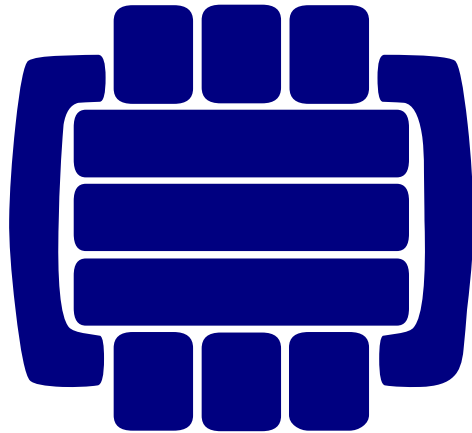


P D A P®



Palmer Drug Abuse Program

PDAP®

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Preambles

Palmer Drug Abuse Program

Palmer Drug Abuse Program is a fellowship of young people and parents who share their experience, love and understanding, to solve their common problems and help others to recover from the effects of mind-changing chemicals. PDAP is non-sectarian. The primary requirement for membership is a desire to live a chemical-free life.

Our primary purpose is to carry our love and understanding to others, and to practice the principles of love and honesty in our daily lives with the help of God as we understand him.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not affiliated with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.

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Foreword

If you are a recovering drug abuser or the parent of one, the Palmer Drug Abuse Program® may already be a familiar name, one that has been a pathway to sobriety and serenity as well as the means of travelling it.

If you are a drug abuser or a parent who is just discovering that getting straight is possible, PDAP may seem a puzzling new way of life.

This book is written as a guide to this program of recovery. It tells the history of PDAP. It describes PDAP's Twelve Steps, the spiritual principals on which PDAP is based. It explains the Twelve Traditions, the rules that govern each PDAP group. It includes the true stories of former drug abusers and their parents who have discovered a better life in PDAP.

There is no substitute for participation in the PDAP group. The love of the group is a powerful aid to straightening out a troubled life. This book can help reinforce PDAP's message, and hasten your progress along the pathway we all walk.



Preface to the Second Edition

The Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP) started in Houston, Texas when a man named Bob Meehan, who was recovering in A.A. built a friendship with Father Charlie at the Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church. A vision developed about reaching young people lost on drugs and bringing them into a new, sober lifestyle.

Since 1971, many people have continued to spread this vision and have carried a message of their experience, love and understanding to many more new people.

I am grateful, to those people who put together the first PDAP book, then titled Fists and Hearts, for expressing the miracles that happen in PDAP.

Since that first writing, PDAP has matured as a non-profit organization integrated with the communities it serves. Drug abuse is more widely recognized as an epidemic, and there are many more people involved in trying to stop its destructive influences. In all the PDAP cities, we are part of these larger efforts to turn the drug abuse problem around.

Today the program is active in 9 cities. Thousands of young people each year are finding a place, free of charge, to meet someone who knows where they have been and can help them achieve sobriety and change in their lives.

Our goal is, with God's help, to be free from addiction and to live our lives as God intended us to live them. We are doing it one person at a time and one day at a time. This second edition reaffirms the way PDAP is helping addicts, potential addicts, and their families overcome chemical dependency. We must never forget that God, and only God, is our deliverer. He has kept His hand on our program, and that is why we are here.

Norman Allen
San Antonio, Texas



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History of PDAP

The Beginning

In the spring of 1971, Father Charles Wyatt-Brown, the rector of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas, had started holding meetings in his church to help a group of young people with alcohol or substance abuse problems. The meetings followed a twelve-step program similar to that of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bob Meehan was a 28-year-old alcoholic and heroin addict. He had recently been released from Lexington Penitentiary and had found his way to Houston. He was not successful at staying away from drugs and alcohol or out of jail. Someone suggested that Bob attend a meeting at Palmer. Since Bob didn't have anything else going for him except a fresh heroin habit, he agreed to go.

Bob was uncomfortable around people who talked about being sober and happy, but he saw they had something that he wanted. He kept going to the meetings, and kicked his heroin habit. Father Charlie, as he was called, sat down with Bob one day in the church cafeteria. As they talked, Father Charlie asked Bob about himself, his past, and his dreams for the future. Day after day, they met in the cafeteria at lunchtime.

One day, Bob went to lunch and Father Charlie wasn't there. Bob started to eat alone when he was called to the telephone. It was Father Charlie, saying he was sorry he couldn't keep their appointment. "What appointment?" thought Bob. Father Charlie said he'd just called to tell Bob that he loved him. Bob sat back down and let those words run through his mind. In the coming days, he kept returning to the cafeteria to hear them.

Father Charlie continued to reach out to Bob. He could see him responding to his love and attention. Then the priest began to have a dream. What if teenagers who were on the brink of making all the mistakes Bob had made could hear where it would get them, from someone who had been there?

Father Charlie offered Bob the job of janitor at Palmer Church. He told him to talk to the teenagers who came around the church and to tell them about himself. Bob began to gather a regular group who came around to visit with him. Meanwhile, Father Charlie was hoping the church building wouldn't go to ruin while he worked to obtain community funding to pay the salary of a "youth counselor." He secured contributions for four months' salary. He called Bob in, and together they set up a schedule.

In July 1971, they called the first meeting of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program. There were six teenagers at that first meeting: the small group who had started hanging around with Bob at the church, some of their friends, and some members of the church youth group. From that meeting, PDAP was off and growing.

That original group of teenagers discovered that if they loved, accepted, and supported one another, they could get off drugs and alcohol and stay that way. They discovered that, in loving and helping others, they began to feel good about themselves. They had discovered the power of the "love of the group," and the basic principles of love and understanding that are still the foundations of PDAP.



Expansion and Organization

A second counseling center was opened in Houston in February 1972. So many teenagers and parents had started attending meetings that Palmer Church was no longer centrally located.

Membership in PDAP was limited to 13 to 16 year-olds. As years passed in the early days of PDAP, some members of the group turned 17. Obviously, just because a PDAPer was no longer a juvenile, he shouldn't be dropped from the group and told not to hang around any more! One of the older counselors volunteered to run a meeting for older PDAPers. In November 1972, a counselor was hired and the first Older Group satellite for those 17 to 25 years old was established.

Within four years, satellite centers had opened in many parts of Houston. Soon a group of parents in Dallas asked for a satellite center of their own. The rector of the Church of Incarnation in Dallas established the first satellite outside of Houston.

The age problem repeated itself in the next years. A counselor in his 30s volunteered to run a meeting for people over 30. Again the experiment was successful, and counselors were assigned to satellites for OTHers (Over The Hillers). That later became 25 and over. In nine years, PDAP had grown to over all ages of drug abusers.

In January 1978, a national headquarters office was established to deal with the continuing expansion and development of PDAP. Cities in Texas and other states continued to request PDAP services. Centers had been opened in several Texas cities.

In September 1980, a major administrative revision of the entire PDAP structure was instituted. PDAP had grown into a national organization with structural needs beyond the simplicity of the satellite counseling centers. PDAP National, with an Executive Director and a Board of Trustees coordinated expansion, counselor training and program literature. National was responsible for maintaining unity and continuity between all PDAP cities.

Because of the continuing evolution of the program and a drop in the economy, in 1986 the national program office was eliminated. Its duties, including training, expansion, program literature, and necessary coordination between cities, are now handled by Palmer Drug Abuse Services, Inc.



Parent Group

After PDAP became a formal organization with regularly scheduled meetings, parents of some of the teenagers started bringing their children and waiting around until the meeting was over. A small group of "regulars" started visiting together around a coffeepot at the church. Bob Meehan's future wife, Joy, was one these "regulars."

Within six months, Joy and the other parents became aware that families share the problem of drug abuse and also need help. They established the first Parent Group. The Parent Group adopted the Twelve Steps for their program as well. They also took on the responsibility of providing funding for the counselor's salary.



Tokens of Commitment

Before long, members felt the need for some physical symbol of their bonds of love for one another and their progress toward sobriety. The teenagers chose the "monkey fist" as a symbol for themselves, and another symbol for the parents was adapted from it.

The monkey fist is a marine knot used in docking ships. A baseball-sized knot with lines attached is thrown from the ship to the dock, the first contact the ship has with land. The crew on shore catches the knot, secures the lines to the dock, and pulls the ship in. The small leather monkey fist suspended on a thong is a symbol of a PDAPer's first contact with solid ground. The group is the crew that pulls the newcomer safely to shore.

The parent hearts are made of carved wood, and also suspended on a leather thong. In the center of the heart is a carved or stamped monkey fist symbolizing the drug abuser who lives in each PDAP parent's heart.

In a brief ceremony at the end of a PDAP meeting in the young peoples' groups and in the Parent Groups, monkey fists and parent hearts are awarded. They are given to the drug abuser for 30 days' continuous sobriety and to a parent for participating in four newcomer meetings. These tokens symbolize participation in PDAP and commitment to the principles of the program. PDAPers wear their fists and hearts as signs of recognition and achievement.



Stories

In PDAP groups, members learn from each other through “getting vulnerable” and sharing experiences. For this book, PDAPers who have found sobriety and parents who have learned acceptance and willingness to grow through the program have written their stories. As you read them, you will discover that each has made many changes in his or her life while working the program. The writers hope that their stories will help you better understand recovery through their own experiences, strengths and hopes.



Restore Me To Sanity

By the age of four, I knew I was totally Not OK and I wanted very much to die. Growing up as an Air Force brat during World War II, I learned that bravery, heroism, and the ability to face all pain without flinching was the only way to be right. All emotions were forbidden, including too much sorrow or too much happiness; anger was a sin and asking for affection was almost as bad. I continued to feel these emotions, so I knew I was a bad person and did not have what it took to live, I wanted to be dead. I was told that God loved me even when I was bad, and I was grateful for his love. But I felt even more guilty for not being able to be good for Him. I was learning to "stuff" my emotions.

A symptom of my mental unbalance was getting married at the age of fourteen. Ours was a storybook romance and a fairy tale marriage. The trouble with storybooks is that they tell stories and fairy tales that are not true. We told ourselves and everyone else that we had a perfect marriage. God took care of me, by not giving me children for seven years. During this time, I began seeking something to ease the pain in my heart and mind, a search which eventually brought me to PDAP, but that was many years away.

When my brother, who was in the Air Force Secret Service, lost his sanity, I felt I was living in a nightmare from which I could never awake. We had been so close all of our lives and had gone everywhere together. I assumed that we would go crazy together. The nightmare was compounded within the next few months when two more members of my family were admitted to mental institutions, and I felt that reality had disappeared from my life entirely. In the midst of this turmoil, I discovered that I was going to have a baby.

The birth of my first baby was one of the happiest moments of my life, and I just knew that he would make me OK. I would do everything for this child if he would just love me and make me happy. I lived my life vicariously through him and through my daughter, who was born two years later. It didn't work. I still wanted to die, and I resented the fact that I had to live to handle the responsibility of my children. But I loved my children. They were my whole life.

My make-believe world ended when my husband was admitted to the State Mental Hospital. I found myself at the age of twenty-five divorced and living again with my parents. Seemingly surrounded by insanity, I believed that only my strong will was keeping me from being insane, too. I sat with a gun pointed at my head every night, praying for God to tell me it was all right to pull the trigger. Instead He sent me to a strange doctor who told me that I had a right to live, for me, the way I wanted to; that until a person establishes a good relationship with God, he is insane; and for me to learn to like myself.

I remarried and had two more children and in some ways I was getting a little more self-esteem, but my marriage was not a happy one, and I still wanted to die. My relationship with my parents disintegrated under my resentments and anger. When I came into PDAP, my parents were not even speaking to me.

My children's story is so closely related to mine, that while not accepting the blame of their problems, I can see that our ships were sailing in the same sea of despair.

My son, though a brilliant student, was so unhappy that I was afraid he would do something to harm himself. He finally left school and home. My heart was broken.

When I heard about PDAP, I was told it was a program for everyone who had living problems, not just drug problems. I wanted to get involved, but didn't feel good enough about myself to spend that much time just for me. My daughter had become involved with drugs, and I became concerned about her behavior and attitudes. When her cousin decided to go to PDAP, she asked to go along with him. This gave me the excuse I needed to go to a meeting.

Of course, one meeting had me hooked on the program. All the searching, all the prayers, all the aching loneliness were found, answered and fulfilled in this program. They loved me. They accepted me. They



knew how to live the principles that I had only believed in, and they were willing to teach me how.

It came to light that my daughter's drug problem was more serious than I had suspected. Besides marijuana, she had also done several kinds of pills, had been using inhalants (spray shoe shine, paint thinner, spray deodorant, etc.), and had smoked a joint that had been "dusted" (with PCP). While out of control of her body from Angel Dust, she had been gang raped by six boys. We admitted her to the hospital where she stayed for three months. Her struggle was a long and hard one. She was in the hospital for sixty-two days before she got her thirty-day "Monkey Fist." During this time, she cut her wrists and became psychotic. She was placed on medication to control her hallucinations and would have to remain on them for the rest of her life.

The insanity which had surrounded me for so long had now encompassed my child. Getting her medication adjusted was a hassle with two more trips to the hospital involved. After her release, she ran away to another state and when I was notified by the Sheriff's Department there, I discovered my first measure of serenity from letting go. I was not upset, and I was willing to allow her to decide whether to return. Thank God, she chose to come home and went into a PDAP halfway home for girls. The change in her, from that day on, was unbelievably beautiful.

My son had returned home, and I persuaded him to get into PDAP, where he found some measure of peace through the meetings. But his was not a drug problem; he was needing professional help. After nine months of sobriety in the program, he took a number of pills in an attempted suicide. When I left him at the hospital, I told God, "If you will just give him a reason to live, I promise I will never interfere in his life again. He's yours." After six weeks, my son left the hospital with something he had never had before - a desire to live and be happy and the tools to carry it out. He no longer attends meetings but is a staunch supporter of PDAP. He carries his program with him and will assure anyone that through PDAP and the hospital, he got what he wanted - a reason to live.

In the meantime, I had been attending parent meetings, and after a year in the program, I decided to trust someone enough to get a sponsor. Then things started happening. I became the Parent Coordinator of a satellite. I was becoming a new person. And my life was changing drastically. My marriage was taken out of the battle zone, and my husband was becoming a nicer person as I changed. Though he has never attended a meeting, he has a lot of the program from living with PDAPers. My relationship with my parents bloomed into a new flower made of acceptance and understanding.

I became convinced that God was in control of my life and that He did talk through other people. I witnessed miracles in my life, like my turning over a large number of debts, and suddenly the U.S. Government is deciding to supplement my husband's line of employment, and our ending up with exactly the amount of dollars that our debts totaled. Then there was the lady in PDAP that I absolutely despised, but had to work with. At my sponsor's instructions, I asked God to put the love in my heart for this person that I needed in order to do His will (not believing for one minute that He could do it), and walking out of our first meeting together, totally in love with that person and convinced of the God in her.

Or the time when my daughter, while in a psychotic state, took a bottle full of pills and became a complete lunatic. There were also the dangers of overdose. It was not easy to see my beautiful child uttering incoherent insanities and behaving like a trapped animal or to know that her blood pressure was so high, her head could explode at any minute. It was not easy to see her cringe in fear from a washcloth or try to dig worms out of my mouth in horror of watch her being strapped to a bed. What was miraculous, was that I could look at her and say, "Even if she dies, God, I'll be all right."

It was my privilege to watch her grow strong in the program. To become sober and serene and happier than I had ever seen her in her whole life. She was beautiful inside as well as outside and so full of love. My heart was full when she told me that living the program finally felt better than getting high. We were able to share so many things, and it was not unusual for me to discuss with her that I had heard a man say at a meeting that our will is the only thing that we really possess and have control over. God is asking us to give up that one thing, and then we can be totally happy. She grinned and said, "He's right, Mom."



Maybe you should try it." I was afraid because my will had kept me from insanity for years, I thought.

That same night, just a few hours before Mother's Day, my daughter, while hallucinating, stepped out of a moving vehicle, got up and jumped off the bridge over the Houston ship channel and killed herself. The medication was unable to control her psychosis even though she was a sober PDAPer.

In my anger, I cried out, "OK, God. Take my will, too. Take it all." I believe at that point I began to know real sanity. I realized that I needed my husband and that I loved him very much. My house was filled with PDAPers immediately, and the phone began to ring and never stopped. I was not left alone for five days.

How strange are the ways of God. How kind to speak to me through other people, to tell me, "Whatever you're feeling, it's OK - just don't stuff it." How generous of Him to send me a woman in the program who had shared a similar experience and was willing to sponsor me in the area of my child's death. I became acutely aware of God in the people around me. I could see each parent's fear of discomfort, and what made it so precious to me was that they were willing to do as God bid them - which was to touch me, hold me, love me, and comfort me. I could feel the pain leave my body at each touch, and with each word, I could feel the strength flow in.

PDAPers are beautiful. Who else would say things like, "I'm so happy for her and so sorry for you." "Today there's a party goin' on in heaven, and it's a PDAP party," "She's made it while we're still having to work at it." "I knew her. I loved her. And now I'm hurting." or "It was just time. God's time, not ours." Her brother said, "She wasn't very big, but her coffin isn't big enough to hold all the love that's being returned to her now, because she gave so much love in her sixteen short years."

There were people at the funeral who experienced their first encounter with PDAP and were so moved that they cried when they tried to express what they felt. Witnessing the teenagers comforting and supporting each other, seeing those tough-looking kids who are not ashamed of crying or accepting hugs from others is more powerful than any explanation of the program.

I was acutely aware of my feelings and surprised at the anger, the guilt, the fear, and most of all, the serenity I felt. Since I had given control of myself to God, I could accept my feelings and thoughts as coming from Him. I even found myself laughing occasionally and thinking, "Thank you, God. That relieves the pressure a little." I could feel that people were praying for me, and when I became lethargic with depression, I decided God was giving me an opportunity to meditate. People would ask if I were OK, and I would say, "No, but I will be," until my sponsor assured me that I was already OK even though my feelings and thoughts were in turmoil. After all, if I could have said that I was feeling no pain because I had turned it over, I really would be insane. When I became angry and cursed God, it was wonderful to know that I didn't have the power to upset the Almighty. And it was sweet to know that I had his love and understanding of my feelings.

My miracle occurred exactly a week after my daughter's death when some of my friends asked if I were "stuffing" my feelings because I was not reacting the way I always had to pain. One said, "This is just not like you," and I retorted with, "Well, I don't want to die if that's what you mean." And then I heard what I had said. Oh, God, I'm hurting worse than I ever have in my whole life, but for the first time in my life, I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I want to live. I've never felt this before - and what a wonderful feeling this is!

The moment of my greatest sorrow became the moment of my greatest joy. My faith was formed in the time of my greatest fear. My strength had grown from my terrible weakness, and in my greatest turmoil was born that place in the midst of me where God and I dwell in peace and harmony. Whatever may happen, there is in me a strong, solid foundation of God's loving care and the joy of being. How could I pray for this, when I didn't know that it existed. I no longer wish to put the limitation of imagination on God; rather I pray for His will and wait eagerly to see what new vision He has for me.

My life is new because I never really lived until I wanted to live. I have given myself such wonderful gifts, like graduating from the GED School and writing for the newspaper. My twelve-year-old daughter came



into the program the day after her sister's funeral. She has never done drugs, but definitely has problems. After two years in the program, she, too, has gone to the hospital. My six-year-old boy has been allowed to grieve for his sister openly (none of that stiff upper lip for us). He knows that big boys do cry. Hopefully, he will have more self-esteem than the other children; but if he develops problems, I know where help is.

Because I became aware of myself, I began to realize that I, too, had a drug problem. I had thought it was OK to "rest" about every two or three months by taking sleeping pills all weekend. After reading ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, I began seeing myself in some of the stories. I came to the decision that I no longer was willing to have even one minute of my life controlled by mind- changing chemicals. I thought I could handle it by working my Twelve Steps and without admitting the truth to anyone. But I didn't stay sober.

It took a lot of courage and trust to admit my problem to my sponsor after three years in the program. She took me to the others, and now I have a year of sobriety. Emotionally, I am still a child, but that's OK. I'm growing. Spiritually, I am eager to learn, to grow toward my God. I know I have the best teachers in the world, and the best tools.

This is my story, but it really isn't finished. In fact, it has only begun.



Gratitude

When I started getting high at thirteen, it didn't seem to be the wrong thing to do. My relationship with my father was zero except for the special attention he showed me by beating me whenever he had some frustrations he didn't know how to deal with. My relationship with my mother was beginning to go poorly and was to stay that way for the next four years. I hated her no matter what she did. I got along with my brothers and sisters like all normal brothers and sisters, I guess, by fighting a lot. I always felt insecure and seemed unable to acquire any self-esteem. I felt inadequate and unattractive and never quite as good as the next person.

When I found the new hobby of getting high, I just fell in love with it. I could rebel against my parents and not feel any pain. I was able to say what I wanted to anyone. I became a very mean and hateful person. I was hurting so much down inside, I didn't know how to express what I was feeling, and hating or rejecting people seemed really easy.

I ventured into the party scene, which included drinking, smoking pot, and doing barbs (barbiturates). Then we hit the PCP scene. I didn't realize what a drag that was going to be until I was really into it. During my freshman year at school, I shot PCP almost every day. I can remember shooting too much and wishing I would die, anything to get it over with soon. I remember asking God either to let me die or to show me the way to something better. I used to cry all the time, but only when I was alone. I never wanted anyone to know that I was really hurting. I finally decided that PCP was no good, and I stopped using it but I had already contracted the hepatitis that led to the first of my many hospitalizations. While I was in the hospital, my parents asked a psychiatrist to come visit me. He just told me that my problem was my parents, and I agreed with him. I didn't have to deal with my drug problem at all.

