

Death of an Alcoholic

The Death of an Alcoholic

{xtypo_info} "As long as we look outside of Self - with a capital S - to find out who we are, to define ourselves and give us self-worth, we are setting ourselves up to be victims.

We were taught to look outside of ourselves - to people, places, and things; to money, property, and prestige - for fulfillment and happiness. It does not work, it is dysfunctional. We cannot fill the hole within with anything outside of Self.

You can get all the money, property, and prestige in the world, have everyone in the world adore you, but if you are not at peace within, if you don't Love and accept yourself, none of it will work to make you Truly happy." {/xtypo_info}

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

My friend Robert died the other day. He died alone in a hotel room and his body wasn't found for two days. He weighed 125 pounds when he died.

Robert was an alcoholic who couldn't stay sober. He had been through full thirty day (and longer) treatment programs at least 15 times. He had been in detox fifty times easily. Drinking had destroyed his body. Robert should have been dead years ago. In the past 3 or 4 years almost every time he drank he ended up in intensive care. I did much of my grieving for my friend three years ago, the last time I rescued him from his cabin on Taos Mountain and took him to the emergency room.

Robert went to lots of meetings and tried real hard to work the program but on one critical point he didn't have enough humility. He did not have enough humility to accept that he was lovable.

My friend had made and lost fortunes in his life. He had been with lots of women and had lots of possessions. He still had lots of possessions when he died. He still had the cabin in Taos Ski Valley but he didn't have the strength to walk up the fifty steps to the front door.

Robert used money to try to buy friendship and love. And then he felt betrayed because he believed that people only wanted to be around him for his money. If you were friendly to him for no apparent reason, then he would talk about giving you money because that gave you an excuse to care about him. He just could not believe that he was worthy of love just for who he was.

Robert was full of shame. He was full of shame because he was raised in a dysfunctional family in a shame-based society. His Father was a verbally/emotionally abusive perfectionist for whom nothing was ever good enough. His mother was too terrified and shame-based to protect her son.

As a young child Robert got the message that he wasn't lovable but that if he was successful enough and made enough money he might earn the right to be loved. He was successful and made lots of money but it did not work to convince him that he was good enough.

My friend had no permission from himself to receive love. When I published my book I listed him among people who had touched my life on the Acknowledgements Page. When he saw his name listed there he cursed me (his generation, and mine, were taught to relate to other men that way, to say 'I love you' by calling each other names) and cried briefly (which he felt was very shameful) and then he drank. In his relationship with himself Robert was too shame-based to believe that he was lovable.

I believe that the great majority of Alcoholics are born with a genetic, hereditary predisposition that is physiological. Environment does not cause Alcoholism. Robert was not an Alcoholic because he was shame-based - it was because of his shame that he could not stay sober. He had a blustery, 'hail-fellow-well-met', in your face kind of ego-strength that was very fragile. As soon as he got sober his ego defenses would fracture and the shame underneath would cause him to sabotage his sobriety.

That doesn't mean that people who can stay sober don't have shame. Some of us just have more ego defenses that buries the shame deeper. That is good news in early sobriety because it helps one to stay sober. It can be bad news later on because it can cause us to resist growth and to not have the humility to be teachable. The reason that I am alive today is because I was able to go to treatment for Codependence in my fifth year of recovery while working as a therapist in a treatment center. I had sworn that I would kill myself before I drank again and the feelings which were surfacing had me close to it when I went to Sierra Tucson. That was where I met Robert.

What killed my friend were the grave emotional and mental disorders caused by growing up with parents who did not love themselves in a dysfunctional family in an emotionally-dishonest, Spiritually-hostile, shame-based society. What killed Robert was his Codependence. His relationship with himself was full of self-hatred and shame and he couldn't stay sober long enough to get to the point where he could deal with his childhood issues.

Robert was born with a genetic predisposition to have a fatal disease, Alcoholism. His childhood inflicted a second fatal disease on him. My friend Robert was one more of the many Alcoholics to die of Codependence.

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