

HOW TO CREATE AN ALCOHOLIC

(an excerpt from a share by Frank M, in 1997 in Modesto, CA)

I have something to do with a beginners group meeting back in Illinois. I'm here to tell you that it is the most successful, most exciting experiment that I've ever been involved in. We have had by actual count over 15,000 newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous come to that meeting.

And New York tells us that it is the largest beginners gathering in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. The only thing we do there is tell them the truth. We tell them the truth. We tell them that they can make it but chances are they won't. Not because they couldn't but because they won't. Because they will say they're alcoholic but they won't believe it. And when you say it but don't believe it, you don't have to do anything about it and if you don't do anything about it, sooner or later you will leave. That's just the way it is, it's not because it doesn't work, it works, it's just that people like me won't do it. They just won't do it.

One day I walked before that group and I don't know, thirty or forty people in there and I said, "Do you know what an alcoholic it?" I mean did it ever dawn on you that nowhere in the book of Alcoholics Anonymous is there a definition of alcoholic? Wouldn't it be nice if we knew what the definition was? Wouldn't it be important that ten we could say yes we are or no we're not? Wouldn't it be really nice to know that you didn't fit and you could leave? Cause the truth of the matter is when you're new you don't want to fit in you want to fit out.

Nobody wants to be an alcoholic, nobody thinks I just can't wait to go to meetings for the rest of my life. Ha ha. Truth of the matter is we want to figure out how to live without having to need help. To need help for people like me is a repulsive statement. I need help! Think that's easy to say? It sticks! Because when I need help, I am weak, and I am not weak. I refuse to be weak, I'd rather die than to be weak. And I will choose sometimes to die rather than to be weak. Strange disease.

And I said to these people If you don't know what an alcoholic is why don't we make one. And what we did that day and what we've done a lot of days and a lot of places is in the laboratory of our mind we've created alcoholics. And I've asked the people who are brand new to alcoholics anonymous to tell me by their own example, by their own life, by their own understanding, a week sober, three days sober, a month sober. As if I'd had an invisible test-tube I'd ask you to put into the test-tube those ingredients that you would think are necessary to constitute an alcoholic. And the day I did was somewhere in 1981-82.

And people looked at me very strange and I said well I just have this invisible test-tube fill it up newcomers. And a little girl, to make a long story short said, put in fear. And an older man said put in depression. Then somebody said put in perfectionism. And somebody said put in guilt. Somebody said put in remorse. Somebody said put in anger. Someone said put in loneliness. Someone said put in negative self-image. Some person said put in perfectionism. Someone said put some more guilt, *we had a lot of Catholics that night*. Put in ego, someone said. Someone said put in superiority and someone and someone raised their hand and said put in inferiority as if superiority and inferiority could be in the same test-tube. In the same test-tube, and I knew it could be cause I am the test-tube.

And they filled the test-tube and I just stood there holding this invisible test-tube while these newcomers filled the test-tube and your know what they didn't put in? I'll tell you what they didn't put in. They didn't put in alcohol.

And I said to them, “don’t you know what you missed?” And they looked at me like I was just goofy and I said, “you didn’t put in alcohol.” An you know why they didn’t put in alcohol? Cause they know, before they come here, when they come here, that alcohol is but a symptom of their problem. And we keep talking to them about their drinking. What do they gotta know about drinking? They’re the worlds authorities about drinking. There’s nothing they don’t know about drinking. How to live and not drink is an interesting subject they would like to touch on before they leave. And we don’t want to talk about it. We want to talk about drunken escapades rather than talk about recovery. They know about drunken escapades!

What they really want to know and are afraid to ask and will die rather than let you know they don’t know, is how do you get from here to there. How does a guy like Bill with forty some years stay sober in life? Those are not just years. These people that stood up with thirty and forty years you think that’s just a number? Here’s what happens in those years. Terrible things have happened to them. And wonderful things have happened to them. There have been deaths and tears. There have been tremendous failures, and wonderful victories. And they’ve been able to not to drink in spite of all of those things. That’s the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Not just some years. We throw years around like they have no meaning. Some of the most wonderful things that have happened to me have happened to me in Alcoholics Anonymous. One of my daughters had two babies die. That’s not fun. I’s not a ha ha. And you’re a big man, you’re the father and you can’t do anything about her tears. It’s not a haha. And I’ve had wonderful things happen and great successes and that’s just as dangerous for guys like me. Bad fortune is one thing but good fortune is sometimes even more difficult to deal with cause it reinforces the belief that maybe I’m different now. Maybe that’s just who I used to be. Maybe now I can or could...

In that test-tube in that laboratory of our mind I asked the people who were new and I’ve repeated this hundreds of times. I said, “do me a favor. Would you just put some alcohol in the test tube.” And they did in the laboratory of their mind and I said, “what happens?” And as they continued to put alcohol in the test-tube, here’s what they said happens. If you put just enough alcohol in the test-tube fear goes away. Alcohol dilutes fear. If you put just the right amount of alcohol guilt goes away. The feeling of dirty goes away, the anger goes away, the inferiority goes away and all the stuff in the test-tube seems to be diluted and looks good.

And that was my experience. That’s why I drank. I didn’t drink to pee in my pants or degrade myself or the people around me, to be ashamed in the morning, I didn’t set out to be ashamed. I just wanted relief. It worked.

I asked them to continue to put alcohol into the test-tube after it diluted what was in the test-tube and tell me what happened. And the new people in Alcoholics Anonymous tell me that if you keep putting alcohol in the test-tube, for some people, it no longer dilutes. For some unknown reason, for some people, you keep using alcohol instead of diluting what’s in the test-tube, it intensifies what’s in the test-tube. And for people like me, who keep on drinking, they learn a new meaning of remorse, a new meaning of anger, etc., etc. And for people like me, I asked them, remove the alcohol and what they tell me is left is the anger, and the remorse, and the guilt and the denial, and the loneliness.

And so newcomers know that the promise of Alcoholics Anonymous is not sober. It’s about change. What Alcoholics Anonymous offers to you and to me if you’re new is a way to change so that you can live as you and not have to drink to stand it. It’s not about not drinking. When I wrote that fifth step I tell you the truth, 90% of all the stuff that was on it that I had to tell that man occurred when I was sober. Not when I was drunk. When I was sober, I did those things. I drank to escape the memory of those things, but I did them sober. My problem is sober. I can’t live sober, I don’t know how.