

# **RECOVERY & ME**

## **Make No Major Decisions**

**- Anonymous**

I'm not a neurologist or a psychologist; however I've read enough over the years about the workings of the human brain and the process of decision making to know that it is a very delicate organ. My personal experience as a recovering alcoholic, as well as the experiences of many close recovering friends, has taught me that years of alcohol use do incredible things to wreak havoc on the delicate balance of brain chemistry. What I had done to my brain did not occur overnight nor, as I know today, would not correct itself in a short period of time. It was going to take time to establish this balance and **patience** would be paramount in this process.

It was October, 1977, and my time as a client in the treatment facility was winding down. I was sitting outside my aftercare counselor's office waiting for her to arrive so that we could begin the discharge/aftercare planning process. I was sober now for about three weeks and I felt relatively confident about my life skills and my ability to make good and prudent judgments. "Come on in Drew, have a seat and let's get started". The aftercare counselor and I began to discuss some short-term as well as long-term plans that I would want to implement upon discharge. We talked about my desire to return to college and get my degree, my post-treatment living arrangements, outpatient counseling, support services and basic living skills.

"Your plans look pretty good Drew; however I am going to suggest that you refrain from returning to college right now. I believe that it's best to refrain from making any major decisions like returning to college until you're at least one year sober."

Well, I was aghast. I'm sober now and I feel pretty confident in my abilities to learn. After all, here in treatment I've learned all I need to know about staying

sober, I'm feeling great, I'm on top of the world. Hmm, it's amazing how denial doesn't end when the drinking stops.

My life and experience in sobriety has led me to believe that the information that I struggled to accept almost 30 years ago was advice that truly helped save my life and kept me sober. I, like many alcoholics early in sobriety, struggled to accept direction and advice. I was quite willing to listen to others who have traversed comparable paths, however my basic instinct was to decide entirely on my own what was the best course of action to follow. I fought against this instinct. That was a good decision. In retrospect, I realize that early in recovery I was pretty ill-prepared in appropriately dealing with many basic life decisions. My years of drinking had left me with a rather warped perception of the truth. My sense of self and personal responsibility were so extreme and confused that my interpretation of reality led me to believe that I was either entirely responsible for everything wrong in the world or that I was completely innocent of any wrong-doings. It would take time and help for this to be corrected.

Well, I took the advice and direction from others who had successfully overcome many similar obstacles early in their recovery and I kept my life as simple and stress free for the first two years of my sobriety. I tabled that idea of going back to college. I took a twenty-five hour a week part-time job at a local convenience store where I stocked shelves, cut lunch meat and waited on customers. I adopted a philosophy of approaching problems through simplicity. I began to understand what others had been telling me about problem solving. That when there are two or more competing theories the simplest is preferable and that an explanation for unknown phenomena should first be attempted in terms of what is already known. I surrounded myself with positive individuals who were invested in their own recovery as well as in supporting me in my health and well-being. I was **patient**. I made no major decisions. I trusted the process that so many before me had trusted, and miraculously, I have remain remained sober, happy, joyous and free for almost thirty years.

P.S. I graduated from Penn State University in 1982 with a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration and later a Masters Degree in Education in 1998.