When I was fifteen, I left home and moved in with my girlfriend and her ten brothers and sister. I only stayed there about nine months. I moved back home when I found out I was pregnant. I didn't know what else to do. My mom asked me if I wanted to marry the father of the baby or have an abortion. I chose the abortion. I was really scared, and when it was over, I felt like the lowest person around. I really hated myself. I was uncomfortable around my girlfriend who was pregnant at the time. When she had her baby, I couldn't handle being around her at all. I left home for the second time and was introduced to heroin. I remember the first time I got off - I really loved it! I knew that this was all I needed to be normal. I started selling at school and was surprised by all the money I could make. And it was all so easy!

By my sixteenth birthday I was back in the hospital again. The doctors told me I had less than 45% of my liver functioning and that I need to take better care of myself if I expected to continue to live. So I moved to my grandfather's house in Michigan so he could take care of me. I stayed there about six months and really tried to keep it together, but it was only a matter of time until I was partying again. My grandfather eventually got tired of putting up with me and sent me back to Chicago. I moved in with a girlfriend until I found out she was into prostitution to earn her dope money. I didn't want any part of that scene, so I soon left.

I met Neil, a thirty-year-old divorced junkie. We lived together in a ghetto on the Southwest side of Chicago, where I learned a lot about living. I experienced being strung out for the first time. Once, when I didn't clean the syringe before I shot up, I shot up my fix along with someone else's blood. I got really sick and thought I was going to die. I decided to get off dope. I made up my mind, no more misery for me. I gave all the dope and all my money to Neil so I wouldn't be able to get any more drugs. The next morning when I woke up, I was sicker than I had been the night before. Neil had spent all the money and had used all the dope. I didn't have any food or any place where I was really living that I could call home. I wanted to go back to my parents but believed my mom would never let me come home again. Somehow I survived and soon after, Neil and I split up.

I found another guy, Hank, to take care of me. I moved into Hank's house on the South side of Chicago. He was managing a rock and roll band at the time and wasn't shooting dope on a regular basis. He had



quit dope a few months earlier and was drinking Methadone. I had just found a new connection after getting cut off from my old one, and the dope I was getting was really bad, being cut with quinine and other stuff. So I decided to try quitting one more time. During withdrawal, I couldn't eat or go to the bathroom. My liver was swollen, and I was sick all the time.

I had been sincere about wanting to quit, but after a day and a half, I felt so bad that I welcomed Hank's promise to bring me some Methadone. I disliked drinking the Methadone, though, and as soon as I was physically able, I started scoring every day again. I would score, shoot the dope, sleep twenty hours, and try to get up and shower and drink a cup of tea before starting the cycle all over again. I soon got to the point where all I could do was lie in bed. I couldn't even move my head an inch. I was almost seventeen years old.

I told Hank that I wanted some help and that I was going to contact a doctor I knew. He told me that if I did, he would never see me again. I decided to call the doctor anyway; I knew I couldn't last much longer. He insisted we contact my family and a few days later, he and my mother admitted me to a psychiatric hospital. The psychiatrist there wasn't interested in helping me with my drug problem. He gave me whatever pill I asked for. I stayed so loaded that I didn't mind staying for two and half months.

After I got out of the hospital, my mom said I could move back home if I went to school and abided by her rules. And I tried it. I only lasted about three days. I was falling apart. I would start crying uncontrollably and wouldn't be able to stop. I was frantic. I was withdrawing from all the pills I had been on in the hospital. I tried to get some prescriptions from the psychiatrist who had seen me in the hospital, but I couldn't afford the fees. I went to see the school counselor, who told me about a program she had worked with during the summer. I promised I'd call the program and set up an appointment with one of the counselors. I went to see them, and the next thing I knew, I had signed up for two years with this place. I somehow managed to last those two years and "graduated" when I was nineteen. They told me after graduation I could drink if I wanted to. I came out of that program sober and scared, but I felt I for once had a good head on my shoulders, some morals, and a sense of responsibility.

I met a man named Jim, who had graduated from the same two-year program, and we fell in love. We were both drinking socially, but weren't into any drugs. We got engaged and moved together. For the first time in my life, things seemed to be going well for me. We took a three-month vacation to Hawaii and Florida for the winter. When we returned to Chicago, I discovered that Jim was shooting dope again. I knew I had to leave him. It was so painful for me to watch the man I loved destroy his life and wind up back in the joint again. I felt devastated. My sister had moved to Houston earlier that year and I talked to her about it. She suggested I move to Houston and get involved in a program they were in called Palmer Drug Abuse Program. She said the only answer was to be completely sober and to start a new way of life for myself. She even offered to help by putting me up for awhile if I were willing to try it. So I did.

I am so grateful that I made that decision. It was a real turning point in my life. I got involved in PDAP, but slipped after my thirty-day fist. I thought that since I didn't have a problem with alcohol, I could drink and work the program at the same time. I found out that was impossible. I couldn't be halfway sober and work a program. I had to be 100% sober. That's what I am today, and I'm darn proud of it!

I know that I've got God on my side now. Through the Serenity Prayer, the Twelve Steps, and the love of the friends I found here, I began a whole new way of life. That way of life has gotten me where I am today - sober and happy. Things can still be rough sometimes, but that's OK. I have the love of the group to see me through. I know if I keep things simple and continue to trust God, I'll be OK. PDAP and the people I've met through the group are just what I needed to help me become the loving, successful, and grateful young lady that I am today.



My Daughter Chose To Leave

I don't know when I first became aware that Sally was on drugs. While she was in school, she was miserable and lonely. She didn't get along with her older brother and sister. But I think she was straight. She always made the honor roll. She did nothing but study, look at TV, and listen to records.

I was terribly worried about the fact that she had no friends and no school activities. I tried to get her to a family counselor, but she wouldn't go. So I did some things that I now recognize were really crazy, to try to "make" her have friends. My husband and I would withhold her allowance if she couldn't prove that she had spent a certain number of hours visiting some other girl. She usually settled for a neighbor with whom she had little in common.

During her senior year, she and her father didn't speak to one another. They would sit at the dinner table, each looking down at the plate or staring at the other with open hostility. I, meanwhile, attempted to make conversation. I desperately wanted a happy family, and I thought that if I could just keep chattering, I could prove there was nothing wrong with us.

Meanwhile, I blamed my husband Jack for all of Sally's problems. He blamed me. I made accusations, and he retaliated by putting me down. I kept thinking that when Sally went away for college, she would find herself. My other children had really changed when they had gone away. They had been excellent in school and had plenty of friends. I spent a lot of time pretending that everything was OK.

Sally changed at college, all right, but all for the worse. My other children had helped earn money to pay for their tuition at the exclusive college they wanted to attend. But Sally had not even wanted to get a summer job. And once at college, she did nothing but demand more and more money. We played a game where I told her what to do - how to dress better, fix her hair and make friends. So that I wouldn't have to feel she was unpopular. She manipulated me by refusing to do any of the things I wanted her to do and by making me feel guilty for her unpopularity because she didn't have enough money. I really felt guilty about her sloppy appearance, the raggedy jeans she preferred, and her long, unstylish hair. She started making Cs and Ds, and I really got on her about her grades.

When spring vacation arrived, Sally phoned and said she had to have money for plane fare if I wanted her to come home. I told her to put her name on the bulletin board and get a ride with someone, as my other children had always done. I refused to send the money. So Sally didn't come home, and she didn't tell us where she was going.

Jack and I were frantic. The college offices were closed, so we phoned her roommate who had little to say. She and Sally weren't getting along. The roommate's mother tried to hint to me that Sally was smoking pot, but I closed my ears. I was desperately still trying to deny the fact that anything was wrong with my daughter.

As always, I feared the worst. I was afraid Sally had committed suicide. We phoned the police and had them open the locked dorm and inspect her room. There was nothing to indicate where Sally had gone. Jack and I felt sick.

After five days, Sally with a raging temperature, turned up at her brother's place in another city. I begged my son to persuade her to come home. I promised him I would not ask any questions if she would just come home, and I would send the money for her bus fare. (I still wasn't going to give in and pay for a plane ticket!). Sally arrived in dirty jeans and a man's shabby shirt, her hair straggling down her back, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, and her shoulders slumped over.

Sally never told us where she had been, but from that day on, our relationship got even worse. At college she often suffered mysterious ailments that kept her in the infirmary for weeks at a time with low-grade infections. Sally had always been my healthiest child, and I could not imagine why she was sick all the



time - even though a doctor tried to tell me she was taking too many pills.

Sometimes I would telephone Sally. Her words would come out slurred, and she spoke as if what she said took a lot of effort. When I hung up, I would be almost nauseous with fear. Yet I denied that she was on drugs. If I didn't admit the fact, perhaps the problem would go away.

In the summers, Sally would come home, and we would threaten not to pay her full tuition unless she got a job. Sally would make half-hearted attempts by working a few days for a temporary agency. The rest of the time, she would sleep till noon and stay up all night listening to records and looking at TV. She still wasn't speaking to her father, nor he to her. Jack and I quarreled a lot.

Sally didn't have many friends in our city. But occasionally a rough looking bunch of boys would take her to the lake. When they honked, she always ran out the door with a big grocery sack in her hand. I had a sick feeling about what was in that sack, but I told myself I had to respect her privacy. I never searched her room. I was afraid of what I might find.

The summer after her junior year, I had to face the fact that my daughter was doping. Sally came home sick with a strange neurological ailment - a bad one that caused paralysis for a period of time. She was in the hospital for six weeks. The day she was transferred to intensive care, the nurse told me to pack up all her belongings and take them home. I opened her purse to stuff something in it and found myself staring at a vial of marijuana and a packet of birth control pills.

Now I could no longer deny the fact that my daughter was smoking marijuana and doping all the things a "good girl" shouldn't. The hospital chaplain thought I was crying because Sally was so sick, and I was. But I was also crying about some other things I couldn't tell him. My worst fears had been confirmed.

I didn't tell Jack. But I did go home, look in her room and opened the sack she always took to the lake. Inside it, I found her bong and some other marijuana paraphernalia. I had read somewhere that it didn't do any good to throw a drug abuser's supplies away, so I didn't. I bided my time, and when Sally got well and came home, I told her I knew had been smoking pot.

"So what?" Sally said. "Everyone at college smokes pot. You can smell it all over the dorms. Besides, it's no worse than the social drinking you do. I just do it with friends, or at a party, so I can have a good time!"

I told myself I had solved the problem, because Sally didn't leave the house that much. Now I know that Sally simply waited till we were in bed to do her doping. Everyday she was groggy and red-eyed, but I told myself she looked sickly because of her recent illness. The doctors had given Sally a lot of pain-killers, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers in the hospital. Sally demanded that the prescriptions continue after she came home. But when she went back to college, they cut her off.

That last year at college was a disaster. I now know that Sally was doping a lot more. She insisted on a private room because she had been sick. She had fewer friends and her grades were worse. But somehow she managed to pass enough courses to graduate.

When Jack and I went to the graduation, we found Sally in a shabby dress that was four inches too short. Now I know that she must have spent the money we sent her for clothes on drugs. She almost bragged about having been out on a drinking binge with a thirty-five year-old married man the night before. Her eyes had that blank look to them. Throughout the ceremony, Jack and I cringed with shame because of her appearance and suffered agony at the thought of our daughter's failure in the midst of so many other happy people.

At home, Sally informed us that she wasn't going to get a job. We had brought her into the world, and it was our duty to support her for the rest of her life. Furthermore, she wanted a car. She slept till noon and stayed up all night. Her eyes were always red, and she complained about various aches and pains.



I now believe that Sally wanted a job and her independence, but she didn't have the self-esteem to go out and get them. She doped to avoid feeling the anxiety and pain. My husband finally found a job for her. Even though the minimum wage pay was a big disappointment to Sally, she seemed excited about working. Her hopes were up. Now Jack and I thought Sally would make a turn-around. She was away from that awful bunch of dopers at college. But within a week she had found an alcoholic forty-year old woman who took her to a different bar every night.

By now I had told Jack about Sally's doping, and we both decided that something had to be done. I had heard about PDAP through my church. I suggested to Sally that she go. She was indignant. "There's nothing wrong with me. You're the one who has a problem," she said.

So Jack and I went to some parent meetings. From the first, I loved everything about them - except all the hugging and kissing. I heard that kids, real losers who had been on worse drugs than Sally, were getting straight. And I saw that those kids were now a real contrast to my daughter. They were happy and outgoing. They hugged and kissed their parents. They discussed their defects freely. When Jack and I went to see the counselors, they told us these kids had once been just like Sally. I could hardly believe it, but I was willing to give PDAP a try.

Another thing I like about PDAP was the fact that the parents and counselors told us it wasn't our fault that Sally was doping. I had always taken on guilt with a vengeance, even though I outwardly blamed Jack for most of my problems. I looked on Sally as an extension of myself. If she failed socially, it was my fault. If she smoked marijuana, it was my fault. But now these beautiful people told me that Sally was the one who had smoked the first marijuana cigarette. I hadn't put it in her mouth. In fact, I had tried to prevent it.

The counselors told us that many parents had persuaded their drug abusers to join PDAP by giving them a choice of either getting in the program or leaving home. I didn't think I could do that. People with a perfect home just didn't do that to their kids. It took me about six weeks of PDAP parent meetings and hearing about the exciting results of trusting God to do what He wanted with a youngster before I decided that perhaps I, too, could do that.

The strange thing was, I had believed I had a strong faith. I really felt that God had already worked a lot of miracles in my life. But now I realized that I had never really trusted God with my most precious possessions - my children. When I said I was afraid to put my daughter out of the house, other parents said, "Don't you believe that God will take care of her if you ask Him to?"

I had to admit that I did not, and my words shook me. I had to do a lot of praying before I could tell God, "Look, I'm really afraid to give Sally that choice. You take my fears and do with her whatever You want."

Finally I did give Sally that choice, and she went to see the counselors, though not without raging at everyone. Sally agreed to go to PDAP, but only to the night meetings since she wanted to keep her job. At the time, my priorities weren't too good. A job had always been such a big issue with us that I agreed that she should keep working. But I told her she had to go to the night meetings, and if she used any kind of drugs or alcohol, I was going to kick her out of the house.

For two weeks Sally went to the night meetings. She didn't like them, but she seemed a little less defiant. She started to relax with us. Then she started refusing to go. One night she came home at midnight smelling strongly of liquor.

"Sally, you've been drinking," I said. I summoned all my courage. "So you have to leave. Right now. I love you too much to see you go down the drain with alcohol or drugs."

Sally tried to argue. But when she saw that both Jack and I meant what we said, she cried and raged. She even held on to the front door as we pushed her out.



"We love you, but you've got to go," I said. Then we shut the door and locked it. I felt a strange mixture of exhilaration (because I had taken action) and fear. I had thought Sally would spend the night in the yard and promise to go to the Saturday PDAP meeting the next morning. After all, she didn't have a car. When she left, she had been wearing a pair of jeans and was barefoot, and it was midnight. But the next morning, she was nowhere to be seen. Where could she have gone?

I went to the Saturday Parent's Meeting and found myself crying the whole time. Other parents put their arms around me and comforted me. They strengthened my determination not to go look for her.

On Sunday, Sally called to see if she could come home and get her clothes. We learned that she had walked five miles through the dark to reach a friend's apartment. Now she was going to move in with a college friend who was married. We knew this friend had a drinking problem that was causing her problems with her husband, so we didn't think Sally would last long there. All the while Sally was collecting her clothes, I sat in the next room praying and feeling sick.

We didn't see her again for fourteen months. The counselor told me not to contact her, so we didn't call. She didn't phone us either. At first, I imagined her as being constantly drunk, or high on marijuana, or even overdosing on sleeping pills. And I'm sure that she was doing a lot in the beginning. But occasionally Sally would contact a relative who would tell me that Sally had kept her job, which gave me some hope.

The relatives would also tell me that Sally couldn't say enough bad things about her boss and that she was dressing sloppily. Even when they told me that she had moved into her own apartment and was budgeting to live on her own salary, I could still think of her as nothing but a failure.

To make things worse, my oldest daughter, Esther, told me that she was sure that Sally would turn to prostitution to pay for her drugs. Esther was furious that I had put Sally out of the house. She didn't think that was any way to handle a drug problem, and she refused to see me for five months. I had always had a good relationship with Esther. Now I felt as if I had lost both my daughters.

My parents told me I had done the wrong thing, too. I took them to a PDAP meeting. They were impressed with what PDAP had done for other kids, but they didn't believe that Sally had a problem. They did promise, however, not to help Sally financially. I don't think they ever did, even though they constantly tried to persuade me to contact Sally and help her.

The PDAP counselors kept telling me not to have anything to do with Sally. I couldn't have kept my sanity without the other PDAP parents. I got a lot of love and support. I learned to think in terms of priorities. They helped me to see that the best way I could help Sally was by letting her bottom drop out so that she could see her need and go to PDAP. If bottoming out took prostitution, then I could be grateful for even that.

They helped me see that I didn't have to take on all the guilt that my relatives were putting on me, either. I could keep my serenity by turning over all these feelings to God.

It was at this time that I consciously started working the steps. I learned the blessing of Step One, recognizing that I was powerless over Sally's doping. I could accept the fact that there was nothing I could do to change her. She had to do it herself. I had the choice of turning both Sally and myself over to God or wallowing in self-pity.

I was thoroughly depressed at first, even though other parents told me I could choose not to be miserable even under the worst circumstances. I would get up every morning and try to turn Sally over to God and end up with tears. That's when talking to other PDAP parents would help.

I wish that I had gotten a sponsor right away. If I had, it would have been much easier for me. But I did call several PDAP parents from time to time. They always helped me see that what I was doing was a way of helping Sally.



By this time Jack had dropped out of PDAP. He said that if Sally wasn't going he wasn't either. Besides, he didn't need it. But I stayed in. I needed the support. Four months after I got into PDAP, I decided to do an inventory. When Jack went out of town for two weeks, I worked on it every night and finished it just before he returned.

I've always been a private kind of person. I've hidden my feelings and tried desperately to cover up my weaknesses. I've majored in denying that anything was wrong. Now I had to go to my sponsor and tell her everything I felt had been wrong about me. It was only because she was a very loving person that I was able to do it. And I found the experience a positive one, for she accepted me as I was. She even pointed out a lot of good things about me, too.

I discovered in my inventory that I had a lot of resentments toward my husband. And I found that I had always felt responsible for making everyone else happy and successful. It was my fault if my children were failures or didn't have friends. I had to take control and "make" them happy. I did the same thing with other relatives and friends. All the while I thought I was helping other people, I now saw that I was trying to control others so I could feel all right about myself. Of course, when they didn't do as I wanted (because they had their own lives to live), I felt rejected and frustrated. I would get depressed because I felt unloved.

I wanted the love of others so badly that I rarely expressed any of my real feelings to them. I just agreed with others and how they felt about everything, from politics that I disliked to movies that bored me, because I wanted their love. The result was that I resented just about everyone because I wasn't expressing my true feelings.

The way I had learned to handle all this garbage was by spending a lot of time on my career. I could equate success on the job with the love that I really wanted from other people. In fact, I was a workaholic. My day was crammed so full of work, activities, and helping others, I was a nervous wreck.

I told my inventory to my sponsor shortly before the holidays, and I'll always be glad. Because I could have been even more miserable than I was, knowing that Sally would not be with us at Christmas. As it was, I managed to get through the holidays fairly well.

I began working on my character defects by writing out my resentments toward my husband and then turning them over to God. I looked at my resentments and saw how I could change. I had wanted Jack to go to PDAP and become a loving person, but he wouldn't go. That was all right. I now saw I could go and change myself. I wanted Jack to be more open, to reach out to others, but he wouldn't. Yet I could reach out to him and accept him as he was. I wanted Jack to stop putting me down. I could stop letting him by affirming the fact that I liked myself and wasn't going to accept a put-down.

By the time Sally had been away a year, I was a much different person. I had learned to express love openly. I could kiss PDAPers. My husband and I were on much better terms. And somehow, by turning Sally over to God every day, I could begin to believe that someday she would be whole and straight.

One day the counselor told me that since Sally appeared to be doing OK on her own and since she had held a job twelve months, it would be right for me to contact her.

"But what will I say?" How will I relate to her?" I asked.

"Just enjoy your daughter," he said.

I could phone Sally only at work because she had an unlisted telephone number. So I wrote her a letter. I spent a lot of time wording it. I felt I could not truly make amends, for an apology would serve as an invitation to blame her problems on me. So I wrote that I wasn't sorry I had required her to leave home because I still felt she needed PDAP. Whatever I had done, I had done it for love of her. I told her that I



was sorry that we no longer got to see each other. I asked her to call me or come by the house. I received no answer.

But two months later, my sister-in-law persuaded Sally to come to my house on a day when my other daughter was visiting. Even though the meeting was awkward, and I could see that Sally didn't want to be touched, I was very happy to see her. Sally looked a lot different. She was healthier and showed no hostility toward us. She didn't beg for money. She didn't try to make us feel guilty. I saw that in a few short months God had taken away many of the defects in Sally that I had spent years of effort trying to overcome.

Sally was still blaming her troubles on others, but at least she wasn't blaming us. Instead she had laid them on her boss. I didn't believe that Sally was actually straight, but certainly her whole attitude was different. She had a new and better job. She was living on her salary. And she actually bragged about how well she could get around the city without a car. She walked miles and rode the bus! She seemed to have gained confidence and self-esteem simply because she had to overcome some hardships on her own.

It has been two and one-half years now since we put Sally out of the house. She has changed a lot more, so much that I now believe she is straight. She takes good care of her health. She's stopped smoking, and eating balanced meals is very important to her. She has progressed in her job. She no longer blames others quite so much for her problems. She has some friends. She is a young woman of twenty-four managing her life as well as most adults I know that age, and much better than many.

