

RELATIONSHIPS

We recovering addicts seem to have a lot of problems in the area of relationships. Well, we should! After all we have always had trouble getting honest or staying honest just as much as we have trouble staying clean. There is a horrible feeling that used to come over me which was like a dread of the reaction people always had to me after we got past the introductions. I just knew they wouldn't like me and they usually didn't. They might feel sorry for me but they usually had to be some what in bad shape themselves for us to have much in common or to talk about.

In recovery it took a while for me to catch on to the fact that personality change is a reality in N.A. Daily we change for the better clean. All of us do. And as we change, the things we used to say and do and think about change. Once we get past withdrawal and the fog begins to lift a little, we generally develop an interest in the opposite sex.

I'm one of the members who had a lot of trouble sorting out what the Program had to say about this subject. Even more, I was concerned that a sort of double standard might exist and that people would talk spiritual principles and creep of in the night to do things they were really ashamed to share or talk about. I have since become acquainted with the ~~fact that~~ twenty four hour a day program which means to me that every single thought and feeling I have is monitored by yours truly and that if I want to be happy and clean in this program anything I do which makes me feel funny is best left undone.

I saw some members get in relationships and not have too much trouble and others who just got miserable, almost immediately. I found that the program recommends honesty in these matters. I had to get to know me a little better; the new clean me, before there was much chance of having a stable relationship. I was in the greatest period of change I've ever been through. Since I was constantly growing and experimenting with the clean life in a sort of fascinated way, the person I presented to others was constantly changing. I would be on one wavelength one day and quite another a week later. Fortunately I didn't let myself get drawn into any side issues like dating for the first six months. This had its frustrations but left me with a lot of energy to attend meetings with. I really wanted a change more than ~~an~~ I had wanted anything else in my life. I read a lot, asked a lot of questions and spent a lot of time with other members talking program. Some said that you shouldn't get into a relationship for the first year. This seemed to put a certain strain on reality for me. I repeated this advise to a newcomer once who simply said he came to get clean and wasn't interested in giving up his interest in the opposite sex. He was too ~~knew~~ to explain the in's and out's to and I never saw him again so I haven't repeated the advise. I know how vulnerable our people are when they first get clean and my heart aches when they hurt but I can't spare them all their pain. Pain is what got them here and one of the surest ways to get an addict to do something is to tell them not to or its bad for them. People I sponsor, I tell to just say the words, "I have to put my recovery first" with some frequency and if they ever get uncomfortable about saying it, they are in trouble. This has worked.

Today, I feel that relationships and all that goes with them are simply a part of living. Most addicts recover at their own rate and that's miracle enough for me. A good sponsor can help avoid the more prominent pitfalls. Just having a sponsor you feel good about is a mark of a sincere desire for recovery. A relationship with a good sponsor is one of the most important relationships we can have in recovery.

The most important relationship and the one I have always had to put first in my life clean is the reverence and love I have for my Higher Power. The rest follows. I believe ideal relationships are for idealists and N.A. has made me at least a little more practical than I used to be.