



Understanding Spirituality

I'm always hearing that religion and spirituality is not necessarily the same thing. That comes as a relief to me; I'm not religious, and at first, I was a bit daunted by the frequency with which the term "spirituality" is tossed about in Narcotics Anonymous.

Seeing as how spirituality plays such a prominent role in recovery, it's reassuring for me to know that I don't have to be religious, (or even believe in God at all), in order for me to still grow along spiritual lines. However, I'm still at a loss to say what spirituality precisely means. It's one of those words that many of us probably take for granted. "Of course I know what spirituality is", we may say to ourselves. Yet when we try to get specific, we find that its meaning can be quite elusive.

I recently read in the Basic Text a sentence that has helped me to better understand (I think) just what spirituality is. It reads, "The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness". Now that way I see it is, if total self-centeredness is what occurs when we are spiritually bankrupt, then

maybe the opposite of self-centeredness is what it means to be spiritual. So I ask what exactly does it mean to not be totally self-centered?

Addicts place themselves and their desires at center of all that is important. Everything (job, family, etc) revolves around and is secondary to the addict and what he perceives as his "needs". Maybe spiritual development is simply the process of removing oneself from the throne of self-importance and acknowledging something larger and greater. Maybe it is attempting to connect with those around us - to become a part of something rather than foolishly pretending we're the whole.

Perhaps, this is what spirituality is, at least in part... to reach out, to focus on the well-being not just of oneself but the well-being of the whole of which one is a part. In any case, my understanding of spirituality is now fuller and richer than it previously was. I know there must be other ideas and perspectives out there that would only enrich my own. Perhaps some of you will share...

Terryl B

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Coming To Believe and The Second Tradition

I was sitting in a Tradition Study the other night studying the Second Tradition, you know, the one about group conscience. We were reading the second paragraph on page 135 of It Works How And Why, yep, that green book that so few of us use. As I read the sentence, "The success of the group conscience process depends on our willingness as individuals to seek guidance from a Higher Power on a personal level", I thought about how my journey thru the Steps is preparing me to serve our fellowship.

A successful group conscience depends on the integrity of all of the participants. We must be open-minded, and willing to surrender to what is best for the group. In order to find out what our groups needs are we have to be able to communicate with each other, freely sharing our concerns, and carefully listening to the thoughts of others.

When I first came to NA I was so self-centered that there was no way I could take part in anything that asked me to put the needs of others ahead of my own, I just did not know how. What I did know how to do was manipulate others to gain control of any situation I found myself in. That's not what we need in a group conscience, so I could not serve our fellowship in a good way at that time.

After coming to a few meetings and seeing addicts who seemed to have a sense of serenity in their lives, I started coming to believe in this program. I could not yet see God as my Higher Power, but I saw the group and the

literature as a Power greater than myself. As I worked my way through the Steps I was learning to be a bit more open-minded to the concerns and ideas of others. The Steps were preparing me to be of service to the fellowship that was saving my life.

In the essay on Step Three in It Works How And Why, page 26, it says "The decision we make in Step Three requires that we move away from our self-will. Self-will is composed of such characteristics as closed-mindedness, unwillingness, self-centeredness, and outright defiance." Without this Step working in my life there is no way that I can be an asset to a group conscience, there is just no way. On page 28 of the same piece of literature it tell me, "If we take time to think and seek direction before acting, we no longer have to run on our own self-centered will. Turning our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power provides a solution to the problems created by a life based in self-will, resentment, and control."

I can't change anything but myself, and if I could, what makes me think I know which way is best. So with an attitude of humility I'm going to work on me. And with the principle of open-mindedness and some Steps under my belt, I hope to hear what my group's wants and needs are. In this way maybe I can be an asset to my group and Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

An Addict named Randy

The Guardian is a free monthly publication serving the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous.

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Meetings in the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous:

Crossville NA Group
Crossville, Tennessee

Daily Reprieve
Wartburg, Tennessee

Getting Started
Crossville, Tennessee

Freedom Group
Allardt, Tennessee

Middle of Nowhere Group
Albany, Kentucky

Primary Purpose Group
Smithville, Tennessee

Unity Group
Crossville, Tennessee

Who Are You Group
Pikeville, Tennessee

(Note: This meeting is held in a correctional facility and is only accessible to those

Powerlessness

I liken powerlessness to being caught in a strong current in a river. At times I am able fight the current by swimming toward the shore but eventually I tire and get pulled back into the current. I even can grab a branch that is sticking out in the water but eventually the branch breaks and I continue to be swept away. Even when I see people who can help me I forgo asking for help because it is a sign of my own weakness----only the strong survive. I continue to struggle and fight the current until eventually I give up, defeated by a force that I cannot control.