I still wish that Sally had joined PDAP. I don't see in her the joy, the freedom to express feelings, the ability to forgive, and the relationship with a Higher Power which I see in PDAPers. But, I am grateful to PDAP for what progress she had made. I am sure that none of it would have happened if I had not given her the choice and then stayed in the program following the counselor's advice myself.

Our relationship is still not a normal one. She hasn't given me her phone number or address. But we meet for lunch occasionally. She comes home to visit when other relatives are here. She talks pretty freely to me about what is going on her life.

Recently she told me that one thing she couldn't forgive in her father was that he "made" her become just like himself. She saw that she had all his bad habits. If she had said this before I was in PDAP, I would have tried to defend Jack, to smooth over things and deny problems. Instead I was able to say, "But you have the choice not to be that way if you don't want to."

Sally and her father now speak to each other politely, though each seems afraid to reach out and make the first move to forgive. Yet I can accept that, too. I can stay out of their relationship, letting them have whatever feelings they want toward each other. It's not my responsibility to make them love each other, and I can love each of them myself. The result is that they are gradually becoming more open to each other.

I try to model some positive behavior for Sally. I've told her how great it is to be able to change. I've told her that I'm no longer trying to be responsible for others and that I'm actively seeking to make myself happy. She listens and doesn't say anything. But I see her changing for the better.

I continue to go to PDAP because I know I need the program. I need to work the Twelve Steps so that I can continue to accept other people as they are and not try to control them. I need to be able to give what I've learned to other people by being a sponsor and helping in the parent group.

I'm no longer a workaholic. I take time out for myself and others. I had added a new dimension to my spiritual life. Just through my experience in PDAP, I am now able to find even greater beauty in worshipping God in my church.



It's wonderful to be able to trust God to take care of Sally and Jack and to know that I don't have to be the one to direct their lives. It's a real joy to be able to turn over my feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, and insecurities to God. Suddenly, my life is very happy and each day an exciting one to live.



I Brought My Son—I Stayed!

My childhood was mostly "blah." The first twelve years were spent in the large city where I was born, with practically no contact with anyone other than my mother, father, and brother. The once-a-year vacation trips to see relatives were the only touch I had with a closeness of family or friends. My immediate family did not show affection because they did not know how. The words "love" and "God" were never mentioned in my home. I did go to a neighborhood Sunday School for a short period of time, but felt out of place and lonely there.

My friends consisted of a girl next door and another one half a block down the street. It was one or the other, never both. School was a requirement I enjoyed, although I made no friends there.

Mother had "health problems"; therefore, I made a decision very early in my life not to upset her or cause her any trouble. I was taught to be seen and not heard. I became a "nice girl" and chose not to make waves. Dad was good-natured and nice to be with. He worked long hours and talked a lot about his work. I adored him. When his business began failing, we came south to Houston to start over in a city that showed considerable potential.

The people were much friendlier there. I wanted friends, but I did not know how to be a friend. I went through high school with a couple of girlfriends and virtually no boy-girl relationships.

At the beginning of my second year of college, I met my "Prince Charming." He was everything I could have hoped for and more. We were married that year. He went to school, and I had babies - six in nine years. The third child died accidentally during my fourth pregnancy. She was almost three years old at the time of her death. We had five kids when my husband received his Master's Degree.

If being willing to put effort into achieving was what life was about, we were both on the way. We put in long hours - him with work, me with the kids. Being physically tired was the norm. I looked forward to what little we had together.

He became successful in the business world, and I began to feel inadequate as a wife. I went back to the university to pursue a career of my own as soon as our youngest child was in school all day. I had been out of school for eighteen years, but found that I was able to do much better than I had ever dreamed possible. I felt like a new person with a deeper purpose in life. Two years later, I entered the business world with full support from both husband and kids.

I was busier than ever with five kids and a business to run. I had a neat business that ran from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., allowing me to be home when the kids were home. The kids liked the new me because I had a lot of enthusiasm for what I was doing. I was in contact with lots of people and was given so much respect. Life was becoming rewarding and exciting. I also became increasingly aware of the business pressures my husband knew only too well.

My world came to a standstill when our second son committed suicide at the age of eighteen. He had been a sensitive and lonely child, so I was not shocked. I was very grateful to have had him as long as I did. I went back to work as soon as he was buried, but I felt that maybe my dad was right - I should be home with the kids. I told them how I felt, and they all wanted me to continue with my business. They liked me much better now that I had more purpose in my life than keeping house and raising kids.

Another year went by, and I began to get uncomfortable about my youngest son. He seemed to be going through puberty differently than his two brothers before him. I would go to his room to talk. He was always polite and listened. Yet, I would find the back door open in the middle of the night and realize he had slipped out. Waiting up for him gave no answers. Not knowing what was going on or where my son was going made sleep increasingly difficult for me. He began hanging out at a questionable place called the "The Rat Hole" with friends of whom I didn't approve. He continued to be withdrawn, staying in his room



with loud music and sleeping a lot. One day I asked him if he would tell me if he were using drugs. He responded, "NO!" I asked why. He said that he would be ashamed. He didn't even have to lie because of the way I had asked.

In January, shortly after his sixteenth birthday, we became aware that he did indeed have a drug problem. I thought being on drugs was worse than death, because life for him and for us would certainly be a nightmare. I thought there was no hope of recovery once he was addicted. At our request, he went to a psychiatrist. After two visits, he said that the psychiatrist was just like his dad - wore a business suit and used big words he couldn't understand. We did not insist on his continuing. We didn't know what to do.

He sold all his possessions and purchased a car to take three of his "Rat Hole" friends and himself out of Texas "to do their thing." It was a relief when they left. Out of state, he was stopped for doing too slow on a freeway and was jailed as a runaway. My husband flew there to get him, signed the car over to the police, and brought him home. He loved the jail experience and had lots to tell his friends.

One night I found that he was using LSD, not just a little marijuana. I called Crisis Hotline and was referred to PDAP at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church. Before an appointment could be set up, my son left, hitchhiking, and was picked up again for being a runaway. When the call from the police came, I told them we were trying to get help for him. Bob, the counselor, told us to bring our son straight from jail to see him.

When I saw Bob, I knew immediately that if there were any hope, it would come from someone who had experienced the drug world. I knew my son was in the right place for help, if he were willing. My son liked what he was doing. He didn't want help. But he gave Bob a thirty-day commitment to get in good graces with us. That night, he and his friends celebrated joining the Palmer Drug Abuse Program by getting some beer. An officer stopped their car and saw the open cans of beer; my son ended up in the juvenile tank. He had been in jail three times in one week, two of those times in one day. The whole situation as unreal.

My son could go to the basement of the Palmer Church and "hang around" where PDAP was helping young people to "get straight." Official meetings for him were on Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings. The rector let us know he was available if we needed him. To inform us about the overall picture of drug abuse, the PDAP counselor recommended that we attend the "Information Series," consisting of six sessions. My husband and I were both anxious to learn more. We attended. First, Bob told his story. Wow! And this guy was still living. Unreal! Each session gave us further insight and hope. I had read some articles about drugs in newspapers and magazines, but here we were being informed on a gut-level basis, from people who had been there, from those who had experienced the problem in their own homes, and from others who were professionally involved. I continued to attend the series.

Autry House was a small cafeteria located on the church's grounds. The clergy, Bob, and the kids would eat there. Checking on my son gave me an excuse to be around these loving people. I was so attracted to them and wanted to hear what they were talking about. They were telling things as they really were, not putting out a false image. I took long lunch hours.

One day, when my son had been in the program less than a month and fear was taking over, the counselor suggested that I attend the meeting Tuesday night. He told me that his wife and a few parents met in the Bride's Room while the kids were having their meeting. I attended and immediately qualified myself by telling that I had one son who had committed suicide and another one now on drugs. There, with about ten or twelve parents present, I found people who were openly sharing the experience they had had with their kids' drug abuse. We asked each other what we did about this or that. Some of our ways worked, but more didn't. We did not get involved with a drug abuse program because we knew what to do. What we did had failed to work; we needed help and guidance. Our Parent Group grew and grew, out of the Bride's Room to the larger foyer, then on to the open room upstairs. I didn't sleep much on Tuesday nights. My mind was too full of things to think about.



My son also found something he loved; he became "straight" and learned new ways to deal with his living problems. He became very involved with PDAP and his new friends. He was once again the nice kid he'd been in his younger years. He began inviting his "doping" friends to meetings; some stayed, some didn't. He invited droves of kids over to the house; many spent the night. He had a new peer group, and this gave me hope. I could only support him, love him, understand his program, and leave the results to God.

In the early parent meetings, we would use topics for discussions. "Responsibility" was a good one. "How much belonged just to our kids?" "How much should we do for them?" We found we were too often "padding their corners" and "killing them with kindness." We had to learn to "let go and let God." "Tough love" had to be well understood. "How uncomfortable were we willing to be in order to allow them to grow?" "Trusting when you had no reason to trust," providing the child was straight and working the program. The input and sharing in the meetings were invaluable to me. People caring about people, with unconditional love and acceptance. People who cared enough about their drug abuser to be willing to learn a better way for themselves.

PDAP was to be one year old June 28, 1972. We had our first banquet at Autry House. I was asked to speak as a representative of the Parent Group. I felt so honored. A "Service Board" was formed to help make decisions and plan the structure of the fast growing program. I was asked to participate. I gladly accepted.

I began leading meetings and sharing the wisdom I had received. Both kids and parents were coming to PDAP to learn to cope; they came by the hundreds. Some kids came without parents; some parents came without kids. It was really gratifying to see a kid have both his parents involved. They were the ones whose success rates were the highest.

The decision was made to adapt the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous to fit the young drug abusers. Now, our Parent Group had not only the topics to discuss at meetings but also had the suggested principles of the Twelve Steps. We began our REAL growth into a new way of life that assured us peace and happiness, if we had the courage to change. I became dedicated to these simple, but not easy, steps.

Through these years, my son was able to finish high school; then he worked a couple of years before making the decision to give college a try. He is currently in his third year, leading a "normal" life as a student. He was active in the program about three years, and today he considers this the most "fun" time in his growing-up years. What a way to describe what was a life and death matter when we first walked through the door at Palmer. Oh well, I'm only a parent. The other three living kids have not been drug abusers. The son that took his life probably was. This I conclude by symptoms I did not recognize at the time. There was no PDAP available for him or he might have made it.

I would like briefly to share how I use the steps in my daily life today. My thinking was not always "normal" when I came into the program. I did and said things I would not do or say today. Today when something in my life becomes "unmanageable," I have a support system of caring people who are not emotionally involved in my problem and can help me to see whether I have done all that I can or should. At that point, I can take the necessary action or "let go and let God." As a person who had to learn to relate to people, I consider successful "program" people whatever age or sex or from whatever walk of life - to be "winners" for me. Today, I'm a "winner" to myself as well as to others.

I believe God is present, not only with me, but also in each and every one of us. It had become necessary for me to surrender to God's will; mine did not work! I took the time and put forth the effort to get to know who I really am and, in as honest a way as possible, evaluated how I got that way.

Then I shared this very personal information with God and another person. I was now much more able to see where changes should be made, and I knew that I needed God to help me change. I was able to see how I had harmed other people; I could admit I was wrong. I could change my old ways to make them right.



Evaluating each and every day has become a way of life for me. I try not to put off letting other people know when I feel I have been wrong. I am in conscious contact with my God at all times throughout my day. With this change of attitude, I am able to give of myself to others, being loving and sharing what was so freely given to me.

We just have to learn to trust...



On Being Different

My abuse of drugs had proven to be a symptom of a problem that began to fester when I was young. Drugs were a coping mechanism, a way to get acceptance, and a tool for blocking out the things I didn't want to see. The problem was the pain, the insecurity, and the self-centeredness. As far back as I can remember, I always felt "different" and inferior to the people around me.

For many years, I blamed my being "different" and inferior on my parents, who were born and raised in a foreign country with very conservative and traditional values. I was born and raised in the U.S., and unfortunately, not everything I wanted to do was conservative and traditional. However, I felt a great need to have my parents' stamp of approval on everything I did.

My parents' only problem was that they never quite made it with one another. I remember lying awake in bed many nights, listening to crying and yelling, and waking in the morning to a house full of overturned tables, holes in walls, with the house reeking of alcohol. I remember, too, going to school wondering if anyone else's parents fought the way mine did. I never told a soul about my family, though, because I didn't want anyone to know how "different" and Not OK my family was.

I was very insecure in elementary school, and my feeling of being different led me to imitate almost everybody around me - especially my classmates and my older brother. I would color my picture of Charlie Brown with the same colors you used to color your picture if you sat next to me in class. And I always wanted to watch the same TV shows and play the same games as my brother. In my mind, everyone else was OK, and I was not. I believed that if I did what others did and said what others said, I too would be OK. The only problem was that I could never quite match up to the other people's greatness and the things my peers did and said were not all "good" in my parents' eyes. I wanted everyone to like me. So until age twelve, I was the "angel" at home and the "I'll do anything you want if you'll just like me" kid at school.

It was the summer before my thirteenth birthday that my family moved from Maryland to Texas. By this time, I had grown very angry and ashamed of my parents' constant arguing, and I was tired of being good to them all the time. I decided before I even left for Dallas that I was going to start getting high. I was tired of being "different," feeling lonely, and not quite being able to live up to anyone's expectations.

My first week at school, I found my first "get high" buddies. I started off just drinking occasionally and smoking a joint every now and then. It didn't take me long, however, to get to where I was always high or drunk, or both.

Amazing things happened when I was high. All of a sudden, people really liked having me around. I found ways to always have dope, and somehow I acquired the ability to make people laugh. I always wanted to be a fun-loving, outgoing, wild person, and when I was high, I didn't feel guilty for doing crazy things.

It didn't take long for my life to become pot and liquor-centered. I became very impulsive, doing things that good thirteen-year-olds didn't do. I'd run away from home, sneak out my window at night, skip school, yell at my parents, beat up my little sister, lie constantly, steal other people's dope and money, etc.

It also didn't take long for my principal and my parents to catch on to the system. It was at this stage of the game that a lot of pain and loneliness came back into my life. The world became uglier to me than it ever had been, and I began to really hate people - my family, cops, teachers, principals - everyone who made my getting high uncomfortable. Then getting high became less enjoyable. Friends of mine were overdosing, dying in car wrecks, moving away, and getting busted. It seemed that my "friends" were never around when the dope was gone or when I was in trouble.

About this time, my brother started telling me about this place called PDAP, and he was constantly on my case to go. My brother and I went to the same school and one of his classmates was in PDAP. He began



telling his classmate about me and asked her to bring me to PDAP. After putting this girl off for months, I finally went to a meeting.

People from right and left welcomed me and asked me to return. I could not believe that these people accepted me and wanted nothing from me. I turned into a marshmallow, hung my head, and responded little. But these people still reached out to me. They seemed to understand my fear.

One week later, I decided to get sober, one day at a time. I was fourteen years old, very lonely and angry. Now, three and a half years later, I am neither. I am no longer a lonely person who hates herself or other people. I no longer feel incapable or unworthy. I have learned to live for myself, to make my own choices, and to be responsible for my actions.

It has not all been easy. Learning to love and believe in myself was the hardest thing I've ever done. All my life, I never had any kind of opinion or outlook on anything. In fact, I didn't look anyone in the eye until I had been sober eight months. I had a habit of hanging my head and saying "yes" to anyone anytime they wanted anything.

My natural tendencies were always to "be safe" and stay quiet. I called myself shy, I wasn't shy. I was just scared. The first month and a half of my sobriety, I got by just sitting back and waiting for people to reach out to me. Soon enough, I learned that I needed to start taking some action. If I wanted some good friends, then I was going to have to become vulnerable and make a decision to trust some people.

I started off just sticking my foot in the water here and there. It's amazing how close I got to people just by sharing a few things about myself, like my fear of people and my insanities about slipping. It seemed that whenever I got just the least bit vulnerable, people loved me, understood me, and believed in me even though I was constantly critical of myself.

I found out how much healing took place when I'd share myself with others, and they would just love me. I think the biggest thing I found out was that I wasn't so different after all. Everybody got scared and felt "different," and I wasn't the only person who didn't have any self-esteem.

Step Three became the most important step in my life. I brought God into the picture when I realized that God believed in me. God doesn't think I'm such an awful person. He knows I can do anything I decide I can do. I also realized that I am God's miracle and that I deserve to be happy and have good friends. Every time I discount myself, I discount God because God made me.

When inventory time rolled around, I found out even more about myself. I realized how unworthy I felt, how hopeless and helpless I thought I was, and how I believed I was everybody's victim. I chose to call these thoughts and feelings my "insanities." These were the things that God could heal through the love of people. I started nurturing the small part of me that believed in me and loving the part of me that didn't. I realized that my feelings weren't always reality, and that just because I felt unworthy, it didn't mean I was.

I got tired of trying to be everything to everybody and started standing up for myself. I started thinking about what I wanted and what I believed. I made conscious decisions to believe in my own good judgment, and I stopped discounting my abilities.

Little by little, I acquired some self-esteem. I found the areas of my life where I set myself up to get hurt and rejected, the ways I pushed people away. I owned my mistakes. I wasn't the victim; when I changed, my world changed. When I did neat things, I felt like a neat person. People became gifts to me - respectable, worth understanding, not scary and "out to get me." And the world to me has become a place where good things happen, a place where there is room to grow and to amend.



Just Having A Good Time

I come from good Catholic parents who always tried to do everything to give their family the best - a good neighborhood, a private school, and a strong religious background. When my mother found out that I was involved with drugs, she was hurt. My father was irate.

My first contact with drugs came when my best friend of eight years asked me if I wanted to smoke some pot with her. We had always been close, so I was surprised when she asked me. I had no idea she had ever done that before. I said "no" and didn't understand how she could do a thing like that.

When school started that year, it was my first year in junior high and my best friend's second. I wanted friends so badly and all of hers got high. Every time one of them found out that I didn't get high, they gave me the cold shoulder, leaving me feeling lonely and rejected. I couldn't find any other friends. It seemed that if someone didn't get high, they were either a "bookworm" or a "nerd."

I wanted so badly to be a part of the "cool crowd," and they were the ones that got high. So I decided to go ahead and get high, too. It was so easy to make friends when I was loaded. I felt like a different person. All my insecurities and inhibitions disappeared when I was high. Every time I was at a party or in a group of people, I had to smoke pot or pop pills before I could feel OK. I got high all that school year, met a lot of people, and had some wild times.

The first time someone asked me to go to a PDAP meeting, they told me that PDAP was a place where a bunch of teenagers my age were staying straight. I couldn't understand why anyone would want to go straight.

I went to a meeting only after many persistent requests by a friend. I figured if I went to a meeting, it would get her off my back. Besides, it was summer and there wasn't much going on. Also, I thought I might find a boyfriend there.

I really enjoyed my first meeting. Everyone there was just like me and not dressed in suits or anything like I imagined "straight people" to be like. I met a lot of people and continued to come back to meetings. I never missed the weekly PDAP meeting.

The people seemed happy and were a lot of fun to be around. They really reached out and made me feel wanted. It was the first time I felt like people accepted me for ME, and not because I got high. I didn't feel like the people at PDAP put conditions on my friendship like everyone else did. My other friends seemed like they always wanted something from me - my dope or money or something. When I had a lot of dope, I had a lot of friends. When the dope was gone, so were my friends.

Even with all this going on, I still didn't see any reason to go straight. I enjoyed getting high. I never had any real problems with it. My parents found out I was getting high, but since I was going to PDAP meetings, they thought things were OK. I never got busted by the police or at school. I was just having a good time.

After I had been going to meetings for a couple of months, I knew there were people like my parents and all my friends at PDAP who were expecting me to get my monkey fist. So I lied and told them I had thirty days sober. I felt so bad for being dishonest that I only wore it for a couple of weeks. Then I told everyone I slipped and got high again, which was another lie. But it was better than continuing to wear my fist and being reminded of my dishonesty whenever I wore it. The PDAP principles were starting to rub off on me. Being dishonest had never bothered me before; now it was eating my insides.

I began spending more time at PDAP. I decided that if I didn't have a problem with getting high, that it should not be a problem for me to get thirty days' sobriety. I was chemically free for about twenty-five days when I got high again. I had always thought getting high was great, and the PDAPers were great,



and if I could combine the two, it would be heaven. Instead it was hell! I got high with the guy I was dating from PDAP. The whole evening was one nightmare after another. Our brakes and headlights went off and we got stopped by the police with neither of us having a driver's license. It was a miracle I ever got home that night. When I finally did get home, I did a lot of thinking.

Step One in PDAP talks about chemicals causing at least a part of my life to become unmanageable. I had never been able to say that this applied to me. I finally realized how much pain getting high really had caused me. I had always thought that everyone was out to get me - my parents, the school, anyone in authority. I never before thought it might be my fault. My excuse for not staying straight had always been that I had never been busted or kicked out of my house.

For the first time I took an honest look at the things and people around me. My grades were dropping at school. The teachers knew I was involved with drugs, and they were watching me. A lot of friends at school were being busted for possession, and I knew it was only a matter of time before it would happen to me.

My parents realized I wasn't straight, and I was always uncomfortable around them. I took a look at my friends. The people I got high with were not my friends, but only people who wanted something from me. My friends at PDAP were everything I could want. They were people who really cared what happened to me.

Even though I had enjoyed getting high, there were too many dues to be paid afterward. Getting straight through the principles and steps of PDAP gave me true, caring friends, the freedom to choose a happy life, and God. It offered all of the things I had thought were impossible to find all in one place, all at one time.

Today I have six and a half years straight. I don't have the desire to get high any more, and haven't for a long time. I am still involved in PDAP and continue to work the Twelve Steps and apply the principles to my life.

