

The First Three Steps

The Miracle of The Twelve Step Recovery Process:

1, 2, 3, and a 1, 2, 3 - The first three steps

"I spent most of my life doing the Serenity prayer backwards, that is, trying to change the external things over which I had no control - other people and life events mostly - and taking no responsibility (except shaming and blaming myself) for my own internal process - over which I can have some degree of control. Having some control is not a bad thing; trying to control something or somebody over which I have no control is what is dysfunctional. It was very important for me to start learning how to recognize the boundaries of where I ended and other people began, and to start realizing that I can have some control over my internal process in ways that are not shaming and judgmental - that I can stop being the victim of myself."

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

In the process of moving this article to Joy2MeU from the Joy2MeU Journal (see first article in this series if you haven't already The Miracle of The Twelve Step Process) I started adding and clarifying a little here and there. This article was not originally written to be a comprehensive look at the steps - rather it was just some of my thoughts on the individual steps. The process of adding soon got out of control, and I realized that I could write a whole new article about the concepts of powerlessness and unmanageability as I understand them in recovery. (Unfortunately, I never did get the time and space to finish that article - perhaps some day, but certainly that will not be any time soon.)

So, I went back to my version of this article that I first published in the Joy2MeU Journal in the summer of 1999. That article follows, with the exception of making some additions to the first part of it - prior to the discussion of the individual steps. I expanded this first part to try to communicate a little bit more fully about what I call the recovery three step.

Growing up in dysfunctional societies, we learned to relate to ourselves and life in a way that is dysfunctional. That is what codependence is: a dysfunctional emotional and behavioral defense system. As I state in the quote from my book above, I spent most of my life doing the serenity prayer backwards: trying to control things and people I am not in control of, and not taking responsibility for what I can have some control over - my own internal process.

Trying to control that which I do not have ultimate control over does not work to help me relax and enjoy life. It does not work to help me find some happiness and fulfillment in life. It does not work to help me achieve some inner peace and serenity. Relating to life in the ways we learned in childhood is dysfunctional because it does not work to help us dance the dance of life in a way which really serves us.

Basically, the reason that life as it is experienced by humans is so messed up, is because we have been dancing to the wrong music. We have had our dance of life defined by fear and shame, by lack, scarcity, and separation. The Twelve Step process helps us to change our relationship with life and self - it helps us learn to dance with music that is aligned with Love and Joy and Truth. That is what is so miraculous and awesome about the twelve step recovery process - it helps us to enjoy our dance.

The True meaning and purpose of life is Spiritual in my opinion. I know that when I started living life from that perspective - the perspective I learned from working a 12 step program - was the first time that life made any sense to me. The twelve steps work to help us align with what I believe is Metaphysical Truth. The basic steps of that dance are 1, 2, 3, - and once we start to get into the rhythm of that Spiritual dance we start to live life in alignment with the Metaphysical Truth contained in the Serenity Prayer. It is the beginning of transformation. It is the path home to Love.

"The first three steps of the twelve step program basically involve:

1. getting honest enough to recognize that what we have been doing is not working;
2. getting willing to open up to some help from outside;
3. asking for help."

Attack on America Chapter 2

1, 2, 3,

1. Quit trying to control, to force an outcome - let go, surrender, accept.
2. Remember that I can't do it alone
3. Ask for help - from my Higher Power, from another person, look up something on the internet, whatever. Have the humility to remember I am not in control, I am not writing the script.

and a 1, 2, 3,
I can't control life: The Force is with me: I can decide to trust that Force

and a 1, 2, 3,

I can not control other people or life events.
There is a Universal Force / God / Goddess / Great Spirit who is in control.
I guess I will surrender to the Power of that Universal Force

1, 2, 3, and a 1, 2, 3, and a 1, 2, 3, This is the recovery 3 step.

Another way of saying it is:

I can't, there is a God/Goddess that can, I guess I will let go and let the Great Spirit handle things.

And a 1,

The first step is about recognizing that I am powerless to control life and other people.
I can not stop someone else from drinking or eating or smoking or killing themselves. I can not make someone else love me or hear me or see themselves clearly if they don't want to do those things. I can not change the past or control the future. In the case of addictions, it also means that I am powerless to control my addiction by myself, out of my own will power. The second part of the first step is about recognizing that my life is a mess because I have been doing the same things over and over again expecting different results.

and a 2,

The second step says while I am not in control of this life process there is a Power, a Force, that is - and that Force is on my side.

and a 3,

The third step says that if we surrender thinking we have to be in control - and open up to receiving guidance from a Higher Power we will get help and guidance.

Go to Step 1