The key to this metaphor for me is that it is my own self-will that is defeating me. My deep-rooted egotism that believes I don't need any help from anyone. That to ask for help would be a sign of failure. When in fact, the fact that I think I can fight and control the uncontrollable forces in my life is unrealistic, hubris and totally insane. It was only after total defeat that I could admit that I was powerless over my addiction that I was able to experience any sense of relief. It was only in total humiliation that I found humility. When my drug addiction surfaced as the reason for my poor performance at work and I still was in denial, I was asked to submit to a drug test. When I agreed to it I was escorted by two co-workers to the testing center. I

completely humiliated and absolutely powerless to do anything about it. From that point on I was at the mercy of others, completely powerless over my own situation if I wanted to keep my job/career. I had reached my bottom.

When I was in active addiction, I felt that I had no problem w/ my drug use whatsoever. I was going to work and what I did outside of my professional life was no ones business. Due to my desire to control my world and my great egotism, I felt that I was entitled to determine what I would do at work, what meetings I would attend, what information I would pass on. And if I didn't do what was expected or made mistakes then screw them that were affected by my mistakes because they weren't really serious and my co-workers should have been able to do it themselves instead of relying on me. What I chose to do was my business and no one else's concern. It wasn't until I began to be threatened w/ the loss of not only my job but also my career was I able to see that my addiction had caused my life to become unmanageable.

From humiliation to humility, I could not remain in denial but had to admit I was powerless over my addiction and that my life was unmanageable.

Frazier M

We need your help!

We need your help. The Guardian is in need of submissions. It can be a personal story of how you used the Fellowship or your Higher Power to get through a tough time, your views on a particular quote from the Narcotics Anonymous literature that you happen to like, Or a simple expression of gratitude.

Don't worry if you think you can't write well enough, we will be happy to make any spelling or punctuation corrections for you. The important thing is that you will be sharing your recovery with another addict. After all, we can only keep what we have by giving it away. The length of your article isn't very important either, just remember that shorter is better.

The only real criteria for submissions are that they reflect the message of Narcotics Anonymous and stick to the identification of ourselves as addicts suffering from the disease of addiction.

Submissions can be brought to the Upper Cumberland Area Service meeting, sent to The Guardian, 140 Cottle Ln, Jamestown, Tenn. 38556 or E-mailed to: ucaguardian@hotmail.com

Thanks to our friends in the recovering community of the Southwest Area in the California Inland Region we now have these wonderful Word Find puzzles. We hope to have one each month, enjoy.

PUZZLE

STEP FOUR

V Z T L I U G C P P C F E I L E R B N M
 S X L A I C U R C D P E M A H S P U Z C
 E L P M I S F N O I S U F N O C N P O K
 U U Y N F D O G F W S F R P U C E M Z F
 S E A R C H I N G T T C E F R E P J R D
 S P I Z O T S O H G M H E K S L M Z E I
 I D W R I T I N G E V L O S E R N M D S
 M B R M O X N C F M N C C T L N O N R C
 G O D O S T C E F E D R E M V Z I R O A
 S A L P F F A S V E T H A Z E F T A R R
 S M N Y A R P I A N M F T E S Z C E G D
 E S K A L T T L E A I C A G L P I F R P
 R T L E C I T M D C E E N I N B D R C S
 T E S A S T T E C S A W G R T E A A N D
 S S C O R N I T R D E F E A S H R D O G
 K S P O E O S O R N I F R O R I T T I J
 S A D S V E M C N A S A P U N U N P S X
 S O E S N E D R U B P R R G S I O P N S
 G R C O R R R C F S U S O F A F C C E S
 T C H R F W A Y R P F D S P A P E R T S

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|---------------|-----------|------------|
| ABLE | FREE | PERFECT |
| ACTION | GAIN | POSITIVE |
| ADMIT | GHOST | PRAY |
| AFRAID | GOD | PURPOSE |
| ANGER | GROWTH | RECOVERY |
| ASSETS | GUILT | RELIEF |
| BURDENS | HONEST | REMORSE |
| CARING | INVENTORY | RESENTMENT |
| COMPLETE | ISSUES | RESOLVE |
| CONFUSION | LEARN | RID |
| CONTRADICTION | MADE | SEARCHING |
| COURAGE | MORAL | SHAME |
| CRUCIAL | MUST | SIMPLE |
| DEAL | NEW | STRENGTH |
| DEFECTS | ORDER | STRESS |
| DISCARD | OURSELVES | SURFACE |
| FAITH | PAIN | TENSION |
| FEAR | PANIC | TOOL |
| FEARLESS | PAPER | TRAPS |
| FIND | PATTERNS | WAY |
| FOUR | PEN | WRITING |

By *GD*

All of the words are taken from Step 4 in the Basic Text pages 27-30

Concept Six

“Group conscience is the means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.”

Besides decision making, in what other areas of our fellowship’s life can we see group conscience at work?

The next meeting of the Upper Cumberland Service Committee will be on June 15, 2008 At 2:30 pm CST in Crossville, Tennessee at the Crossville NA facility. Come check it out to see what the service committee is doing for the Upper Cumberland Area and your group to aid in better carrying the message to the still suffering addict.