It is only Step One that talks about living a chemical-free life. The other eleven talk about developing a relationship with God, honesty, and personal growth. Today I believe the Twelve Steps of PDAP have given me the tools to obtain the best of everything God has to offer me. I have the most won-derful relationship with people, God, my friends, and most importantly, myself...



Good Intentions Weren't Enough

I am the youngest in a family of nine. My father drank a lot and was drunk most of the time. He and my mother argued constantly. As a family we never seemed to have anything going our way; we struggled for everything we got. My older brothers and sisters seemed to be following my father's path, growing more like him every day. I felt very ashamed of my family, because we were just poor country folk.

At the age of thirteen, I began throwing a paper route to earn spending money. I also started drinking about that time. I began lying to cover up the fact that I was drinking because I was afraid to let my parents know the truth. Feeling guilty about being dishonest, I began to dislike myself more and more. However, I wanted my peers to like me, so I'd spend all my money on them and on booze, and I'd lie to them about brave adventures and sexual encounters that I'd really only dreamed of having.

As my drinking increased, I began to start "paying dues." I was not making it in school. I attended only because the law said it was mandatory; therefore, for two years I attended only two or three days a week. I got further and further behind in school and refused to listen to anyone. I finally quit school at the age of fifteen.

I started smoking grass and doing other drugs. No longer did I restrict getting high to weekends only. It was now an every night occurrence. To keep people off my back, I worked sporadically, holding jobs for about a month at a time. I started going to jail quite often. That didn't bother me too much, though, because I knew good old Mom would rescue me. And she did, every time. After getting out of jail each time, I would try to clean up my act, but I never could. I had good intentions about changing, but I found that good intentions were not enough.

Things started going from bad to worse. I really disliked the person I had become, and degraded myself in front of others. I was jealous of them, always wishing I had everything they had. I used whoever was around me for as much and as long as I could, and I developed really sick relationships and attitudes. I thought about carrying a gun because I was so afraid of people.

By the time I was eighteen, I was really a loser. I didn't bother even to pretend to work any more. I let my Mom support me while I stayed high all the time. I had a lot of blackouts, ending up in places and never knowing how I'd gotten there. I grew more and more paranoid and insecure.

One night I was drinking and doing speed at a lake party. I started a fight with a guy I disliked. I wound up stabbing him several times; he almost died. I remember the feeling of guilt and shame that engulfed me the following morning as I awoke in jail. I had almost killed a man - how could I do such a thing? What kind of a person was I?

I was released from jail on bail and a court date was set. My family knew I had really blown it this time and hired a lawyer for me. The attorney suggested I enlist in the Armed Services. I discovered, however, that the military wouldn't take me because of my police record.

I stayed straight about two weeks; then I found myself on the same old merry-go-round. I had decided to work but ended up just staying home so I could get high again. I hated myself and wanted to die, but instead of killing myself, I stayed high night and day to avoid the pain I felt.

My court date finally arrived. I was given a three-year probated sentence. I was relieved that I had not been sent to the penitentiary because I knew I couldn't have made it in there. In addition to the probation, the judge required that I complete a course on alcoholism. I attended the classes, but I was always high.

After I'd been on probation about three months, I was arrested for drinking and reckless driving and was returned to jail. They released me shortly due to a clerical error, but I knew that it was only a matter of time before they would realize their mistake and apprehend me. I was willing to do anything to avoid



going back to jail. A friend of mine told me that the police couldn't arrest me if I admitted myself to a state hospital, so I did.

Once I was admitted as a patient, I found the Austin hospital to be a lot different than I had anticipated. People reached out to me and seemed to care about me. I met a woman who worked there, who told me she had spent several years doing drugs but now had two years of sobriety. We talked together every day and became friends. I continued to get high in the hospital, but not as much. After about a month, she asked me to go to an AA meeting with her, and I did. I enjoyed the meeting and continued to attend them whenever my hospital counselor would let me.

When I was released from the hospital ninety days later, I knew I had to change my lifestyle. I entered a halfway house directly after my discharge and continued to attend AA meetings. After awhile, though, it wasn't long before I was getting high with them.

I decided to move back to Houston. I met a girl who was married to a friend of mine stationed in Viet Nam. I eventually moved in with her and really thought I had it made living off her old man. One night, I came home and she was gone. She had left me. I felt like a jerk. I was lonely and hurt, and finally I decided to try AA again.

I returned to the Austin halfway house and put everything I had into staying straight. One day at a time. Things started getting better for me. A few months later, I met some people who were involved in PDAP, and they told me about their program. The idea of people my own age trying to stay straight excited me, so I agreed to attend a PDAP Round Robin meeting. I really enjoyed the experience and all the loving people I met there.

A few months later, the Director of PDAP visited Austin. I listened to his story at a meeting one night. Afterward, he and I talked for a long time. He asked me to come to Houston and work for PDAP as a counselor.

That night happened seven years ago, and I am still working with the program today. The Twelve Steps of PDAP have truly become my way of life, and my rewards are countless. I now have seven years of valued sobriety, and all desire to get high has left me. I thank God for the miracle of PDAP. I have been blessed with so much - a beautiful wife, a newborn son, a belief in myself, and a love for other people.

Today I know I can go anywhere and do anything. I am no longer a loser. I can really make it today, in my actions as well as my good intentions.



Some Come Sooner

Getting high never seemed to pose the traditional problems it was suppose to for me. My grades were already bad, my relationship with my parents already poor, and I was already unhappy. So as I started getting high, it looked like nothing good was coming out of it.

My family had just moved to Houston from a small town in Oklahoma. It was very exciting at first, but after a few months, we were all wishing we were "back home." I had grown up with the same people all my life and had little idea how to make friends. The people I met were very different from the small town people I had known. They all seemed to know..."know" isn't the right word...They all seemed so worldly and self-assured. So aside from being homesick, I was lonely and felt as if I were on the outside looking in.

After we had lived in Houston a few months, I was invited to a party; I had stopped at a local pool hall hangout for a few minutes before going. A guy I had seen around came up and asked me if I wanted to go smoke a joint. I had heard a lot about getting high. The police, schools, and those kinds of people said it was bad and led to heroin. My brother, who seemed to be having quite a lot of fun, thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread.

To make a long story short, we got very wasted. He dropped me off at the party, and I ended up doing some very bizarre things. I swore up and down the next morning that I would never do it again. Fun is fun, but the way I saw it, I was totally out of control and didn't like that in the least. I really planned on never doing it again, until I went to school on Monday morning. It seemed my little performance at the party had made a sensation, and I was suddenly part of that group of worldly people who had seemed so inaccessible before. I quickly changed my commitment from "I will never get high again" to "only grass."

There are only two things I can really say about the time from when I first got high to when I got straight. One is that my commitment kept changing. First it was "grass only," then "acid and grass"; then I discovered the pills in my parents' medicine cabinet, so it was "pills, acid and grass." The only commitment I kept was that I never stuck a needle in my arm and that, I believe, was just a matter of time.

The other thing about that time was that the loneliness never went away. I had "friends," I had places to go, but it all seemed very empty. It was like watching a movie and, when it's over, knowing that life will still be the same as it was when it started.

Just after I turned seventeen, I did some bad acid one night and woke up the next morning feeling like I had had Drano poured into my stomach - somewhere inside of me something connected - and I realized that if I didn't change, I would die. It wasn't fear of overdosing or anything like that. It was just a knowledge that the fun and games were over.

I tried going straight. I changed the way I dressed, changed the way I thought, but ended up with the same people, doing the same things. As far as I could figure, getting high wasn't the best thing in the world, but it was the only thing in my world. So I came to the conclusion that I would continue to get high and that I could plan on being dead sometime in the near future.

About that time, the people I was running with started attending meetings at a place called PDAP. They were all my age or younger and had been dragged down there by their parents after a friends' mother had found him missing one night and started calling around looking for him. Consequently, all the other parents found their sons and daughters missing, too.

One night my friends sat me down and explained sobriety and a thing called a "monkey fist" to me. In my mind, all I could hear was that my friends were deserting me. After much harassment, I finally agreed to go to a meeting. I figured that a priest or psychologist would lecture us about the evils of drugs, and that would be that.



All I will say of my first meeting is that, although it took me several weeks even to consider giving up getting high, I fell in love immediately. Here was a total, unconditional acceptance that for so long I had only dreamed about. As I said earlier, things were wrong long before I started getting high. PDAP filled that gap that nothing else could, certainly no pills, acid or grass. Here were people who had known that gap and had filled it in a new and more permanent way.

I have just one last thing to say. Sobriety has not removed all obstacles from my life. These are challenges by which I grow. But the program has given me a way to deal with these things and a God, whom I understand, to help. I love you.



The Nut Ward Got My Attention

I want to start my story in the middle, which is now. My life is full of joy and excitement and love, lots of love. I care about so many people and lots of people care for me. My husband is the best friend I've ever had; our relationship is full of giving and receiving. I have a loving relationship with my son, and he is a good friend. My career is a dream come true for me; I am totally fulfilled with it. Every day for me is a day that I grow closer to God, as I understand Him. I can cope with anything that comes my way with the help of God, the Twelve Steps, and my friends. Don't let me give the impression that all is Utopia. Far from it. I have problems daily - conflicts, challenges, disappointments, frustrations and fear, but I am living in the solutions. Nothing will ever drag me down again. There is nothing inside or outside of me that is the same as it was six years ago. God has done for me what I couldn't do for myself.

The proof is this - I just told you what I am like now, so here is what I was like six years ago. First of all, my friends consisted of my mother and grandmother, and they were fed up, disgusted, and afraid of me. They helped me get committed to a psychiatric unit in Terrell State Hospital. I spent ninety days there, part of that time in a padded cell. I had been drinking something like a gallon of vodka a day to stay out of convulsions and taking any kind of pills I could get my hands on.

The doctor there told me that every vital organ in my body was bleeding. I had no control over my bowels or bladder, blood ran out of my mouth constantly, and I had severe convulsions. I'm 5'7" tall and normally weigh about 128. Then I weighed 102. He was appalled by me and what I had done to myself. I told the doctor that I had been an alcoholic since I was thirteen. He didn't buy it, nor did the nurses. The psychiatrist said I was a manic-depressive with suicidal tendencies. He said I was too young to be an alcoholic, and since I didn't shoot dope, I wasn't a drug addict, either. I felt totally helpless and afraid.

The women in my unit were really insane. Two or three were locked up in padded cells because when they were loose on the ward, they were dangerous to others. They sat in those cells and screamed all day and night. Some were tied in wheelchairs because their minds had slipped into another world and their bodies were helpless. These ladies just stared and slobbered on themselves. The rest of them just wandered around the ward talking to space or grabbing and tearing at their clothes and crying.

The doctor told me I would stay until I got well, which was impossible since they were treating me for a psychiatric problem and what I had was a chemical problem. That's when I hit my knees and surrendered to God.

I knew nothing about steps or program, but I knew that my way of doing things had brought me to a padded cell with the State saying I was legally insane. I had heard about God all my life and had seen His work in people I had known over the years. So I knew the power existed. There had been many times that I had choices to make about my behavior, whether to be mean or loving; I had chosen to be mean. So I humbly asked God to help me change. I took responsibility for the mess I was in and told Him that with everything I had I would serve Him and do anything to let Him put my life together according to His will and not mine.

The very next day, two men came on the ward from the alcoholic unit and talked to me about my chemical problem. They told me how to get transferred to their unit. The psychiatrist didn't believe I needed the alcoholic treatment, but he let me go anyway. From then until now, it's all been uphill.

I was given a copy of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous and was sent to AA meetings. I talked to other people, who like me, had a chemical problem, and I felt as if God had reached down His huge hand and lifted me out of hell. Tears still come to my eyes when I feel the gratitude of that day and the relief of really knowing what was wrong with me. I was thirty years old and had not been sober except for eight months out of the past nineteen years.

I had started getting high at age eleven on beer. I got drunk that very first time I drank. I was at a party for



a friend. Someone brought some beer and everyone was drinking, and I didn't want to be different. I was a very insecure, scared little girl, and alcohol made me feel grown up and secure.

From my first drink until I quit, I was different. I didn't care about anybody or anything. I ran in street gangs until I was fifteen. Fighting was also a way of life for me. Nice kids were afraid of me. I went to jail often for fighting. Girls fought each other with razor blades tucked between their fingers. We used to send notes around school for people to be at a certain place at a certain time to watch me and another girl fight. We fought until one of us couldn't get up. I was so full of hate that I didn't care if I got killed or killed someone else. By the grace of God, I didn't kill anyone.

At fifteen, I got married for the first of five times. I thought getting married would get me out of trouble and maybe I could change. After two years of marriage, two miscarriages, and having my nose broken twice, I got a divorce. For the next year or so, I just worked and partied. At eighteen I married again. The only good thing that came from that was my son. The only time I didn't get high was while I was pregnant. I also thought of having a child would change my life, but it got worse.

After my son's birth, I got into pills, lots of speed, and acid, as well as alcohol and grass. The next ten years were a nightmare of drugs, prostitution, bars, jail and another husband. Everything was wrapped up around getting and using drugs. I even got evicted from the State of Nevada for prostitution. The last three of four years of my chemical career, I was a stoned hippie with everything that implies - rebellion, dope, orgies, headbands, beads, etc. Thank God I finally crashed and burned, or I might have had to live like that forever. My son left me right before I went to Terrell. He couldn't take it any more. So when I sobered up, I had nothing left.

When I started going to AA, I had nothing but a Big Book, so I got married again, common law at first and later legally when I had been sober two years. I think I tried harder to make it work than before, but it was a failure. Sometimes I think it took me four years without chemicals to get sober.

My son came back to live with me when I had a year's sobriety. And he was getting high. God brought PDAP to my town right after he came back, so I started in PDAP as a parent. I still think there is a little irony in that. When I had been in the Parent Group about seven months, my director hired me as a Parent Coordinator. I really thought I had grown up. It was a real stroke for me. After being Parent Coordinator for awhile, I was asked to be a counselor. That was tough for me, because I wasn't committed to teenagers or people. I quit after one year and started going back to parent meetings.

Being filled with resentment and having no sense of commitment, I quit my job and got my fourth divorce. I spent about ten months sober and unhappy. Finally, I forgave the people I resented and committed myself to God, people, and PDAP, in that order. Daily, I commit myself and I ask God to keep me aware of "building cases" and creating resentments. Working the steps has given me a way to cope with anything that comes up in my life. I can change my attitude immediately, and I can love myself and respect who I am today.

I am married again now, for the last time. I did everything different this time. We dated for quite a while and became close friends. We made our commitments slowly and one step at a time. We used our sponsors and learned to communicate well. We are very open and honest with each other. We pray together and are very considerate of each other's feelings.

It's great to be alive today. My life is precious to me now, and I take good care of what God has so richly given me.



Let the Music Play

As a child I always felt different. I had a skin problem that made me feel like the "creature from the Black Lagoon." From age seven until sobriety, I felt always inferior. Somehow, I think that helped to set up a painful pattern for years of chemical addiction.

I had a very loving family, though my parents were divorced. My dad left my mom when I was eleven, leaving me suddenly with the responsibility of caring for my two younger brothers while my mother worked and went to school. To the best of my recollection, I began to stuff an incredible amount of feelings about our living situation. Suddenly I had to be grown up, and all I wanted to be was a teenager. While my friends were having slumber parties, I was babysitting. I now thank God for my brothers because in the years to follow their love and understanding helped me to find peace with myself through PDAP.

Feeling put upon and inferior, I was definitely a prime candidate for chemicals. At thirteen, I was ready for something to change my life. It did. My mom was an apartment manager, so we could get our rent free, and she could continue to go to school. She very generously gave me my own apartment next to hers so I could have some space away from my brothers. She really tried to give me all I demanded and still hold the family together at the same time. I felt on top of the world.

I had my own apartment and even my own telephone. We were living in a neighborhood new to me, and I was just beginning to make friends. It was during the summer and everyone was into partying. I felt so grown up and so did my friends. We were all fifteen and felt adult because we started having drinking and make-out parties at the home of anyone whose parents were out of town or out for the evening. We were quite successful at getting completely wiped out. Only on a couple of occasions were we even confronted by parents. Some of the other kids' parents thought we were cute and just going through a stage. I was entering a stage that was to last the next seventeen years of my life and bring me closer to death than I really care to remember.

Needless to say, with alcohol the doorway to chemical oblivion had been opened for me. Junior high school is just a blurry memory to me. I knew I'd found Nirvana, so I skipped merrily through junior high. In high school, I found a new love to go along with alcohol and drugs. At the ripe old age of fifteen I was eating mescaline with my motorcycle driving boyfriend. I wasn't available to baby-sit my brothers very much any more, and I'm sure my mom was in panic.

My mom wanted me to be dating the proverbial "nice boy." There I was with a hoodlum and total bedlam broke out. Looking back, I was one of the most spoiled, self-centered young girls a mom has ever seen. I was determined to do things my way. Besides, what could an unhip mother possibly know about cosmic vibrations when all she ever did was maybe drink a beer on Saturday afternoon? So I knew it wasn't her fault for not understanding.

It was an incredible time for me. I stopped ratting my hair and wanted it to grow to the ground. The world was opening up to me. I was incredibly beautiful. I had a soul and an aura beyond belief. I could see God. All these things were mine when I took a little sugar cube and dropped it in my mouth. LSD entered my life and the world changed. It's filled with love. We were the Love-Peace generation. The Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, Janis, Jimi. Our generation and our music would change the world. We did indeed leave our mark.

It became all too obvious that the "pusher" wasn't a guy who hung out at the local elementary school, pushing reefers and syringes into unsuspecting juveniles. The pusher was me, my brother and sisters. Dope was the answer. Music held the message. I feel now that some of our basic ideas and some of our principles were good, and we were looking for a spiritual awakening; a concept of God we could believe in. We didn't know that chemicals would be the ultimate destruction of those ideals and principles, but it didn't take long for the castle to begin to crumble.



I stayed loaded every chance I got. Senior high to me is even more of a blur in my memory than junior high. I began to sing in a small band and lived only to be with musicians and get loaded. I wanted to be the greatest girl singer ever, but I found it very hard to fulfill a dream when I needed something to help me get out of bed. So I rapidly left my dream behind and held onto my pursuit of drugs and musicians.

By the time I was seventeen, I'd been in the fast lane quite a while and showed no signs of slowing down. I started hanging out in an all-night club downtown Houston, smoking dope, eating pills, and laying musicians. I thought if things got any better, I'd easily fall over dead.

Here, in this lonely heaven, I met Mike, my future husband. At the time he was an old married man of sixteen with one kid and another on the way. Being of high moral fiber (after all, he was married), I decided I'd better back off this guy and put my attention on some other worthy musician. If I had had a crystal ball then, I probably wouldn't have believed we would be together today, in love, successful, and sober.

I moved through that club like a miniature tornado, a real heartbreaker, I thought. My mom was always asking me what I was going to do with my life. Didn't I have any ambitions? Didn't I care about myself? No, I didn't care about anything, least of all, me.

I always had two or three romances going at once and somehow I turned up pregnant. I always thought that illegitimate kids happen to girls who were uncool. How could it happen to the Queen of Cool? It did, and it was scary. My mom was right there for me and was nothing but love and support throughout this ordeal, as she has been through my whole life. I tried to get an illegal abortion, but the appointment with the doctor, or quack, I should say, left both me and my mother hysterical. We knew that was not the answer.

We made a decision for me to have the baby and give it up for adoption. My life was beginning to close around me. I couldn't figure out why. Throughout the pregnancy, I drank, took acid, and even shot heroin to try and abort the baby. The baby was born and I gave it up. Something inside of me died. A little of the light in my eyes burned. I was beginning to lose all my youthful glow. I was eighteen years old.

I decided it was time to pull my life together and make an attempt at being somebody. To try to give my self-image a lift, I got a job, an apartment, and decided only to eat acid on weekends. With coaxing from Mom, I made an attempt to go to college. It wasn't much of a try, though, because I was thoroughly convinced I wasn't smart enough to be there. All of these things were so surface. There was a big and painful hole inside of me, and I was so terribly lonely. I wanted someone somewhere to love me and build me a house with a picket fence and a nursery full of kids. Until now I had only been in love once, and we had gone our separate ways.

Enter Peter, the man of my dreams. I met him in a restaurant. I was loaded on psilocybin, and he was on acid. What a couple! But he was Prince Charming. He moved right in, and I dropped right out of school. Away we went to travel the U.S. in a "media nomad" van.

We lived on nothing but pot and red beans and rice. We vowed to be mobile units the rest of our lives - no ties, no commitments, free spirits. If we ever had any children, they would stay with us a couple of months out of the year and the rest of the time would move from family to family of our friends so they could always have fresh input and high energy. It all sounded so perfect. So I pushed and pushed until I became pregnant, feeling such incredible relief when it happened. That empty feeling went away with the thought of knowing that in the not too distant future, I would have my baby. It was something of a disaster, though. I was seven months pregnant before I ever saw a doctor. When I did, I was on welfare, full of fear, and living in California, away from my mom and dad. I was once again a scared little girl. I had my baby, went back to Houston, and found out that all that Peter and I had talked about was reality. Children are a commitment, like it or not, and I wasn't ready to make one.

We had no money, no jobs, and we didn't want to be part of the "establishment." I resented him, and he



resented me and my baby, but we both loved our daughter beyond belief. Once again, Mom came to the rescue. She bought us an apartment complex to manage and let us live there and pay only half the rent. We went for it. We thought we had no other choice.

My days as a Peace-Love Organic Earth Mama were about to come to a screeching halt. I was totally disillusioned. I wanted out. About this time, Mike came tripping back into my life, and Peter coincidentally left town. What followed was a whirlwind of new drugs, old love, renewed and, somewhere deep inside, the decision to self-destruct.

