

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 6

By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

November/December 2009

My Story

By R. H.

I was raised in a conservative family with strict mid-western values – in other words dysfunctional. My solution to escaping this dysfunctional setting was when I learned to masturbate. I discovered masturbation at the age of 13 but quickly became bored with it. For some reason, one early morning, I exposed myself through my bedroom window to trash men collecting the trash. They responded with some profanity and I shrunk away from the window both excited and extremely frightened at the same time. The rush was so intense I just sat on the floor unable to move for several minutes. When I finally got up, I felt so guilty and worried that I wished I could have just died that very minute. But as the day progressed, nothing happened. The neighbors didn't knock on the door and the cops didn't arrive, so I started to breathe easy. As the days went by, I longed for the rush. And as you might imagine, it was about a week before I went to the window again. As I got bolder, I started to go out through the window onto the roof.

I got my license and a car at the age of 17. The car gave me the mobility to expose myself. I swore that I wouldn't do it but it happened anyway. At the age of 18, I decided that I needed help. I found a psychologist and started going to therapy. The therapist helped me accept my gayness, but it did nothing for the addiction.

When I was 20, I found a partner. Despite this fact, I was driving all over town with little hope of actually getting to work on time or making it to planned events. The addiction would trigger every time I got in the car. Somehow I lived like this for the next 20 years. Eventually my partner found out and he became an enabler and co-addict. We experimented with our relationship by having three-ways, sex outside the relationship, and eventually our relationship became totally insane. I got to the point where I manipulated him into taking on a 29 year old roommate. I was 40 at the time. The roommate lived in the house only about two weeks before we had sex. After about a month, I decided I was no longer in the relationship with my partner and told him that I was "moving in" with the 29 year old. I literally moved from one bedroom to the other down the hall. About a month later, my partner tried to commit suicide. That was a wakeup call for me. My life had become so insane that even I could not manipulate

continued on page 2

Conscious Contact Thru Meditation

By R. F.

The 11th Step suggests that we "sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God....". My Catholic home upbringing and involvement in evangelical Christianity in my teens and 20's gave me lots of instruction about praying. Even the 11th Step gives us some guidance on prayer when it says "praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out". But I never received much information on how to meditate and how to make it an integral part of my life. However, in these last 6 months of developing a daily meditation practice, I have found meditation to be life transforming and an essential part of my spiritual practice.

I never paid much attention to meditation, other than picking up a daily meditation book each morning and reading the topic of the day and trying to think about that for a bit. I equated meditation with contemplating a spiritual topic or aspect of my life, similar to doing a 10th step. I heard about other kinds of meditation, such as transcendental or Buddhist meditation, but I thought the focus was either on stress reduction or religious devotion. I rarely practiced meditation and the little I did practice did not make much of a difference in my life.

Three things happened this year that forced me to seriously consider meditation. First, at the beginning of the year I changed jobs within my agency and was challenged and overwhelmed with the amount of new things I had to learn in a very short period of time. I was impeded by my lack of focus and attention and my memory was not serving me well. Experiencing these issues caused me to worry if I had inherited the same Alzheimer genes that my father had suffered and eventually died from. Second, a few friends both in and out of the program were pursuing a meditation practice and began sharing their experiences with me. Lastly, one day I read a book review in the Washington Post entitled "Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain". The article described a compilation of scientific studies over the last 8+ years which found that those who practiced meditation actually changed and increased the neurons and pathways in the brain – called Neuroplasticity. This fascinated me, especially in light of my family history of dementia.

continued on page 2

SCA NEWS & EVENTS

The 2009 DC SCA Newsletter editors would like to wish you a very safe, fun and sober holiday season.

Please contact D. M. [REDACTED] if you would like to contribute to future editions of this newsletter. This is another way by which you can use the tool of service and share your written story with fellow SCA members.

My Story continued

my way out of this situation. So I called a therapist.

