn't *disturbed*, I would think that there must be something wrong with her. I don't think anyone could argue that point, so I believe that the spiritual axiom quote relates to the way we interface with other people, and I find it to be a tremendous template to improving our relations with them. In it we question what drives us when we start to get a little out of sorts and we can apply the pre-mentioned self-restraint.

As in all the steps as, I continue to attend those weekly step study meetings these things get clearer each time I go through them and most of my issues are well under control if I don't assume that I can let down my guard, as my EGO is always ready to fill in the empty spaces in my program. The maintenance part of the tenth step is easy for me these days. I just get up in the morning and say, "God, please show me what to do, and please give me the strength to do it; I don't do too well on my own." I'm not sure that He hears me, but I know that I HEAR ME, and it arms me with the best possible attitude I can have for that day. It usually works. I let the rock tumbler keep me on my toes, and I hope that I always pass the assayer's test.