With Peter away, Mike and I renewed our relationship overnight. He suddenly became my life. We ate Quaaludes like candy. We did whatever our hearts desired, and our hearts desired a lot. My friends kept my daughter, Katie, for me, and once again, I felt the freedom that I had lost. I was head-over-heels in love with Mike. He could do no wrong except one and that was "shoot dope." Upper middle class, clean-cut young adults never, but NEVER, did that. That was for the trash minorities. Mike did it, and he did it whenever he damn well pleased, and whenever he had the money. I chastised him severely for it, even threatened never to see him again he didn't quit.

He didn't quit. One afternoon, I came up with the particularly ingenious idea of doing some dope myself so I could tell him why it was so bad. Never condemn something you've tried was my philosophy. It sounded good to him. I fell in love for life. There are no words to describe my heaven with my lovers, Mike and heroin.

Eventually Peter completed his out of town job and came home. He returned to "an old lady" about twenty pounds lighter, strung out on heroin, and in love with someone else. I don't remember his homecoming; I only remember dreading it. I felt as though I were two people, the one who loved her little girl and Mike beyond belief and the one who lived to get loaded.

My life was turning into a circus, one night with Peter, one night with Mike, until finally I ended up with a guy Peter had once done a job for. Odd? Not really. He had lots of money and lots of dope. I finally drove him away, too; but he left me with a house, a car, and an ounce of heroin, which led to the first time I was hospitalized for addiction. Even then I didn't think I had a problem with drugs. Life had just dealt me some hard blows, and I had been incredibly unlucky.

When my ounce ran out, my parents put me in the hospital. It was a joke. Mike would come and get me and take me to get fixed and bring me back to the hospital. My doctor gave me a 2% chance of recovery, and at that time, I didn't sincerely care to recover. My problem was pressure from my parents.

I made a vain attempt to pull my life with Peter back together, mostly for my mom's sake. I got a job as a topless waitress. It did wonders for me in the area of self-esteem. Before long, I was back on the merry go round, bouncing back and forth between Mike and Peter. I was so lost. I wanted someone to love me, but I couldn't find it anywhere. I even had a girlfriend and hung out at the gay bars for awhile.

Then, in my few sober moments, reality would seep in, and I knew something had to change or I would lose my little girl. This was a fear so real, I couldn't live with it. I decided to move to Arkansas and live with my precious daddy where nobody knew me. No matter how far away from Houston I ran, I still had to live with myself. I could not do it without getting high. I found every drug known to man in a relatively short time, except the drug of my choice.

Mike was spinning his own web of problems. His band was beginning to become quite successful, while he was successfully going down the tubes. So, Mr. and Mrs. Disaster decided we belonged together, do or die. Together we would lick the rest of the world. A real modern-day Romeo and Juliet. Our re-union was the beginning of the end. We loved each other very much, but we had the ability to bring out the most destructive parts in each other.

Mike's manager slapped him in the hospital for overnight rehabilitation. We all know overnight drug abuse



programs have an astounding rate of success. He came home with pills to cure his ills, and we began our eight months of being straight. They were some dynamite-packed months, from the syringe to the bottle in one not so easy lesson. We began to beat each other up two or three times a week. Every other month one of my eyes was blacked and my face rearranged. Mike's destruction was not so physically obvious, but his heart was breaking, serious internal damage.

I guess people around us prayed a lot and their one justification for our actions was "at least they're not shooting dope!" It didn't last long. I decided if we had to live loaded, it might as well be on dope. At least then we didn't beat each other to death (my justification).

So begins the end of our downward spiral. Our life became a nightmare. Our friends knew we were shooting dope again. Some chose to ignore it because it was too painful; others just backed off. We were oblivious. Sane moments were rare.

We made weak attempts at putting up a front that we were getting better. We went to a psychiatrist loaded. We bought a house and destroyed it. I wrecked cars every other week. Our relationship was a joke. I'd count the hours till he would go on the road, and so would he. Then I would prowl about, hoping to find some answers, some relief, somewhere.

The fear of losing Katie had me almost paralyzed. Peter would pick her up on weekends knowing everything was all wrong, but somehow he, too, was hoping for a miracle, an answer to an impossible question.

I fought with everyone, my mom especially. She seemed so desperate to help me, and she felt so helpless. Finally, a drastic attempt to straighten me out was taken.

Often when Mike would go on the road, I'd go over to Mom's to "kick." This time I went over in really bad shape. My bowels had been locked for almost two months; as the dope wore off, I doubled over. Mother said she was taking me to the emergency room to try to get me into the hospital. I complied. All I wanted was some relief from my pain, inside and out. I ended up in Bellhaven Mental Hospital. The doctors got me back on the road physically. I was scared inside and cocky outside. I knew Mike would be home soon and so would I, so I could face a couple of nights in the nut ward.

I was wrong. Mom had the psychiatrist take away all my phone privileges. Then she came to the hospital and told me I would never see Katie again. Peter had her. I would never see Mike again. Attorneys were working on some papers to keep us apart. My worst fears were real. I screamed. The nurse sedated me. I wanted to die.

Even in my darkest hours, I was still scheming. Somehow I conned until I was out of the hospital in seven days. You were suppose to stay no less than ten and up to two months. I went to Mike and was on my way to retrieve Katie. With all my heart, I was through shooting dope. Some dear friends took me in, loved me, and tried to help me get on my feet. Mike was back on the road. So for forty-five days, I was straight. I pleaded with Peter not to take me to court over Katie. I swore to God I would never get high again.

For a month and a half I didn't sleep more than two hours a night. I was consumed with problems and all with no answers. Mike came home. We talked. We knew we had problems and somehow we would work them out. The phone rang, and it was our connection. We couldn't say no!

I knew then it was out of my hands. I no longer had any control over anything. For the next year I lived in fear. I lived from shot to shot. It again became painfully obvious to all our friends and family that we had lost the battle, and it was only a matter of time. I couldn't imagine any sort of life without something to numb me.

On television late at night, Mike and I began to notice the PDAP public service announcement. We blew it off but it lodged in our subconscious. Later it was the blessing that saved our lives. We knew we needed



help, so we tried the Methadone program. For awhile, instead of having one gorilla on our backs, we had two - Methadone and Dilaudid.

Finally, the walls closed in. Mike was soon to go back on the road, and he was too strung out to do it. I was no longer functioning as any sort of mother, and I was watching my little girl die a thousand deaths every time she had a hard time waking me up. If you can live death, we were doing it.

We decided we had to pull up, and we couldn't do it together. We arrived at this decision after we tried to blow each other's brains out and were unsuccessful. Mike went to his parents. I stayed at home alone with Katie. I couldn't trust anyone to help me. I had plenty of barbiturates to pull me through. I took too many and after three days with nothing to eat, Katie called her dad and asked him to come get her. She told him I was dead. I had nodded out with my head in the pillow, and she thought I was dead.

It all seemed like a long nightmare that was soon to be over, one way or another. Peter came and took Katie. He was very gentle and said he would bring her back when I felt better. I said, "Thanks."

The next day was the beginning of a new life for me, Mike, and Katie. It is so strange how God protects and loves us. In the midst of all the insanity of that day, He gave me the sane moment to "use wisely my power of choice." In a barbiturate stupor, after I had torn my house apart, beaten one of my brothers, and pleaded with Mike to let me kill myself, PDAP magically appeared in our minds.

We walked straight into a whole group of loving, God centered people who had been to hell and back and were happy and full of love.

This meeting we walked into seemed so strange, but it felt so right, almost immediately. It began to alleviate some of my fear. I barely remember our Newcomers Meeting, but I do remember the shine on the faces and the lights in their eyes. I knew we would come back: From that moment on, and for the next eight months, we didn't miss a meeting.

I guess we had plenty of motivation to stay and sober up. If we didn't, we would probably die. But we had had motivation before. This time was different. As I became more involved in PDAP, I felt I was home. I had friends like I'd never had before. I was learning to deal with all the "problems" that made me want to self-destruct. I was shown a concept of God that was much like the concept I was looking for in my "acid days." Being a part of PDAP has brought me to a level of awareness and God centeredness that I never thought possible before. I feel after years of searching that I am truly "absolutely free."



I Couldn't Handle Changes

There were many events in my early years that I believe served as pre-conditioning to my becoming an alcoholic and drug addict. As I was growing up, I felt something terrible must be wrong with me. My mother and father always seemed aloof in the face of calamity, never showing emotions, but I would go hide and bawl my eyes out. I just knew there was something wrong, but I was afraid and pretended all was all right.

Looking back at my childhood, everything looks normal. I'm from a middle-class family. I responded well to school, my chores, and responsibilities at home. And I felt we were just one happy family.

Until sixth grade my grades were fantastic. I made the honor roll many times, was on the School Patrol, and won several awards for scholastic achievement. Meanwhile, my parents' relationship was gradually deteriorating.

My father's drinking was becoming a problem in the marriage. However, he never drank in the house or around us. Two or three times a year, he would really get blasted. The first time I saw my father drunk, it scared the life out of me. I knew it was my father, but he didn't seem to be the same person. He was shouting and screaming and not making sense.

I didn't know that my dad's condition was due to alcohol. I found out about that when I got older. All I knew was that he scared me, and I hoped it would never happen again. It's quite ironic, but the first drug I chose to use was alcohol.

My parents separated eventually over my dad's drinking and the behavior that went along with him. I was in the sixth grade. I remained with my mother and all I can remember is feeling hurt, wanting Dad to be with us, and hearing them both try their best to explain to me how the situation was "for the best."

I cried a lot, felt lonely a lot, but I kept up a front for my friends, teachers, and neighbors. That summer I got high for the first time. A friend brought over a small bottle of vodka. My mother was out, and we got bombed.

I'll never forget the feeling. I was Superman! I now had something to look forward to. That summer I drank a lot. It felt good and that was the only excuse I needed to keep using it. At the end of the summer, I entered an entirely new world. Junior High. The girls were prettier, their skirts were shorter, and all the guys had a Beetle haircut, black suede boots to the knee, and Day-Glow paisley shirts.

Compulsive is the word that describes me to a T. I had to have everything that the other kids had. Arguments started at home over the way my hair looked, the clothes I wore, and the poor grades I was making. Shortly after my first report card, I smoked my first joint behind the gym. All the problems I was experiencing seemed to melt away; I knew I had found the perfect solution to everything. All of a sudden girls like me, and I had a lot of friends. What else matters? To a thirteen-year-old in need of attention, not much.

I could fill a book with information about my increasing use of marijuana and how it led to other chemicals, etc. But what I find most disturbing in looking back at my life is my inability to cope with change.

With every major change, I seemed to crawl deeper into a shell. We moved and I had to change junior high schools. I got almost violent leaving my old neighborhood. Going into high school was the scariest thing in the world! With each change, I merely stepped up my intake of chemicals. In doing this, I was at least assured that I would feel good and a certain percentage of the student body would really respect me. In high school, I became aware of many feelings that I hadn't counted on: inferiority, insecurity, anxiety, and the feeling that people hated me whether they knew it or not. I didn't have much of an image. I wasn't turning out to be an athlete or a scholar. Drugs had fixed that for me in junior high. So, I set out to



be the big dooper on campus. It was about this time I discovered rock and roll concerts.

I couldn't believe how fine live music was when I was loaded. Concerts were and still are a melting pot for dope fiends. I could score just about anything in the restrooms, and it seemed everybody was loaded. Most teenagers' dreams are to be a rock star and most of the girls want to date the rock stars. I decided I wanted to make music my life. It was too exciting. Add the girls and the drugs, and you're in heaven!

In my junior year I got addicted to Quaaludes. At the time, I could get them three for a dollar in the parking lot before school. A friend and I found out about a doctor who would give us a prescription. At the doctor's we could get them cheaper, and by rotating our visits, we could get three hundred pills a week. We would make a little money and get high for free.

At one point I was eating Quaaludes before first period. Everyone at school knew what was going on with me. At the time, I really felt I was maintaining just fine. I would come down, before going home to my parents. It was like acting out Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Complications arose almost as often as I could down some pills. I had to lie to my parents about where I was going, what I was doing, and who I would be with. I still had some straight friends who came in really handy. I would say I would be with them and this would please my parents.

When I got caught stealing, my parents took me to a psychiatrist friend of theirs. They knew I had some serious problems and were hoping to get me help. The doctor couldn't figure it out, and so I took the infamous I.Q. test. I scored the second highest score he had ever seen. This pleased me, my parents, and the doctor. So the situation was passed off as just a teenage phase.

I quit high school during my last semester. It was more important to get an apartment so that I could deal drugs for a new connection I had found. I lived there for six months, and I can't honestly remember what happened. I know we broke a plate glass window twice. I was doing barbiturates and Quaaludes daily. I ended up almost killing a girl in my car when I was under the influence of Amytol (blues). At that time, I remember having no feelings of guilt or remorse, but several days later, when I began to think of what had happened, it scared me. Even then I could somehow justify it as a "freak accident" that would never happen again.

With my car ruined, I couldn't continue my job. So I moved home, enrolled back in high school, and finished my last semester. After graduation, loneliness set in. All the people I knew were going off in different directions. I began dealing drugs and doing whatever else I could to make a quick buck.

I moved away from home and things got worse. In order to do drugs and sell drugs, you become a dishonest person. There is no way around it.

I got involved in the rock and roll scene. The drugs were better, and I got introduced to narcotics. I was working for concert promoters, concert security companies, a record store, and a music magazine. My whole life became music. Then with the drugs and the girls, I thought I was in heaven. Even so, deep down I felt terribly inadequate. I spread myself so thin, trying to be everywhere at once, so if something happened, I could say, "Yeah, I was there."

I didn't hear the word "ego" until I started making PDAP meetings. At this time of my life, though, I guess my ego was being fulfilled more than it ever had. Why should I change? I was happy.

Being the compulsive person I am brought me much misfortune. Every junkie knows deep down that he can handle heroin. I knew I could. It's just that it feels so good. Why try and handle something that makes you feel that fantastic?

Over the next several years, I battled heroin addiction off and on. I tried several outpatient programs, but I really sincere in my efforts to quit. I was arrested four times between the ages of eighteen and twenty-



two on drug charges.

I was arrested twice for public intoxication, once for driving under the influence of drugs, and twice for indecent exposure. (I would simply forget that clothes were required outside my apartment.)

I have a million stories to tell about the rock scene, the rock stars, the parties, the busts, etc. But it is all quite sad in the end. I got caught in a web - a web of deceit, of lies, of distorted facts, of people playing on my emotions. All I ever really wanted was to have friends and be loved. For a short while back in junior high, this plan seemed to work.

Then one night in my apartment, I doubled over in pain. I had shot some dope earlier and had contracted "compound poisoning" from dirty cottons. I knew I was dying. It was like having a terrible toothache all over my body. I threw up everything, including some stomach lining. I prayed. I asked God to go ahead and kill me. Any rational thinking person would think this would be a good sign to stop me from shooting any more dope. I was deathly ill for several days, but I came out of it fine.

Two weeks later, I got the poisoning again. I kept saying, "God, if I make it through this time, I'll do anything." I got through my second case in a month, and a week later caught it again. After recovery I had dark circles under my eyes, the whites of my eyes were red and yellow, and I had lost forty pounds. I looked ghastly. I found out later at PDAP that we suffer primarily from a spiritual sickness. I was anything but spiritual.

When I returned to work, I wasn't even recognized. I told everybody I went overboard on a diet. One guy pulled me over and told me to turn my life over to God. He told me a whole lot about the Bible, and I listened. I was very weak, and I listened because I never had paid any attention to religion before. I knew the guy wasn't lying. He didn't seem like the type to lie. So I went home and turned my life over to God (on my terms). With God handling my life, I might not get the blood poisoning. It didn't take me long to forget about God.

A month later, I was set up in a dope deal. It involved large amounts of heroin, hash, and crystal. A guy I had been getting high with for the last year turned out to be an informer. I went to the county jail with four felony drug charges hanging over me. I remember the ride downtown in the patrol car. I looked out at the sky and silently asked God to get me out of the car, the situation, whatever.

I was in a cell block with sixty-four junkies. I had been there before. I figured I would be there again someday. I tried to sleep, unsuccessfully. Something had a grip on me, and I didn't know what. I tried to think, but I could only think about how miserable my situation was and how much I hated it. I wanted to die. I knew there were people looking for me. I knew that when my parents found out where I was, I was sure to be disowned by them. For once in my life, I admitted to myself that there was no one; I was alone. That hurt, and for the first time since grade school, I cried. That was the moment that I believed and let God into my life. I allowed myself to feel the pain. I knew there were going to be some changes. I was just afraid I would be held in jail until my court date and then go directly to the joint. I had to prove I could make it.

Upon my release from the county jail, pending my court appearance, I went to my apartment. It had been cleaned out. I was so afraid standing there in that empty apartment. The thought of suicide crossed my mind. It didn't seem to be such a terrible alternative at the time.

I remembered a girl I used to "nail up" with who had since gone straight. On several occasions she had urged me to attend a PDAP meeting with her. I gave her a call. She listened to my sad tale and gave me a number to call.

The next morning I had my first appointment with a PDAP counselor. I had a hard time letting my eyes meet his. I could tell by the way he talked and acted that he was definitely happy and in control of himself. He was honest and to the point. The only thing I can remember from the first appointment was a promise



that guy made me. He told me that should I stick with the program and give it my best shot, I would be happier than I've ever been.

That was almost four years ago. The promise came true a long time ago. I have been off all chemicals since that first appointment. The love of the group, the support, the direction, and the honesty that have been given to me have made me a whole person again.

I've learned a lot about myself in the past few years. I no longer run from things that bother me or hurt my feelings. With God at my side, I am able to confront the situations that bother me. I have a handle on my life. You just can't sell dope to or put something over on someone who is as happy with life as I am.

The Twelve Steps are the spiritual answers to the spiritual problems. Once I made the decision to work those steps, working them ceased to be work.

I'm very thankful to God for putting some people in front of me who cared enough to show me where I was wrong and how I could change. Change - that evil word I was so afraid of. I now approach change as an opportunity to grow. God just wants me to be the best I can be. This is what I am currently doing, and I have no complaints!



My Addiction Was Not To Drugs

I grew up the youngest child in a small family. I was always a nervous child and was terrified of getting into trouble. I always did whatever would most please my parents. My sister and I were not allowed to have temper tantrums or get angry, so I learned to hide my feelings at an early age. I was a people-pleaser with my family from as early as I can remember. I had one main goal in life while growing up; that was to get married and have a family.

I never had many friends in my childhood or adolescence. I always hung around the adults because I felt safer and more secure with them. However, I had one best friend, and we did everything together. I was always the meeker of the two and was really a people-pleaser with my friends because I wanted them to accept me. I was insecure and had a very low opinion of myself. I was totally threatened when my best friend would do things with other people, because I was afraid she would no longer be my friend.

I found out early that boys were where it was at for me. If I had a boyfriend, I felt OK, cute and accepted. And even though I did not like the taste of alcohol, I started drinking with my friends when I got into junior high school because that was the cool thing to do. I would have done anything to be accepted.

By tenth grade, my whole world had changed. I had found true love! I started building my whole life around my boyfriend. I began to change personality for him, and I didn't care. I really wanted his approval. I gave up things I enjoyed doing and tried to change for him. Eventually, I began to resent him and blamed him for the changes I had made without really wanting to. I didn't want to let go of him, though, because that would mean being alone. And I wanted to avoid that at all cost - even the cost of my own happiness. I really was dependent on this guy.

Soon, however, it was time for me to let go of my parents' apron strings to go to college, and my boyfriend and I had to separate for awhile. I still had most of my securities in my family back home, but my best friend was in the new college with me, so that helped a lot. I was scared to death, but excited, too. I wanted to make new friends but was afraid of being rejected. I finally pledged a sorority and this eased my loneliness as I felt I had found a group of people who would accept me.

I started drinking more. That's what everyone else was doing. I kept my drinking under control, however, because I felt I had to please my parents. I was afraid to disappoint them in any way. For the first time in a long while, I felt happy. I was being responsible and felt successful, both scholastically and socially. My family approved, and that, of course, was very important to me.

Then I began dating a guy in my brother fraternity. We had fun for awhile, and I was feeling very good about myself and my life. One big problem arose, however. He was an alcoholic, and I soon began to resent his drinking. Now I see that I always seemed to go after guys I felt needed mothering, but it never worked out. We broke up, and I was instantly banned from the dating scene by my so-called friends. People thought I was being unfair and unreasonable in breaking up with this guy and didn't seem to want to have anything to do with me. I got really depressed. I felt betrayed, alone, and friendless. I felt I was truly a failure. I had no one to talk with about my feelings. Even drinking didn't seem to get rid of the depression I felt.

I decided to return home to my old boyfriend. I felt if we could just make things go right this time, that we could "live happily ever after." Things did not go as I planned, I found that he was living with another girl, and I felt crushed. But I held onto the hope of getting together with him again, as I had nothing else to hold on to. We did date again, but to no avail. My self-esteem was underground at this time, and I allowed him to walk all over me. I was really a doormat and given up on myself and my lifelong dream of getting married. My life seemed to be going nowhere. I was beginning to feel desperate. Nothing was working out as I had hoped it would.

I transferred to another college so that I could finish my degree. I began to concentrate heavily on school



and to work compulsively. When I began dating again, I began to abuse sex. I at least felt attractive if a guy was willing to have sex with me. I decided that I would try to stuff my feelings about what I was doing, but I had a hard time getting rid of the knot that I felt in my gut every time I went to bed with someone that I knew didn't really care for me. I felt worthless, cheap, and used, but this was the way I could achieve that, then I felt it was worth the uncomfortable feelings.