While my partner spent time in a hospital suicide ward, I walked into a therapist's office. I knew my life was a mess and I had to get it cleaned up somehow. I continued to see the therapist for a few more weeks when he determined that I needed help that he couldn't give. He gave me a number to call for a 12-step program. I walked into a meeting for the very first time in January 2000. I was so frightened. I had no idea what to expect.

It took me some time to adjust to the program. I eventually found a sponsor. He was incredibly patient with me. He had what I wanted, a loving partner and long-term sobriety. He told me I could call him anytime. I began to call him when I got into the car and to my surprise I was making it to work on time. Many months went by and I realized that I could actually do this. I was working the program one day at a time and the months were beginning to add up. I made it just past a year before I fell off the wagon. I learned that I was "white knuckling" it for the first year because I had never really established a Higher Power. So I went on a quest to find one that I could live with. That was hard and I still struggle with this aspect of the program, but somehow, I convinced myself that I was not God because I didn't create the earth, the sky, or the universe. So I accepted that there was something there. Then I convinced myself that this "something" didn't put us here to suffer, so I came to believe it wanted to help me.

Once that was established, I got back on the wagon and was sober for over seven years. But I had forgotten during that time how cunning and baffling the addiction can be, and I convinced myself that I no longer needed the program to stay sober. I recently heard an analogy about addiction and 12-step programs. It said that our addiction is like an escalator going down. When we get in the program, we start walking up. Walking up is our way of working the program. When we stop working the program, we stop walking. We end up back at the bottom. That is exactly what happened to me. After about a year off the program, I started acting out again. That is where I am now. I am struggling to get back into the program and struggling to stay sober. I have gone back to a therapist and I'm trying to work the program again. It is not easy but I am making progress. As they say, it is progress, not perfection. I will keep coming back because I know it works.

Meditation continued

I bought the book and devoured it. I picked up and started reading other books on the practice of meditation. I talked with my friends and found out that they were part of a community of meditators so I started checking out these meditation groups. I eventually settled on one group, regularly started attending meditation sessions, and committed myself to practice sitting meditation for at least ten minutes every day.

I learned that a specific type of meditation, sometimes called "peaceful abiding", is not about thinking but about placing my mind on the breath. As I focus on the breath, my mind may start to wander. I may recognize that I am thinking about a conversation that I had at work or a fantasy on what I should have said or millions of other thoughts, feelings, or images. I don't pursue my thoughts nor the stories my mind spontaneously creates. I admit that I am thinking and I consciously return my mind to the breath. It is not about thinking, not about analyzing, not about accomplishing anything other than being mindful of my breath, of my body, of my sense perceptions. It is all about "being". Thoughts will arise, feelings may ebb and flow, and I observe them, give them space, and let them go and return to the breath. Slowly the mind becomes tamed. This is a very simple practice that has had profound effects on my life.

I began to notice that I was more attentive, more aware of my surroundings. My concentration level increased and I started to listen better at work. My memory began to retain and more easily access information I had received from emails and conversations. Several co-workers and friends began to notice changes in me.

I also started to deeply experience program principles I heard described for many years. I became more gentle with myself. I started living more in the present with less regret of the past and less fear of the future. I more readily accepted my own basic goodness. I began to let go of expecting my Higher Power to fulfill my wishes and demands and when they weren't met to feel depressed or resentful. I call this intention to merge my will and HP's will as "magical thinking". Instead, I opened myself up to the phenomenal world just the way it is, accepting life on life's terms. My valleys of depression and anxiety became shallower and the cycle shortened. I became less critical of myself, of my partner, and of my world. My compulsive urges had less power and I put more space between myself and my addiction.

Though meditation has been an amazing experience for me it is far from perfect. Nor is perfection my goal. I know now that my life is so much better by practicing the 11th Step in the form of a daily meditation practice. I am so deeply grateful.

I would also like to thank everyone for allowing me to be of service through this newsletter. In the spirit of our 12 step principle of rotation of leadership, I am stepping down as editor after four years and am grateful that the stewardship of this newsletter will be in the capable hands of D. M.