

Hello fellow recovery friends

I recently read a very insightful book entitled, “12 stupid things that mess up recovery: avoiding relapse through self-awareness and right action” by Allen Berger.

This is a must read for everyone early in recovery, from any addiction. And it is a great read for those of us that have been coming around for a few more 24 hours. There are universal themes throughout this book. I hate to admit it (but it is an honest program), I indentified with much of what Dr. Berger wrote about. I saw myself in pieces of each of the twelve stupid things. I also recognized some isms in those of my recovering friends around me (not to take anyone’s inventory or anything). The good news is that by staying clean and sober and by actively working the 12 steps, I am getting a little better each day.

So, I thought it would be a good idea to share with you the general “12 stupid things” that “we” do to make our lives less happy, joyous, and free.

In the book’s introduction, Dr. Berger, wrote “I believe that if we are truly to recover from the disease of addiction, we must grow up-emotionally. True recovery is the product of humility that emerges from living and practicing a conscious and spiritual life. In order to attain humility, we must be honest with ourselves. This necessarily includes looking at the stupid things that we do, today, in our recovery. I use the term *stupid* to indicate the things we do that are self-destructive and not in our best interest.” (Berger, 2008 p.1)

Let’s start with Berger’s “stupid thing 1” that we do to mess up our recovery. “Believing addiction to one substance is the only problem.” How many of you in AA have heard of marijuana maintenance? Those of you who have not heard of this phenomenon, it is basically when someone comes into the AA fellowship realizing that they have a problem with booze. They know the horrors first hand of alcoholism. But, yet they may feel it is no big deal to smoke a joint from time to time. They will probably even come to meetings, but they generally are not very vocal in meetings about still smoking weed.

Berger, shares his personal history with a similar yet someone opposite story of this. He was a drug addict but did not think that alcohol was considered a drug. I have learned that some of us came into recovery realizing we had a drug problem but thought that alcohol was no big deal. After all, it is legal, right! If you are 21 it is. I was nineteen when I first came to treatment when I was nineteen. My life was out of control and I knew that I had a problem with drugs-and crack cocaine specifically. Now, here was the problem. I was not yet legal drinking age so I did not think I could be an actual alcoholic; that honor was saved for old people! SO, I went to NA meetings and continued to drink beer occasionally, which quickly became everyday, which quickly became harder liquor and then of course brought me back to my true love-COCAINE.

And there are still others of us, who come into AA and realize, after some dry time, that we have another problem; maybe it is food, or sex, or gambling. Some of us spend too much, or get way over our heads with credit cards. Still others suffer needlessly with sick and codependent relationships. There is no mystery why there are more than 200 twelve step fellowships.

Berger discusses how many of us “compartmentalize a problem... [and] keep it isolated, or separated, from other relevant issues.” When we compartmentalize our problems it is difficult to get truly honest with ourselves and others. We all know how secrets keep us sick. This has been proven time and time again by many an alcoholic or addict that did the experimenting for us.

But if we are honest with ourselves, and when we truly consider addiction as a primary brain disease, it is difficult to separate other mood and mind altering substances. My friends that are in Gamblers Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous all talk of the same love/hate relationship with their “drug,” as any drunk or junkie. So I realize for my own recovery and serenity, I must stay ever vigilant and in constant contact with my higher power. It is my spiritual condition that determines my level of serenity.

What are your experiences with this “stupid thing 1?” Can any of you relate to any of this phenomenon? Have you ever lied to yourself and told yourself that something that you were doing was no big deal when it was creating problems for you in your lives?