I would stay up at night or cry myself to sleep, feeling that I had no one to turn to. I wanted to leave town after I had graduated from college, but I already had a good job and could not arrange a transfer. Since there were no job and could not arrange a transfer. Since there were no job openings in my home town, I stayed where I was. Finally, I got a job at a hospital in a nearby city, working with drug abusers to teach them to relax. I worked with two other girls who became my close friends. I had finally found two people I could trust and confide in. It was such a good feeling of relief that I centered my whole world around them.

I moved into the city after communicating for three months and got an apartment by myself. My friends still lived out of town, though. Therefore, I never had anything to do after work. I was still too insecure to meet new people, so I stayed miserable. I would stay home and listen to music and try to go to bed early because I didn't want to feel anything. My job was a good one, and I worked with a lot of warm, friendly people. The group I worked with was called PDAP - drug abusers who had gotten sober and were trying to help others to get straight also. They were always hugging each other and saying, "I love you, " and I thought they were a strange group of people indeed. They told me I was welcome to attend their meetings, but I never did because I thought I wouldn't fit in, because I wasn't a dope fiend. But I knew that I always felt good around these people because they talked about their feelings and seemed OK with who they were. I really admire that. I worked at the hospital for nine months without going to a PDAP meeting. I always kept just far enough away to avoid being vulnerable or taking any risks with this group of people.

Then I met a very special man who worked at the hospital as a Psychiatric Service Technician. He was shy, quiet, looked like a dope fiend, and scared me to death; but I was very attracted to him. A member of PDAP, he asked me to accompany him to a PDAP party one weekend. I did, and a week later I attended my first PDAP meeting. I've been in PDAP ever since and am very grateful for this special guy who acted as a catalyst in my involvement with the program. That guy is now my husband.

PDAP is very special to me, because it has shown me a God who loves me and has given me a whole group of friends who love and care about me. PDAP has given me a new, happy way of life, along with the self-esteem I need to enjoy it. The Twelve Steps are for anyone and any addiction. My addiction wasn't to drugs - it was low self-esteem and guys. I have gained personal growth, awareness, and serenity from the steps, more than I thought was possible for me. I can honestly say that I love myself now, and that feels terrific. I am self-confident and know that I have a lot to offer others. I thank everyone in PDAP who has helped me find and love the person I really am.



I Didn't Know What To Do...

I am going to tell you a story about someone who, like many of you, learned how to be a liar, a thief, a con, jailbait, and jailbird. I grew up just like anybody else, in a typical Jewish family, oldest of four children. I had a typical Jewish mom, a typical Jewish dad. Mom's domineering. Dad's passive/ aggressive. I went to a private school.

I was eleven years old when I had a really traumatic experience. We had just moved to Texas from Missouri, and I started working at a newspaper owned by my uncle. I was really impressed with him. I thought he ruled the world and knew everything there was to know. I wanted to be just like him and do everything just like he did. Well, I did. We started having a little sexual affair. I was very naive and didn't know what was happening. I went home with him. I didn't know what to do.

God forbid that I should tell my mother, or my father, or my friends. Somewhere I'd gotten the message that what was going on was not normal or cool. But I didn't want to say, "No, I'm not willing to go home with you." So I just kept doing it. It got worse. I was scared, more guilty, more messed up.

When I was about thirteen, I'd gotten to the point where I couldn't stand it any more. I couldn't stand the the depression and the bad feelings. I had to think of a way to get out of the situation. So, I thought, "Well, now if I were in an accident, if I were in the hospital, then wouldn't have to be with him. I wouldn't have to spend the night with him and do those things I don't want to do."

One day when my parents were gone, I went out into the garage, took an old bedspread and tied it around my waist. I picked up a gas can and poured gas on the bedspread. Then I set it on fire. The gas exploded, and I couldn't get the knot untied. I took off running around the house, my sisters chasing me. Finally, the fire burned through the bedspread and it fell off. I didn't know how bad it was until I went in the house and looked in the mirror. My whole back was charred.

I was terrified of my parents' reaction. I heard their car drive up to the house. I went out to them and told there had been an accident. I was afraid of their anger, but I was really badly and didn't know what else to do.

I spent three or four months recovering in the hospital, where I first learned about Demerol. My room was just across the hall from the nurses' station. Every four hours I'd start screaming, and they'd come running with that little shot. Needless to say, within several weeks, I was addicted to Demerol.

When I got out of the hospital, I couldn't walk right. My legs were affected by the scar tissue that I had formed, and I walked like an ape. Needless to say, I felt ugly and didn't like myself a whole lot. But while I had been in the hospital, I had made my mother promise me that I would never again have to set foot in the newspaper shop that my uncle ran, or even see him again.

After my hospital stay, I learned about Novahistine D11 cough syrup. It has codeine in it. I conned a pharmacist into refilling a prescription for the next three years. I also had surgery every summer. I loved having surgery, because I could go in and get loaded for at least a week. After surgery they'd give me Demerol every four hours. I used chemicals because I didn't like myself. I was a homosexual, and I couldn't accept that, but I couldn't change it either.

When I was sixteen, Mom hired a housekeeper, and she taught me the facts of life. I loved it. But I had already been through this thing with my uncle, so by the time I was sixteen, I didn't know which way to go.

By this time, I was already beginning to learn about depression, guilt, and the games to play to get attention. I learned how to get my parents to respond to my "needs." I was already addicted to codeine. I was learning hit or miss about narcotics. And I wasn't telling anybody I was getting loaded either, because nobody else in school was getting loaded. Smoking cigarettes was a big deal, and getting drunk on wine



and throwing up all over the place was big, too. (I did that once). But I was strung out on high school.

I was around fifteen years old when I first started making the rounds of psychiatric hospitals. I was getting desperate and tried to slit my wrists, like I'd seen on TV. I didn't do much damage, just enough to freak my mother out. My parents took me to a psychiatric hospital where, for reasons still unknown to me, they gave me insulin shock therapy.

I met a lot of really crazy people and decided that I wanted to be like them. I could get a lot of attention that way. So I sort of made it a habit of going crazy once or twice a year and going to the hospital. There they'd put me on Valium or Thorazine. Between surgery every year and my trips to the nut houses, there was no way I was going to get sober!

I graduated from high school 1960, and my parents decided I was going to college like everyone else. They also decided I was going to be a lawyer or doctor. Well, that's where I put my foot down. "I am not going to be a doctor. I am going to be a NURSE." Well, my mom was really upset. It just wasn't the IN thing for a guy to be a nurse back then. But I was determined. So off I went.

I flunked the first semester. I came home with five Fs. Once again my parents freaked. But I got the hang of things. I started going through the drug and gay scenes at the university, and I had a ball. I was partying and carrying on and having a good time. I spent a lot of time at the infirmary with sore throats and awful back pains for which I needed Percodan and other drugs. I went to any lengths to stay loaded.

I guess when I really freaking out and getting in bad shape was when I started making my trips to my medical school's psychiatric unit. I'd probably OD'd, I'm not sure. They put me in a locked unit. I couldn't get out. Everything was locked. I was there for about a week when the shrink got together with his assistant and decided that I needed electroshock therapy. I didn't know what electroshock therapy was. I was nineteen.

They consulted with my parents and, in their desperation, they agreed. I cannot remember experiencing anything so frightening. What they do is wake you up in the morning and give a shot to dry up your saliva glands so you don't swallow your tongue. Then you go and sit and wait and wait and wait. Then you go in. Well, my veins were shot. I had none. They had to dig forever to find a vein. I hated that. They would dig and dig and dig. Finally they would find the vein and then stick a mouthpiece in my mouth, put a little headband on my head, and strap me down so I couldn't move. Then they would give me the knockout. I would wake up fifteen minutes later, drooling in the dark. It was humiliating. I felt like an animal. Therapy? Oh, I saw the resident maybe once a week if I was lucky. I spent time in occupational therapy making little baskets and hundreds of billfolds.

I went through three series of electroshock, three times a week for three months. I was being treated like I was really mentally ill. I began to believe that I was crazy.

I graduated from nursing school and got my little degree saying that I knew what I was doing. By this time, I was a walking PDR (Physicians Desk Reference). I knew everything there was to know about dope. And I knew how to get it, too. I had learned how to write prescriptions. I used to go to my shrink once a week and get the prescription for sixty Desoxin, take it up to my friendly neighborhood pharmacy, and they filled it.

I moved to a small town and in with a girl named Sharon. We ran out of prescriptions, and I had gotten to the point where I loved speed, but I sure didn't like crashing. All of a sudden, I would look in the mirror and see what I really was. My parents had spent a fortune on braces, and now my teeth were falling out. I would look in the mirror and see nothing but old skin and bones. I was only twenty-five. I didn't like crashing. I didn't like the pain.

So, I said, "Sharon, you're fat. Go see a doctor and rip off some scripts." She did. We went back home and consulted the Ouija Board. Were we going to get caught? It said no. We jumped in Sharon's car and



went over to the little pharmacy. She went in, and I waited. She came running back out freaking because they were taking too long. Two minutes later, here came the police.

That town jail is awful. I had never seen the inside of a jail. I don't think I even knew where it was. There I was in this cell with three others. For my one phone call, I called Momma. "COME AND GET ME!" She freaked. She and the attorney came and made some kind of deal. They said all I had to do was to go to the federal narcotics hospital. All right, another hospital; I could get excited about another hospital. But was a prison, with bars on the windows. It was more humiliation. I don't think I ever saw a doctor. I stayed there about fifteen days before Momma came and got me out.

Over the next years I moved around, admitted and denied I was a drug addict, was hospitalized, rehabilitated, therapied, and sobered up for weeks at a time once or twice. In one rehabilitation center, my therapy was making 2,000 silly sippy diapers. I made 2,000 of them a day for nine weeks.

My three sisters were perfect. They grew up and did everything they were suppose to do. They went to college, married doctors and lawyers and dentists. Then there was me, making silly sippy diapers. I felt that something had to change, but I didn't know what to do.

I tried a Christian commune. I tried to carry the message in the gay bar where I worked. I tried nursing - lots of drugs around to try. I tried Europe. I learned how to hustle, panhandle, sell my body, how to destroy myself, how to be garbage. I learned how to shoot up. There were times when I wanted to make it, times when I wanted to change. But to quit. For the first time, I was experiencing the pain of withdrawal without something to help me through it. Emotionally, I didn't care any more. I didn't want to live the way I had been living; I couldn't stand it any more.

Back at home now, my mom and dad took turns sitting with me. By the third night, I was questioning my decision to get out of drugs and this insanity. Was this what sobriety was all about? I was lying there freaking out, feeling so alone. The little boy inside of me wanted Dad just then. My pride wouldn't let me call him, but he came into my room. I was lying in bed screaming and crying that I wanted to die. Dad walked in and dropped to his knees at the foot of my bed and started crying. I cried because I had never felt this love and concern from my dad before. I never thought he loved me. For the first time in my life, I felt love for my father. He was praying and crying and I was really confused, because I didn't know how to handle it. He rubbed my back and sang to me like I was a little boy. I feel asleep. When I woke up, I didn't necessarily feel any better, but I knew without a doubt that my dad loved me.

I stayed sober until I went to court. They dismissed my case, and I celebrated by getting loaded. You would think by now I would have learned something. But not me. No, I had to be scraping the bottom from underneath to learn something. I wasn't one of those who could go down the elevator and get off where I wanted to. I had to straight to the bottom.

I went to New Mexico with some friends and got screwed up again. But I couldn't stay loaded very long any more. I felt awful. I'd wake up in the morning, get loaded, feel OK for about twenty minutes, and crash. Then I'd get loaded again and throw up. I didn't like it any more.

I decided to shoot myself. I went back home to the folks. I took a .38 from the home of a friend, went home and sat on my bed. I was absolutely serious about killing myself. I figured that if I asked God to forgive me just before I pulled the trigger, that I could go to heaven. I really didn't want to go to hell. I didn't want to burn (I had already done that). I'd never handled a gun before, and it went off before I was ready for it. I'd never heard anything as loud in my life! My mom came running to my room, and that the end of that.

It was at the end of my next trip that something different happened. I'd been loaded, hospitalized, kicked out of where I was staying, and finally called Momma and told her I wanted to come home. She told me I couldn't. I couldn't believe her! She said she couldn't stand it any more, and that I was too old (thirty-four-years-old) to come home to Momma. She told me that I was going to die, and that she wanted me to do it



somewhere else, where she didn't have to watch. She offered me a one-way plane ticket to the Austin State Hospital. I'd always been able to come home. I didn't know what to do. I knew I couldn't live like this any more, and I was too chicken to kill myself. While in the hospital, I started going to AA meetings. One night, a guy asked me if I wanted to go to a PDAP meeting. I asked what it was, and he said it was the Palmer Drug Abuse Program. I said, "Sure, I'll try anything once."

I went, and it was something I'd never experienced before. I saw people just like me, and I didn't feel crazy there. I didn't feel so unique, so alone. Also, I wanted to change my life, and I'd never before met anyone who told me I could change. I wanted to be normal, like everybody else, but nobody had been able to tell me how. Someone at the meeting announced that he was going to tell me how the Twelve Steps worked. I thought that if I could work one step a week, in twelve weeks I would be fine!

Really, though I fell in love that night with the program that told me that I could be anything I wanted to be. Anything. If I were willing to do what it took to stay sober. All of a sudden, I believed in something. No, all of a sudden, someone believed in ME. Someone thought I was worthwhile; someone loved me. I had doubted that anyone could love me.

I stayed in PDAP. For years now I have been learning how to turn my life and my will over to God. I have married a beautiful woman and I'm very much in love with her. I have been given the opportunity to work with other drug abusers and their families. My life is so wonderful that sometimes I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm awake. I am grateful to be able to look back at the person I was four years ago, and then to see where I am today. I'm a respected human being today, not because I'm that great a person, but because I have learned how to love and how to give. I have learned it from the people in PDAP, the winners and the losers. I am a miracle and a success. Today I know what to do!



The Minister's Daughter

During my childhood years, I was a happy, normal child. I had quite a bit of dependency on my family and particularly my twin sister. My father went through seminary and became an Episcopal priest in a small Texas town. I went to private Episcopal schools on scholarships through fifth grade. The schools were small with a lot of individual attention, which I adored. My twin and I were in the same classes, and we shared pretty much everything, including friends.

After three years, my father was in a car accident that almost killed him. After his recovery we were transferred to Houston to a small mission. That was quite a relief to me, but also rather frightening. We had no private schools around and I had to enter public school for the first time. I was tremendously insecure and did some acting out to get attention. I had done some shoplifting. We drank everything and anything all mixed together, tequila and creme de menthe, bourbon and vodka, port and sherry. I know that I didn't care what it was so long as the alcoholic content was fairly high.

I discovered marijuana one summer when I was about fourteen. I bragged about it, and I bragged about drinking. I continued to shoplift and was caught at one of the stores. The man at the store threatened to call my parents and the police, but he did neither, and I continued to shoplift.

I began drinking at around twelve years old, perhaps younger. My drinking started gradually. All the family would attend family parties on Christmas Eve, and the adults all had cocktails. The kids were supposed to have cokes. We would have little coke and a lot of bourbon mixed together so that our parents wouldn't know we were drinking. We would also gather around the eggnog bowl and get drunk on eggnog.

My brothers and sisters and I would raid Dad's liquor cabinet on evenings when our parents went out. Mom and Dad never noticed the amount of liquor in the cabinet. We would all sit around and drink straight from the bottles. That summer my younger brother had fallen and was hospitalized, dangerously ill, for six weeks. Mom was with him a great deal and Dad was working a lot, so I had lots of free time. I was involved in the church youth group and most of us were getting high. I was tired of being ridiculed for not smoking pot, so I decided to try it.

A friend from church came over one day when nobody but my twin and I were home. We ventured into the attic to smoke our first joints. We smoked two joints between three people, and I didn't get high at all. I put up a front so that my sister and our friend would think I was loaded, but I wasn't.

I really questioned this getting high business. If you went to all the trouble and expense to get drugs, surely there must be some benefits! I decided I would smoke dope again, just to give it one more chance. Well, my next try gave more "positive" results, and I experienced my first high on chemicals, other than alcohol. From then on, getting high was where it was at. I continued to drink, naturally, as alcohol was my favorite drug.

Sometime during that period, I contracted bronchitis and was ill for several months. Not ill enough to miss a lot of school, but enough to have codeine prescribed for me on a regular basis. That was another good high. I had been experiencing some minor blackouts from my drinking, but it still was all fun and games to me.

My parents separated during the fall of that year. My way of dealing with that was to either drink or smoke dope. I professed to feel nothing except relief and a sense of freedom with Mother gone. The sorrow, loneliness and rejection. I stuffed; and I got high when the feelings came too close. I wanted to have the image of the "well-adjusted teenager" and tried to give that impression to all by my close friend. Occasionally I would cry on her shoulder.

I experimented with sniffing gasoline and tried to get high on antihistamines, but they really weren't my cup of tea. My favorites were pot and alcohol. The best and safest place that I had to get high was our



church. Most of the people I got high with went to my church and were most willing to attend church on Sundays. We would go in at the beginning of the service, slip out at some time, and get loaded when we could be certain of not being observed. I performed quite a bit for my friends, trying to give off a really "tough girl" image. I found getting high to be an answer for me, because whenever I was feeling bad, I had an immediate remedy. Whenever I made a complete fool out of myself, I always had a really good scapegoat - drugs.

One night, I was feeling hard up for something entertaining to do. I was fifteen, unable to drive, and had to rely on my older brother for transportation. I was out of pot, and we had a friend from church spending the night. My twin and I wanted to show her a good time. Well, the only place my older brother would take us was with him to a PDAP meeting. I had been to a PDAP meeting several years earlier and had very little desire to return; those people were just a bunch of junkies and no fun at all. However, due to the circumstances that night, I went to a meeting. It was better than staying home with Dad and having to stay straight. Big brother also mentioned the number of good-looking guys, and that was enough to quicken the heart of this boy-crazy fifteen-year-old.

Upon my entrance to the meeting, I was greeted by a multitude of people all welcoming me to PDAP and truly being friendly. That really threw me a curve, as I expected them to check me out and wait until they approved of me before they made any friendly overtures. I was made to feel at ease immediately and the people were very nice. I met a guy that I thought was really cute, and it turned out, conveniently, that he already knew my brother.

I continued to attend PDAP meetings, but, at the same time, I really didn't know why I was going. Now I realize that I wanted friends, people who would stand the "fair weather" sort. Shortly after my first or second meeting, I was at church with my crowd. One of the guys had slid. The police drove up and my friend gave me his lid and split. I panicked and stuffed the lid down my pants. I strolled as nonchalantly as possible inside the church. My sister and few other friends managed to keep the officers busy while I stashed the dope inside the church. The police had come to caution us against a ruckus, which we were liable to do. They were not aware of the pot that was behind the scenes. That day was pretty much a turning point in my life. I realized who my friends really were. They weren't the people who were willing for me to get busted in their place; they were the people who stood by me and supported my going straight.

My first thirty days of sobriety were very grueling. I had gotten to the point in my drug abuse that I was getting high three to five times a week, depending on availability. For me to stay straight around the same people that I used to get high with was very difficult. I would go to church on Sunday and my old friends would be there, and we would do the same thing. Everybody would be getting high except me. The pot was being passed around, and I kept passing it on. My twin was going to meetings also but was very proud. About thirty days later, she received her monkey fist.

Eventually my older sister and one of my younger brothers came to PDAP meetings and managed to find a resource for themselves. That brought the total number of PDAPers in my family to five. My father had gone to a few parent meetings but decided it wasn't really for him. Mother made quite a few parent meetings before she moved to Canada to get married. Today, there are still five members of my family actively involved in PDAP, though not necessarily the same five. My older brother and sister dropped out and are involved in church groups and therapy on an individual basis.

I have learned quite a bit about myself through the Twelve Steps and through sponsorship. I have made changes where necessary. Today I have the self-esteem and confidence in myself that I never had before. I have a beautiful relationship with my Higher Power, and I have the willingness to grow and to change as He sees fit. I kept going to PDAP because of the people. They were so beautiful to me and so warm and understanding. They gave so much of themselves.

I was a very lost and insecure little girl, far younger than my years emotionally, when I came to PDAP. Today I am a woman. I do not know what road my life would have taken had I not gotten sober when I did. But I do know that I have been happy following this direction and have achieved a maturity that really



amazes me. I also have excellent relationships with my family. For my happiness I am truly grateful to the people in the program. They have been there for me when times were difficult, and by their example, I have truly found how to be God-centered and how to be able to give something to other people, past and present, who have helped me along the road to sobriety and happiness.



She Tried To Please Everyone But Herself

I thought I was well. Yesterday, for one whole day, I was insane again. Mind you, insanity is often simply the inability to make wise decisions. The result of my insanity is that I "run around in circles," not accomplishing anything and becoming paralyzed with fear. Yesterday, I allowed myself to become totally overwhelmed by a problem which I faced. By choosing to talk with other people and with my God about the problem, I once again felt the peace and contentment that I have so often experienced over the last year. My name is Lisa and this is my story.

My early childhood memories are of constant conflict between my parents. I began to see my mother as a cold and extremely controlling person. I saw my father as a spineless alcoholic. I felt very little love or warmth in our home, and somehow I felt responsible for the discord I saw around me. I began to think of myself as a worthless person and began to spend a lot of time trying to convince myself and others of my true value through my actions.

I built my self-esteem not on what I thought of myself, but on what other people thought of me. I liked to please people because when I pleased someone, I felt worthwhile for a short time and that felt good. I decided early in life that I would be whatever other people wanted me to be. And this became my goal.

