

It Couldn't Happen to Me

Eighteen months ago I had my last drink, I pray. Prior to that time, I would have rather jumped off a bridge than have to admit to myself, let alone to the readers of this column, that I was an alcoholic. The stigma that I perceived to be attached to this disease was sufficient to sink me deeper into denial. Additionally, I could not have a drinking problem -- I was not the type of person I imagined an alcoholic to be: a daily drinker, a street derelict, a washed out, weak willed sod.

In my recovery, I have learned that it does not matter what I did for a living, how smart I thought I was, how often I drank or how much. The bottom line was what the drink did to me.

I had always associated drinking with fun. It allowed me to relax, celebrate, and escape temporarily from stress and to create a high spot in an otherwise dull day. Because I drank periodically, I thought I was a social drinker. However, almost every time I took a drink, I wanted more. One drink was not enough. So, often when I did take a drink, I would get inebriated to some degree. Once I picked up the first drink, I could not guarantee the outcome. "Stopping for one" was a figment of my best intentions.

During the last four years of my drinking, I used alcohol more frequently to cope with the ups and downs of life. My hangovers became worse. Fear, guilt and remorse, which used to visit me on "the day after," became more frequent companions. Motivation and productivity at work lessened. More and more I isolated myself from people. My wall was up. I did not know that I was suffering from the disease of alcoholism. As it often times is, I was the last to know.

It was difficult for me to take what appeared at the time to be a humiliating step: to admit that I was powerless over alcohol. However, by taking that first step, by honestly facing myself, I began a new life, a much better life. I surrendered to win. Freedom, peace of mind, and a newfound happiness are just a few of the promises of sobriety, which are coming into being in my life, one day at a time.

For those of you who think you have a problem with drinking and/or drugs, there is a solution. For confidential assistance, call Pat Spataro, NYSBA LAP Director, at 1-800-255-0569.