As a youngster, I went to public schools and liked it very much. It kept me busy so I had no time to think about my home life. School also provided a new place to please people and receive strokes. I was an excellent student and my achievements brought compliments at home as well as at school.

Both my parents worked to provide me with what they had never had as children, and as a result, I was raised by a variety of housekeepers. I received dancing lessons, nice clothes, a comfortable home, and eventually my own car. But never what I wanted most - a close, loving family and parents who would value me for who I was, not what I did. I felt emotionally starved and materially overfed.

During my adolescence, we had to move twice due to my dad's drinking and illicit behavior. The first time we moved to another neighborhood. The second time we moved to another state. I continued to do well in school and began to discover new channels for attracting attention and receiving strokes. I had very few girlfriends, but many, many boyfriends. The pattern of having many male friends at one time continued through my adult life as I persisted in my people-pleasing syndrome. I also found acceptance and release through work. I grew apart from my parents as I became more dependent on my boyfriends for emotional support.

I became engaged while still in high school. We eloped, and soon afterward I discovered that I was pregnant. For a couple of years, I lived a fairly happy and normal life being a housewife and mother. We even had a second child.

During this time I was involved in two major automobile accidents and suffered back and nerve injuries. I began taking muscle relaxers to ease physical pain, and soon I was using them to relieve any emotional pain as well. My husband used alcohol to relax after work. We soon lost our ability to communicate with each other at all. Shortly, through this lack of communication and any true desire on our parts to work out our family and personal problems, we grew apart. I began to drink in addition to abusing my prescription medication.

One evening, I got drunk at a new Year's Eve party and ran away with my husband's boss. The next thing I remembered was the police, along with my parents and husband, breaking into the motel room where I was sleeping with this guy. Afterwards I became openly rebellious. I continued the affair for a short time to "humiliate my husband" in the ways I felt he had humiliate me. I never realized how insane my thinking was at that time.

We tried to start over. With some accident settlement monies we received, we moved into a better



neighborhood and a larger house. We forgot to leave one very important thing behind - the drugs and alcohol. We each had additional affairs. We no longer took interest in our relationship, which had become watered down by involvement with other people. It was meaningless as a source of love and comfort. We half-heartedly tried a few counseling sessions while he continued his most current affair, and I drank myself to sleep. We finally agreed upon divorce as the solution.

After the divorce was final, I realized what it meant to be alone with two children. I tried to be eighteen again. I tried to go back and relive those years of dating I had missed. Each time I ended up drunk and in bed with a strange man. Each one of those mornings, I woke up with a terrible sense of loneliness, guilt, and a hangover.

I eventually married a second time. I did not know my new husband very well, but I was impressed by the style of life which he was accustomed to keeping. Judging from outward appearance, I thought he would provide stability and security for me and my children. We seemed to get along well and had a good time together the few times we dated. Our marriage lasted a little over two years.

Our social life consisted of getting together with friends and "getting wasted," listening to hard rock music, and "crashing." After six months, my husband quit his job and did not work again for the remainder of our marriage. I began to resent everything he did. I supported the family solely and used speed to keep me going. I soon became emotionally unable to handle the responsibilities of raising a family, and I gave my husband custody of our two children. My thinking was blurred and my life was at its bottom. I divorced my second husband and again tried to start over. I decided to go to church regularly and to stop smoking grass in order to clear up my thinking.

I was alone again. I got involved with church activities, spent extra hours at work. Through all of this activity, I never saw drugs as a major problem. I was seriously contemplating suicide as a solution to all my problems.

Then I met a man through the church who noticed my problem. He convinced me to start going to PDAP meetings. He also convinced me to marry him. I began to attend meetings "for him." I was still not willing to admit to anyone else that I had a problem. I attended Parent Meetings at first, and then the OTHers Group. There I finally admitted to myself and to the group that I had a problem. Even though I stopped taking all mind-changing chemicals, including alcohol beverages, when I married this man I did not work a program, and I was not SOBER. I was still running from myself and my past. I was not a whole person.

Being straight but not sober was no more fun than staying loaded. I was still extremely self-willed. My new friends tried to help. They asked me to take time to work on myself, to stay away from old friends that I had drunk or had done drugs with, to use a female sponsor when I had questions, and to make the Twelve Steps a part of my way of life. I got a sponsor and used her, but only after my way managed to mess up my life again. I stayed straight, but I never used the Twelve Steps. My marriage finally ended in divorce.

Yet as self-willed as I was, the group still loved me and supported me when I could not love and support myself. Through all my stubbornness and pain, the group was there for me.

Seeing my third marriage fail was painful. But something happened. I began to grow. Very slowly I was able to see my mistakes. I began to use the program for me. I got to know my Higher Power. I began to blossom spiritually and emotionally. I spent time in counseling through the group. I became a woman. For so long, I had felt like a little girl; now, for the first time in my life, I had grown up.

Growing up was painful. It took loving understanding from the group and my willingness to work through my problems. The growth that was most difficult for me was to stop being a people-pleaser. As I grew closer to my Higher Power, I realized my God wanted only for me to be happy. I began to love myself as I know my God loves me.



I can honestly say that I am deeply grateful that I am a drug abuser and alcoholic, for I have never been happier that I am today. I would not trade one of those sobering experience. I have a new outlook on life and a new way to live. There are days when I tend to slip into my old patterns, and that is why the Twelve Steps are a way of life for me. On those days, I have to start over. I begin each day giving my life and my will to my Higher Power and thanking Him for allowing me to have an experience through which I have gained life, love, happiness, and serenity.



Doesn't Everyone Smoke Dope?

In early January of 1979, my daughter came to spend the day with me. Her behavior was so completely different from what it had been just a week earlier that I commented on it. "Daddy," she said, "It's from the Round Robin. It was just fabulous!"

"What's a Round Robin?"

"I can't explain it. You just have to be there. It's part of PDAP."

"Pah-dap? What the hell is that?"

"I can't explain," she said, "but I really wish you'd go to a meeting."

I had recently separated from my second wife, was very lonely, and had nothing to do on Tuesday evening, so I decided to try a meeting. Besides, I figured I could meet my daughter afterward for dinner and spend some more time with her.

I went to a newcomers' meeting and heard a number of parents crying and moaning about their drug- and alcohol-abusing children. I couldn't relate. After the second meeting, I told my daughter how I felt.

"Well, Daddy! Why do you think I was always falling asleep in school and messing up? I was smoking eight or ten joints a day!"

I still couldn't relate. After all, everyone smokes dope these days. What was so bad about that?

By the third meeting, I had begun to notice all the smiles of the "old timers." I knew there had to be something more to this PDAP than parents who were worried sick by their children. Besides, my kid didn't have any more of a chemical problem than I did. Her problem was emotional. She had a lousy ego and couldn't make friends. It took me seven more months to admit my own problem in these areas, plus more!

In the meantime, I'd gone out of town for a few weeks. When I got back, I lied about attending four meetings, to get my heart, and began going to those meetings where folks were learning to smile. In those meetings, we concentrated on recognizing that chemicals were an end result of living problems; not only my child's living problems, but my problem as well. Week after week, as others in the group would share themselves with me, I began to be able to relate.

I wanted more, so I began going to other satellites. I met more people, heard more, learned more. And I began to grow and change. I had heard about the need for a sponsor, got one, and promptly discarded him. But I learned that one of those tools of those I saw who seemed to be the most self-assured was using a sponsor. This time around, I got a sponsor and used him. I talked to him daily, went to his home after Saturday meetings, and watched football with him on Sundays. I always felt welcomed and accepted there. I always felt loved.

During this time, I was asked to be on the Steering Committee. I began to learn the importance of reaching out to new people, of getting just a little vulnerable and letting others know me, and even recognizing that marijuana was, in fact, a mind-changing chemical, and that I didn't need it in my life.

Some five months into this program, my daughter got high and was hospitalized for rehabilitation. For three weeks she not only showed no willingness to take what was offered, she went to extremes to get attention, including three suicide attempts. The day they decided to transfer her to a hospital with greater security, I talked with her. I shared myself more openly than I ever had with any human being and told her how I had progressed in the program. That afternoon her therapist called to tell me she had signed a contract and was willing to work within the guidelines of the hospital program. Five long weeks later, she



was released. As a parent I had hurt her. I knew what pain she felt because I felt it, too.

Prior to my separation from my wife, I had been taking eighty milligrams of Valium per day. Even in the program this seemed acceptable to me. After all, every doctor I went to would give me a new prescription. I used every one of them to get the quantity I needed daily. In fact, I used my considerable ability as a con artist to get these prescriptions and maintain my supply. I attended few meetings without at least ten milligrams of Valium in my system.

With six months of sobriety after her discharge from the hospital, my daughter, just turned seventeen, went to Fort Worth to live with a family there. During her stay, her mother and I were asked not to communicate with her. However, the Dallas banquet was being held at that time. I went, searching the faces and tables, questioning people, "Do you know my daughter? Have you seen her? Where?"

God's will was that I not find her. After a frantic four or five hours, I finally gave up looking and went to my hotel room. I began to look at my compulsive behavior, the urgent need I felt to find her. I realized this was the moment that had been chosen for me to let go. Trust, trust that she was all right, that she was safe with the people there. I came to know that there was nothing at that point that I could do. I popped twenty milligrams of Valium and went to sleep.

The next morning, I called her counselor in Fort Worth. He invited me over for an appointment. When I arrived, my daughter called and was told that I was there. She came right over, and we spent a full, beautiful morning together. When I dropped her back at the satellite, she left me sobbing, knowing we wouldn't see each other for an indefinite time. But I left with serenity in my heart, trusting at last that the program would work for her. I was high on Valium.

When I came back to town, my senior counselor asked me to coffee after our meeting. Over the months, I had projected her in many roles. First, she was my daughter's counselor. Then mine as a parent. As I continued to know her and trust her, she became a close friend, a "podnah" to play with, a wise and perceptive friend. So when she confronted me that night on my own drug abuse, I eventually understood my own dependency and agreed to go to OTHers.

My first OTHers meeting was a complete ego trip. I was full of fear and renewed denials. I was so cocky. I knew all about the First Step. I'd been, in my own eyes, "Mr. PDAP" and judged myself as having much less of a problem than the rest of the men and women there. I went to two more meetings and decided I didn't need OTHers. Thank God some dear friends cared enough about me to spend time to love me enough to help me see that OTHers was where I wanted to be.

The night I got my fist was the most beautiful night of my life. As I allowed the love around me to seep through my fear, I was overwhelmed. I think it was the first time since my teens that I actually felt the knot in my gut disappear.

Over the next few months, I became aware of the self-hatred I'd allowed to run my life. I spent day after day with self-esteem exercises, and slowly I began to come out of the very thick shell I had constructed around myself. As I began to risk a little more and let people know me better, I grew. Through this growth, I started the slow, sometimes painful process of learning to accept, then to love myself.

At the November OTHers/Older Group Round Robin, the miracle of finding my own personal God occurred. From that day my life was to undergo incredible, miraculous changes. As I came to know God better, I learned to get in touch with my feelings and to share them. My sponsor patiently spent hour after hour dealing with my thoughts, fears, jealousies, loneliness, embarrassments, and dishonest thoughts, helping me to become OK. All the while, I was growing and learning of the miracle that I am, accepting that God not only talks to me through others but through me as well.

I did the 18-page inventory (the one that covers childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) which opened so many doors to my past and gave me the insight into why I react the way I do. I learned how to choose my



response to situations and people rather than merely reacting. I began to accept and better understand my alcoholism, which I had denied and stuffed so completely. Today I must share, for my own sobriety, that I am an alcoholic, that I cannot and will not, today take even one drink. To do so is to begin the path that leads to my personal road to self-destruction.

I pray each day for continued growth. I understand that I will never be perfect, but that one day at a time will continue to get better. I thank God for giving me my life. Each new day is a gift for me to do with as I choose. I have found a new way of life, one I was never aware could exist. It's a way of life I've never read about, not in a hundred "self-help" books. I've found the serenity I'd never imagined.



Working The Steps

Being involved in the Palmer Drug Abuse Program is a life changing experience. It is not just talking to someone and feeling better, or a morale booster to jolt you out of a bad place. It involves experiencing the Twelve Steps one step at a time and, with the help of God and other people, developing a whole new "sober" way of life. This is an exciting process, but it is almost always totally different than each person who has worked the steps planned for it be. The steps are a process--not a destination. The PDAP method is to be worked one day at a time with the help of others who have been where you may be sitting. Getting a sponsor in the program and going to meetings are important ingredients to working the program. The following is some basic information about working the steps. It is meant to help newcomers learn about the program and help keep "old timers" on track.



Step One

We admitted that mind-changing chemicals had caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable.

When we admit that a problem exists in our lives and that nothing we can do will help, we are working the First Step.

This step focuses on identifying the problems related to the use of mind-changing chemicals. It asks us to look at the problems we have either because we use drugs or because someone we care about does. Is this problem causing some part of our lives to be unhappy, out of control, unmanageable?

For many of us who used mind-changing chemicals, there were obvious external problems, such as being jailed or confined to a mental hospital, or having problems at work or school. We may have felt private despair, fear or anger, but told on one. Some of us were aware that we didn't like ourselves and were lonely and unhappy. We hid behind drugs to avoid dealing with ourselves or others.

Many of us did not personally have a problem with drug use, but drugs did effect our lives. As parents, friends, or relatives of drug users, we were afraid and full of questions. People we had known and loved acted like strangers. They said and did things that confused and angered us, and we didn't know what to do. Some of us were straight in a "get high" environment. We didn't fit in, yet had strong needs to belong and be accepted. We chose to "belong" in this Twelve-Step Program of PDAP instead of giving in to the pressure to use drugs.

The principles of Step One apply to all problems, not just that of drugs. The phrase "mind-changing chemicals" can be replaced with any problem area, for example: fear, anger, school, work, marriage, food, sex, money, or other people.

The reality that leads us to Step One is that no matter how we try to solve the problem or how we try to ignore it, there is NOTHING we can do alone. We know this is true because most of us have tried everything we can think of to solve the problem, and it remains. We have tried to stop other people from giving us a hard time. We have tried to stop using drugs or to cut back or change from one to another. We have tried to leave situations or places that have caused us pain. Nothing seemed to work. Most of us did not blame drugs for our problems.

Those of us who had tried to change a drug abuser had no better luck. Lectures, punishment, doctors, therapists, and all the controls we could think of were of no avail. When we tried to deny the problem, something would jolt us back to reality. Still, we continued to think there must be something we could do or say - if only we could figure out what.

Step One invites us to stop being frustrated, depressed, hopeless, or angry over not knowing what to do. It asks us to finally admit that there is a problem and we do NOT have the solution.

Many of us experienced tremendous fear in taking the First Step. Admitting we are out of control and there is NOTHING we can do to change, we think, must mean we are failures and losers who can't cope with life. We are afraid giving up the illusion of control will leave us empty shells. Many of us feel we are being asked to give up and give in, and our training and society have told us we must never do that. We are afraid of what others will say.

One of the truths we have learned is that we MUST rid ourselves of the attitudes that keep us tied to our problems. We are not asked to give in to the problem, but rather to surrender to the truth and admit the reality or our situation - SURRENDER TO THE SOLUTION. Admitting we do not HAVE the answer does not mean there IS no answer. Others face the same problems and find solutions. We must learn to stop



doing what doesn't work and look outside of ourselves for what does work. This Twelve-Step Program is the method we have chosen to learn how to find these answers.

Admitting that there is a problem and that we do not have the solution is the First Step. From here we move on to Step Two, and begin to find the solution.



Step Two

We found it necessary to "stick with winners" in order to grow.

In Step One, we admitted we were powerless to overcome the problems in our lives. We recognized our need for help and began to seek it. Step Two guides us toward the help we seek. It begins a plan of action we can follow to find our solution.

For many of us, learning that there IS a solution, and that we CAN attain a better way of life, is a new and even uncomfortable awareness. We realize that we can have the peace and happiness we have seen in the faces of others in the program. We find the best way to do this is to spend as much time with these people as possible - to "stick with winners."

"In order to grow" in the positive direction we have chosen, we, must let go of old habits, thoughts, and patterns. Our old way of life has proven to be a negative one, full of misery, loneliness, and failure. Many of us have tried to return to old friends and environments, only to find our old way of life even more painful than we remembered. Withdrawing into ourselves is no better. By ourselves, we tend to dwell on the past and indulge in self-pity. Alone, we are often with our own worst enemy.

Surrounding ourselves with happy, loving people seems to be the only solution. Being with strong people in the group gives us a sense of belonging and being loved. This forms a base on which to build our new lives. Again and again, we find new growth by sharing with, being with, and listening to people who have a positive attitude toward life, even with its problems. From them, we learn to cultivate the attitude that solutions are possible for us as well. People who have solved the problems we now face are the winners and invest in relationships with them, thus opening ourselves to change.

Each of us needs to determine what areas of our lives need strengthening. How can we grow more? Do we have difficulty developing personal relationships? Do we have trouble with ego? A patchy job history? Are we compulsive with sex, money, food, or other parts of life? Someone who had dealt with such problems can be a winner for us.

We have found that developing a close relationship with one winner in particular is an important part of the Second Step. We choose as a Sponsor a person with whom we can relate and feel comfortable. We trust this person to guide us on our road to better life. Through close contact, we learn to believe in ourselves and in our ability to change. Our feelings of unworthiness and hopelessness diminish. We begin to overcome our fears and to learn the importance of asking questions. We take action, following our Sponsor's suggestions and those of other winners we have chosen.

A trap many of us fall into in working this step is working it for someone else. We have also been guilty of judging others and their friends and associates. We must be responsible for our own choices and allow others the same responsibility. This step is to help us choose wisely the people we want to learn from, NOT to eliminate everyone else from our lives.

Although PDAP has by no means cornered the market on positive, happy people, we have found that attending meetings and parties and visiting the satellite during the day gave us the opportunity to meet many "winners." We have found other people who have been through situations similar to our own whom are happy and serene today. These are our winners, and by "sticking with "them, we can begin to become the person we have always wanted to be.



Step Three

We realized that a higher power, expressed through our love for each other, can help restore us to sanity.

After admitting our lives were unmanageable, we are ready for outside help. We know we can't change ourselves. We have learned by "sticking with winners" we can change.

This step reminds us that it is vital for our recovery that our relation with God be active in our lives. We can see God working through our love for each other. Many of us who had a concept of God discovered that ours was only a condemning God, and we had to recognize a loving God who wants us to be forgiven and live in peace. Others of us knew there was a God, but were certain He didn't care about us one way or the other. We had to learn that we were vitally important to God. Those of us who claimed we had no Higher Power found we were our own Higher Power, and the way we had run things in the past was not working out. We were asked to become open to new possibilities in a new relationship with a loving God.

"Expressed through our love for each other..." Here we learn how to become open and trust one another. We receive healing through the love of those we become open to. We begin to learn the overwhelming beauty of love and acceptance expressed by the group through words of understanding and compassion, and most of all, through hugs. Each of us needs the feeling of someone touching us, a gentle hand on our shoulders, a hand clasp, a hug or a kiss. We discovered that touching as a means of expressing love was another tool for healing which God has given us through each other. As one PDAPer put it, "They loved me until they convinced me I was a loveable person. Now I love me."

Next, it follows that if we must be "restored" to sanity, we are not sane now. A great many of us have been offended by these words until we have taken a serious look at our lives. Sanity for us is being okay with ourselves and our actions, being free from despair, anger, and resentment. It means being whole. Insanity for us is the inability to make wise decisions, believing no one will understand us or has ever had our problems, keeping our feelings locked inside until we are ready to burst, wanting to continue the old habits that brought us here, assuming it was normal to live that way.

Through our thoughts, our actions, and our inaction, we have not been the people we would like to be. We are puzzled because we hurt others and ourselves. It is as though we have two personalities - the one we want and the one we have. Having the group to love us and believe in us when we can't love or believe in ourselves helps stabilize us. We can come to a meeting feeling scattered and confused, and through the love of the group, get back on an even keel. This is how we are restored to sanity.

Our awareness of that love is not always instantaneous. The feeling does not come in a package or a pill. It is sometimes gradual and must be experienced to be understood. We see that the people involved in PDAP are straight and happy. We realize the way to be like them is to follow their suggestions. We listen to our sponsors and friends. We share our problems and begin to find answers. As we open up and share ourselves and our feelings, we learn that the love of PDAP is unconditional. We find we are surrounded by people who love and accept us for ourselves - not for what they can get from us, not for what we appear to be, but simply because we are. We also learn that unconditional love does not mean approval of all our actions. We are given loving direction, whether we like it or not.

We are accepted as human beings full of human feeling and thoughts. We learn we can be human and not be judged. We deeply feel the love we express to each other. We can leave a meeting, party, or PDAP gathering and now the love is still there. Through the love of the group, we have learned to experience a Higher Power, God, in our lives as never before. We are beginning to live the happiness we have been promised.



Step Four

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand him.

The decision to give up controlling our will and our lives would be frightening if we could not trust a loving God to be in control. We have a choice between our will, which has failed to work before, and God's will, which promises peace and serenity.

When we first see the Fourth Step, many of us hesitate at the word "God." Old beliefs or lack of belief keep us from the benefits of our new sobriety or serenity. We know this step is necessary, but do not know how to get beyond our previous concept of God. Many of us believe God loves us only when we are good. Others feel abandoned or overlooked by God. Some of us see nothing wrong with our concept of God, so we balk at the need to change that relationship. Some of us have no belief in God at all.

To overcome our misconception, we remember the Higher Power we feel through the love of the group. Words like loving, compassionate, powerful, and patient begin to describe Him. He becomes someone we can trust. We realize that He will NEVER consider us unworthy of His full-time love and attention.

We begin our relationship with God on a one-to-one basis. Our prayers are simple and to the point. We honestly tell God of our decision to trust Him. Many of us have thought our prayers were unheard, but with repeated prayer, we feel the beginnings of new faith.

We learn to trust God with our powerlessness over our compulsions. By allowing God to prove that He is always reliable, we gain the confidence to trust Him in all areas.

We turn to our sponsors for guidance and attend meetings on the Fourth Step and related topics. Many of us begin to go back to church at this step. We start to see where those people were right and can help us work a stronger program.

Through these positive experiences, our trust in God grows. We continue to turn parts of our lives over to God until we feel secure in His care. We decide to live a spiritual way of life rather than an intellectual, material, or emotional way of life.

Step Four is the beginning of change. We are asked to leave the security of what we know and go to the unknown of God's will. We are asked to "give up what we are for what we can become." Instead of trying to bend the world to our wishes, we are asked to surrender, to stop fighting. We are asked to trust that God can and will bring us into harmony with the world.

At first some of us believe this step means for us to stop doing anything and leave it all to God. We soon discovered we are to do our share and let God do the rest - to take action, but leave the results in God's hands. We learn to be responsible for 100% OF OUR 1% and let God care of the 99%.

Although we may still have fear, anger and resentments, we trust that God is in control. We have allowed God to form a foundation for our lives. By turning our will and life over to the care of God, as we understand Him, we have the tools to be happy and serene.

This story illustrates what we can expect from God.



Footprints

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there were only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This bothered him, and he questioned the Lord about it.

"Lord, You said that once I decided to follow You, You'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most, You would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious Child. I love you, and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

—(Author Unknown)



Step Five

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Once we believe that a loving God is caring for us, we become willing to take action. As our faith in God's love grows, so does our desire to change. Others in the group tell us we have the tools to live a happy, sober life, free from the bondage of fear and compulsion. We find that writing a moral inventory of our lives helps clarify what we are looking for, and brings us face to face with these tools.

For many of us, there is a lot of fear. What if we find nothing within ourselves? Or what if we find that we are hopeless? But the curiosity, desire to change, and encouragement from the group demand that we find out. The cleansing of this step is a miracle. Please don't be afraid of the inventory. Look at it as an adventure and an opportunity for spiritual and emotional growth. That is very simply what it is.

At first, we see no reason for digging up old resentments, feelings, and experiences. Most of us are willing to admit we are less than perfect, yet see no reason for rocking the boat. Analyzing our past seems worthless in our new drive to be happy. Besides, some of us have spent years trying to forget our past. However, we trust our Sponsor's and friend's suggestions that we begin to write.

There are many ways to make the inventory. Some benefit from an autobiography. Others start with lists of character assets, resentments, or fears. Whatever method we choose, we sort through our memories in the same way a storekeeper takes stock of his goods. Events long forgotten are jotted beside a long list of resentments. Details of painful relationships are scattered throughout our personal accounts. We also take time to look at our strengths and assets.

Feelings surface that we have held inside for years. We sometimes feel our hidden fears and feelings are exposed for everyone to see. We begin to see how these hidden parts of our lives have haunted us in our new way of living. Sometimes the feelings are so painful that we question the benefits of this step. Our sponsors and others in the group remind us that the Twelve Steps are guaranteed to work for us, but without completing the Fifth Step, we cannot fully benefit from what the program offers.

The key to a successful inventory is a sincere effort to do a thorough job, not the perfect inspection of every nook and cranny of our lives. We are learning to use a tool for personal growth - not trying to pass an examination. We cannot remember everything that ever happened in our lives, but most of us have discovered that we will be given memories, insights, and awareness when we can deal with them and when we need them.

When we feel that we have thoroughly examined our lives, we are anxious to continue our growth. Some of us experience great feelings of relief and new freedom. We feel a glow we haven't known before. Others, however, finish our writing with no special feelings of uplift. The most we can say is that we feel a sense of accomplishment for working the step. It is not until later that we become aware of differences in our lives that result from writing the inventory.

As we continue our personal program, situations arise that require us to look at various aspects of our lives. We must fearlessly search for patterns in our relationships - with God, our parents, in our work, and with the opposite sex. Often we need to inventory just one of these aspects. Such an inventory can clear a particular obstacle to our growth.

Slowly we begin to clear away the damaging patterns and thought processes that had built walls around us. Since we have learned that half-measures avail us nothing, we determine to follow our inventory work with vigorous honesty in the Sixth Step.



Step Six

We admitted to god, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Our primary goal in the Sixth Step is lowering the barriers and defenses we have built around ourselves to keep out God and other people. After writing the inventory, we are asked to take complete responsibility for our wrongs by openly admitting them. First, because we have begun to believe in a loving God and have let go of our fear of a punishing God, we openly admit everything to Him.

Next we admit to ourselves - without excuses or justification - exactly what we have done. Finally, we take our inventory to another person and read what we have written, hiding nothing. The benefits we gain from this step are many:

- Trust
- Vulnerability
- Freedom from guilt
- Forgiveness
- Release from fear
- A sense of proportion

Many of us have hidden from God, believing we did not merit His attention. In the Sixth Step, we search our pasts and "remind" God of things we never wanted Him to know in the first place. We strengthen our trust in God by taking this risk, because we allow Him to prove does not reject or punish us - and we receive forgiveness.

It is important to develop a sense of proportion about ourselves. When we accept responsibility for our wrongs, we realize we can be responsible for change as well.

Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to another human being can be very frightening. Being honest with ourselves and with God is challenging - but not as risky as allowing another person to know the worst about us. We have a strong fear of rejection.

After writing our inventory we choose the person with whom we will share it. Usually we choose our Sponsor, taking the opportunity to become closer to this person who directs our growth. We may choose instead someone who has dealt with an important problem we faced in our inventory. Most of us find that God leads us to the best person with whom to share our inventory.

When we finish Step Six, we have changed. We have taken the risk and been accepted. God has not rejected us. We have not limited ourselves by failing to be honest. Another human being knows the worst we can share about ourselves - and continues to love us. God has proven, through the loving acceptance of another person, that He forgives us and loves us unconditionally. Things we had hidden in shame have been spoken aloud. We are not alone - others have done these things or worse, and yet have accepted themselves and changed. We have a new sense of confidence and power. Our "deepest secrets" that seemed so horrible have become ASSETS through God's redemptive love.

Silence gives power to our fear, but sharing takes its power away and releases us from the fear. Another benefit we receive is freedom from guilt. Most of us judge ourselves harshly for errors made in ignorance. We learn that much of what we have done is part of the process of living and growing. We can now share with someone else who struggles with the same problems.

In working Step Six, we have acquired some tools that allow us to choose more positive ways of living. If we continue to be honest with God, ourselves, and others, the walls that have isolated us will be destroyed. Step Seven will enable us to use what we have learned in Step Six.



Step Seven

We became willing to allow our higher power, through the love of the group, to help change our way of life and humbly asked him to help us change.

We have written a thoroughly honest inventory of our lives and shared it with another human being. We see what has caused our lives to become unmanageable. We realize that we have not been able to manage life by ourselves, nor have we been able to transform ourselves. The only way we can change our way of life is through Step Seven. Here we must reaffirm all we have learned in the first six steps: powerlessness, our need for "winners," our choice to allow God to work in our lives, and asking Him to do so.

We must be willing to change AND believe that change is necessary and possible. We believe in the healing power of the group's love for us, and that God is not only ABLE to work through these people, but that He WILL work for good in every area of our lives. We have learned to avoid the trap of blaming our situation, others, or the environment for what is wrong with us and to stop using it as an excuse to keep from changing. We no longer require people, places, or things to change in order for our own lives to be tolerable.

Becoming humble before God, we relinquish our pride and let go of things we cannot control. When we ran on our own will, our negative patterns resulted in pain and misery and caused us to be in conflict with family, friends, and ourselves. Sick and tired of the loneliness and hurt, we became willing to make whatever changes were necessary to bring true peace into our lives.

Honesty and humility are the two keys to the door of change in our lives. Honesty makes us aware of the need for change, and humility allows us to ask for the help to change. The love of the group helps us gain and maintain our contact with God. By seeing change, growth, and healing in others in the group, we know this life-changing power is available to each of us. With the help of our sponsors and friends, we have found the love, support, and direction necessary to make the change. All we have to do is ask. We must continually remember that we CANNOT make these changes alone.

Conscious and continuous reaching out to God reduces our fear of change. The more changes we grow through, the closer we become to people and to our Higher Power. Changes become simpler and more exciting. We begin to trust that any change will be a wonderful experience as time after time we face our fears and ask for the change. We decide to trust our sponsors and God, and to take action on what they suggest. This action strengthens our faith that God will give us the results best for us.

By humbling ourselves to God's will, we learn the difference between needs and wants. We no longer expect all of our wants to be fulfilled - however, we find that our Higher Power supplies many of our wants and all of our needs.

As our lives change with the help of God, our attitudes about life, people, and ourselves change. We become aware of the person we are, and that we can love and accept ourselves as well as others. Our actions and reactions to daily situations change. We cope with daily problems before they become unmanageable. We begin to experience permanent, deep changes. Our way of life changes, and we consistently do things differently than before. Happiness and peace become NORMAL REALITY rather than a dream we hopelessly pursue.

As our lives continue to change, we realize that we are changing our old patterns that were abusive to others. We learn that to continue our growth, we must be willing to make amends to these people. We are ready to take action on Steps Eight and Nine.



Step Eight

We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Up to this point in our program, we have come to realize how past actions have hurt us and others. Since we are now willing to allow our Higher Power to work in our lives, it is time to take definite action to right our past wrongs and become more God-centered. We now have a need and a desire to get right with our God and with ourselves about the past. After writing the inventory and sharing it, we prayed that God would help us change and show us H.O.W. (honesty, open-mindedness and willingness). Step Eight must now be worked so we can achieve serenity in our lives and peace with God.

Step Eight calls for us to write a list of people in our lives whom we have harmed in any way, and then become willing to amend our relationships with those people. Amends means more than saying, "I'm sorry." We must be willing to change our way of thinking about and dealing with others.

The first name of many of our lists has been our own. We reaffirm that WE harmed ourselves and must be willing to change our self-destructive behavior. In many cases, it was our self-destruction that caused pain to others, either through our chemical abuse or our fear and anger about our powerlessness. The names that come to mind vary from person to person. Some lists are long and others have only two or three names.

The key point to remember is to look for those we have hurt. There are many kinds of harmful behavior in our past. We may have harmed people physically, emotionally, spiritually, or materially. There are those of us who have robbed or embezzled thousands of dollars and others have made long distance calls on someone else's telephone. Each of us must look to our own harmful behavior.

After writing our list, we become willing to do whatever must be done to amend (fix or change) the hurt. We are aware of the burden of pain and guilt we carry because of what we have done, and we are willing to get to any lengths to change ourselves. Through working the previous steps, we have made the discovery, that it is human to make mistakes and be wrong. We don't need to be perfect, only willing to change.

It is pointless to apologize to our brother for hating him and not be willing to let go of the hate, or to pay back a grocery store for items stolen and not be rigorously honest from now on. We must be willing to change.

An important result of writing this list is that we assume responsibility for the harm we have done to others and we stop blaming them for the problem. We learn to stop looking for "fairness" and to do what we must to feel good about ourselves. We begin to experience emotional maturity.

Step Eight concentrates on making the list. We don't need to worry about what kind of amends to make. After we have made our list, we talk it over with our sponsors, then go on to Step Nine.



Step Nine

We made direct amends to such people, whenever possible, except to do so would injure them, others or ourselves.

Making direct amends means opening the doors to healing old relationships and actually changing the habits and behavior patterns that caused the harm in the first place.

There are many ways to make amends. They all call for the humility to admit our wrongs. In some cases, an apology and a sincere effort to change are enough. In others, the action of change is all that can be done. Paying back stolen property or money is a long-term amend for many of us. Opening the doors to injured relationships with our parents, children or families can be risky as we put aside our fears, risk their rejection, and humbly ask their forgiveness.

"Whenever possible" means in God's own time: immediately, when opportunity presents itself, or never. Forgiving ourselves is sometimes the only choice God gives us in making amends.

"Except when to do so would injure them, others or ourselves" frequently requires guidance from a Winner who has successfully worked this step. This is why it is important to go over the list with our Sponsor before beginning Step Nine.

If you have engaged in character assassination behind your friend's back, telling him or her all about the garbage you spread is not making amends. It is hurting them more. It's the people you gossiped with that you need to go to and admit your wrong and seek to mend the hurt. Then love your friend and never do it again!

If we have harmed our children through our mistakes, we can talk to them about our awareness or our wrongs and let them know how we really feel about them, and how much joy they have brought to our lives - and then live the changes we need to make.

Admission of past infidelities to your wife or husband is frequently a damaging action, especially if they didn't know about it. On the other hand, if they did know something was going on, an admission of wrong may be exactly what is needed. Check out your situation with someone else.

We are not required to make any amends that may endanger our lives or freedom. But we may be unable to make such decisions for ourselves. We should talk it over with someone who has been in the same position and handled it successfully.

The first time we complete this step, we are "cleaning up the wreckage of the past" or doing some much needed "housecleaning." This step is sometimes said to be the one that separates the sheep from the goats. People who are not committed to a new way of life find themselves unable to rigorously, completely work this step. Those who can work it though, can expect some truly wonderful things to happen in their lives.

The lives of those around us who have walked this path prove that some basic, solid changes can and do occur. We will experience absolute freedom: freedom from guilt and regret about past, freedom from self-centered living, freedom from fear of the future and financial insecurity, freedom from feelings of despair and self-pity, freedom from fear of rejection and the judgments of other people. We will understand in a new and deep way the reality of happiness, serenity, and peace. We will see how sharing our experiences, love, and understanding can heal others. We will cope. We will realize that God heals us when we cannot heal ourselves. These changes will always happen if we are truly committed to working the steps as a way of life.



Step Ten

We have continued to look at ourselves and when wrong, promptly admitted it.

Once we have become aware of our past life patterns, ask God to help us change, and make amends to ourselves and others, we feel absolutely free - for awhile. It doesn't take us long to find out that though we have made progress, we have not achieved perfection. We need the Tenth Step to maintain our freedom from inner conflict.

We can only maintain spiritual and emotional growth by continuing to look at ourselves honestly. Often we do not clearly see the games we play and the self-destructive patterns that hinder us. Several methods are usual for increasing our self-awareness.

Sponsorship is invaluable for teaching us to be honest and vulnerable with one person. We gain the insight of that person's perspective. Sharing our feelings and experience with others in the group, either at meetings or one-to-one - and listening to them in return - teaches us to relate to others and learn from them. Counseling, either from PDAP counselors or from another professional, increases our understanding and helps us resolve difficult conflicts and situations.

Reading positive self-help literature increases our scope of awareness and understanding. We also do brief daily inventories, either written or mental, to develop the habit of facing uncomfortable feelings and difficult situations. These inventories also help us cultivate gratitude and appreciation for all the positive aspects of our daily lives.

At this point, many of us concentrate on improving our self-image through a written inventory of our assets, positive values, and good feelings. Sharing our good and our personal beauty with our sponsors reinforces these qualities in us.

Promptly admitting our wrongs, we find, becomes easier as we begin to trust God and accept the love of those in the group.

We also learn not to expect certain responses from those to whom we admit our mistakes. This keeps us from being disappointed and helps us to practice unconditional love.

No one likes to say "I was wrong," but being able to admit fault is necessary to our emotional and spiritual health, and to our sobriety or peace of mind.

When we allowed resentments to build up inside, we hurt ourselves more than anyone else. Therefore, we learn to deal with our anger and resentments, our misdeeds, and our dishonesty through the love of God and of the people in this program.

Admitting our wrongs, though initially painful, brings us closer to God and to other people, remove our misguided thoughts, and frees us to improve our conscious contact with God through the Eleventh step.



Step Eleven

We have sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our higher power, whom we have chose to call god, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the courage to carry that out.

In working the steps, we have come to understand God as a loving and protective force in our lives. With this newly developed faith in a Higher Power, whom we call God, comes the desire to know and communicate with Him more fully. We wish to become God-centered rather than self-centered. We know only too well where our self-will has taken us in the past.

In the Eleventh Step, we seek to deepen and strengthen our personal relationship with God and to maintain the closeness and trust we have already achieved. Prayer and meditation are a means to this end. We rid ourselves of old notions about prayer and meditation, and learn not to complicate it.

Prayer is talking to God. Every good relationship depends on frequent, intimate, and honest sharing. Our friendship with God is no exception. After all, who would trust the care and guidance of our lives to a stranger? To learn that God is our friend, we talk to Him. We can do this anytime, anyplace, and it need not be long and drawn out. One word, "Help," is even enough.

"Hitting our knees" in the morning and again at night is more effective than a fast "Hi and Bye" which neither helps us to grow really close nor even to maintain a good contact. Even this is meaningless, however, without the right attitude to go with the action.

What sort of attitude? We surrender ourselves to our loving God. Trusting to His wisdom, we pray for knowledge of His will for us and the courage to carry it out.

As in any good relationship, there is a time for talking and a time for listening. In meditation, we listen to God. This is often harder than it sounds. So much of our life is involved in self-centered thought, that forgetting ourselves and listening to someone else can take some getting used to.

For example: Take thirty seconds and try not to think of anything. Do you hear the roar of voices in your head? In meditation, we wish to open our minds and hearts to the experience of God, but to do so we must still our own inner chatter and static long enough to allow God's voice to be heard. This, we find, takes some practice.

As with anything else in our lives, patience and faith are needed. We pray for the courage and strength to do His will and soon find that we, too, can meditate. Many of us have been greatly helped in this area by our clergy or someone else of strong faith.

We grow from the experience of our daily prayer and meditation. Our commitment to God deepens. As our faith and trust in Him increase, we surrender ourselves more fully, secure in the knowledge that He loves and cares for us, and His will for us is what we desire most. Our lives become God-centered, and we know true peace and happiness.



Step Twelve

We, having had spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, try to carry our love and understanding to others, and practice these principles in our daily lives.

We who have worked the Twelve Steps have formed a close personal relationship with our Higher Power, whom most of us choose to call God. Though in the beginning some of us had no God, we have gradually become aware that there is a Power greater than ourselves. Our spiritual awakening happened one step at a time. Through the steps, we have learned how to be happy and to love ourselves. This makes it easier to believe in a God who can love us and care deeply about us. Through the experience of working the Twelve Steps, we have seen evidence that this loving God is completely involved in our daily lives.

The Twelfth Step is often called the icing on the cake. This is the fun step and the real reward of the program.

Filled with gratitude for the serenity, joy, and love we have found, we have a strong desire to share these things with others. We are willing to do almost anything to help others get what we have. This may mean sharing our experiences and feelings, answering a phone in the middle of the night, or driving out of our way to give someone a ride to a meeting.

Sometimes what is asked of us seems more than we can handle, but we have learned not to worry because God will provide what we lack. We have also learned that what we have must be given away in order for us to keep it. Some of us have adopted the attitude that we will always say "yes" when we are asked to do something for the group or for another person.

Sometimes a newcomer is amazed by the love and good feelings we want to share with him, but we know that soon he will be able to share the same things with others.

We have learned that happiness comes about by having close contact with God and by helping, loving, and sharing with others.

By practicing love and honesty in our daily lives, we have freed ourselves from guilt, pain, addiction, and many other negative forces. This means the simple honesty of obeying the speed limit and feeling good about yourself for doing it. It means being kind to the grouch next door and liking yourself for it. It means giving a hug to someone in your family or being honest about your feelings. It may mean sharing the message of PDAP with someone who doesn't know about it.

These steps have given us the ability to handle the hard knocks of living and come up smiling. That is why we choose to live by these principles at all times. To choose anything else would mean instant suffering, and we are no longer willing to live that kind of life.



Appendices

- I. The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous
- II. The Twelve Steps of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program
- III. The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous
- IV. The Twelve Traditions of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program



The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

“Alcoholics Anonymous”
pp. 59-60



The Twelve Steps of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program

1. We admitted that mind-changing chemicals had caused at least part of our lives to become unmanageable.
2. We found it necessary to "Stick with Winners" in order to grow.
3. We realized that a Higher Power, expressed through our love for each other, can help restore us to sanity.
4. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him.
5. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
6. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
7. We became willing to allow our Higher Power, through the love of the group, to help change our way of life and humbly asked Him to help us change.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people, whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them, others or ourselves.
10. We have continued to look at ourselves and when wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We have sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, whom we have chosen to call God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. We, having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, try to carry our love and understanding to others, and to practice these principals in our daily lives.

Adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous
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The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A. as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

“Alcoholics Anonymous”
p. 564



The Twelve Traditions of the Palmer Drug Abuse Program

1. Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends on PDAP unity.
2. The primary requirement for membership is a desire to live a chemical free life.
3. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of love and understanding to substance abusers and their families.
4. The right to personal confidentiality must be respected at the public level.
5. The symbol of abstinence from mind-changing chemicals is the monkey's fist. Commitment to Family Group is symbolized by the Heart.
6. PDAP is non-sectarian. We are however, a spiritually oriented program that recognizes God as its Central Authority
7. PDAP never endorses or opposes any cause. It does not finance or lend its name to any outside enterprise.
8. For the purpose of continuity, PDAP is a structured program administered by a salaried staff operating by authority of a board of trustees.
9. Each PDAP city operates as an autonomous entity, except in matters that may affect PDAP as a whole.
10. Policies may be established by each city's board of trustees and implemented by the staff, except when to do so would affect PDAP as a whole.
11. PDAP is a non-profit organization that charges no dues or fees for its services and is dedicated to helping people recover from the effects of mind-changing chemicals.
12. Unconditional Love is the spiritual foundation of our program, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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