

ESH: Experience, Strength, and Hope
The Newsletter of San Diego County Debtors Anonymous

Winter 2005

Oct./Nov./Dec.

Life Raft

When my life feels like its working, I notice that I've been to two or three meetings weekly. When folks share about returning to the rooms, my heart jumps with the hurt they have experienced and with my fear. I keep coming to meetings because the alternative is too hard to contemplate. My life has daily reminders of my willfulness and unmanageability. As long as I show up and do the thing in front of me my life raft remains above water. Meetings keep me connected to the legacy of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. I know that when I show up willing, the most unlikely person will say something that I can hear and apply in my life. Meetings give me an opportunity to listen to wisdom. There is something in every meeting—when I listen with a careful heart.

My willful impatience often trips me up. Sometimes I forget to bring back a D.A. audiotape. I've listened to the same tape over and over in the car. I think I've memorized the speakers, I think I want something new and fresh, and I forget to bring the tape back to exchange it. Oh well! Another week on the road with a taped meeting, a share I've heard—again. And then, if I'm lucky, another miracle happens and I hear something fresh and new. My heart listens to wisdom that just wasn't available to the busy me. I become grateful for the willingness of others to share their experience, strength, and hope. For a brief moment I get it. I hear what I need for my recovery. Oh yeah, and then I get

busy and forget. So I go to meetings. I try to listen with an open heart. I am always surprised and frequently grateful. I have a life raft.

Cait

Grateful Debtor

For over six years I have been with an awesome fellowship and met many comrades in Debtors Anonymous. When I began I grudgingly walked through the doors looking for a quick fix yet unaware of what positive affects I would experience in this program. My pursuit of serenity and peace has led me to D.A., linked me with special people and taken me places I couldn't have dreamed. Free choice has hindered my growth at times yet the D.A. Tools were always there when I was ready to recover further. The Twelve Steps are a guide for living a healthy and prosperous life. Most times what's needed is for me to step out of the way, regardless of what I want, and allow things to happen.

There are different paths and Tools to use in D.A. that have led me to a more fulfilling life. I have used the phones, received pressure relief meetings and given pressure relief meetings. I've participated in many D.A. functions like dances, potlucks, variety shows, auctions and fundraisers. I've asked for and followed through with suggestions from other members, tried to live using the Twelve Steps as my guide, searched through meditation to get closer to a Higher Power. For me, much recovery came in the form of service. There is

Grateful Debtor continued

something about doing something for others, without expectations of what one gets in return that is difficult to put into words. It was surprising that I received unexpected gifts in the process of doing service for others.

I started my service with accepting a literature position at my home meeting. Leaving things a little better from where I started, felt great! I faced some fears when I volunteered to be the San Diego Intergroup Treasurer. It was not always fun but it was an important learning experience that helped me with my own financial issues. Afterward, I took on the General Service Representative (G.S.R.) position for the Saturday Visions meeting. It was an amazing experience to learn more about how the fellowship functions worldwide. I am currently the Intergroup Service Representative for San Diego County. I'm looking forward to doing more D.A. work with other G.S.R.s and Intergroup Service Representatives (I.S.R.s) I have met in different parts of the country. My vision is to one day be on the D.A. World Service Board and be part of making D.A. even better.

When I came into the D.A. fellowship I would sit in the back of a meeting unable to put together a coherent thought. There were feelings of anger, helplessness, loneliness and confusion. Since then I have gained self-esteem, confidence, clarity, serenity, friendship and hope. Coming to that first D.A. meeting was one of the best things I did in my life. It's a wonderful feeling to know there are meetings and people to turn to all over the world. Places where others understand, a fellowship that will

help another member in times of crisis, an organization where no one need ever be alone.

Sincerely,
Thomas J.

My Eleventh Step

When does prayer and
meditation end
And life begin?

A ceiling of Least Terns overhead
Screeching
This is my meditation

The sand glistening under the
Ebb and flow
Of the ocean
This is my prayer

The caress of air against
Skin
Like a whisper
This is my meditation

Salt mist in the air
From ocean spray
This is my prayer

When does prayer and
meditation end
And life begin?

Irene H.
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My ESH

For many years I had no idea how spiritually bankrupt I was. I couldn't even imagine a life without struggle. But the very moment I admitted out loud that I was powerless over my life and that only a Higher Power could save me from myself, I knew the meaning of *hope* for the first time.

What I carried for so long was now God's responsibility. He would close the old account and open a new one in partnership with Him where I now rest, and rejoice and am experiencing true recovery.

Karen

Recovery, One Day at a Time

Our first Step in the D.A. Program is: “We admitted we were powerless over debt and our lives had become unmanageable.”

And the A.A. Big Book, on page 45 states: “Lack of power. That was our dilemma.” I had no power at all regarding money and my debting, and I finally surrendered. I didn't know how to handle either; I didn't know if I even wanted to know. I wanted OUT from all the fear and the fog, and I didn't know if there was a way out. But I did have hope, because in my case, I already trusted the 12 Steps.

So I kept coming to meetings, and I found the Tools. I “kept my numbers”—that is, I wrote down every day what I spent that day, and on what. It seemed

such an absurd idea. But it worked. I had a little power.

I “book-ended”—made telephone calls before and after difficult actions regarding money. When I finally cut up my credit cards after four months, I made the phone calls, in cold sweat. But thanks to the D.A. person on the other end of the line, it worked. Today, eight years later, I still pay only cash or checks, even for trips, and my \$25,000-debt is more than half paid off. Without deprivation. Wow.

I went to a committed Step Study for two years after every Thursday night regular meeting, to work through my money issues, and as I let them go, I really began to lose the fear.

Pressure Relief Groups (PRGs) were a big (and loving) help—my PRG-people, whom I chose, showed me how to make my monthly Spending Plan, not a budget. (That word had connotations, for me, that I didn't like). My PRG also helped me by suggesting that I could “pay myself first”—put aside some money at the beginning of the month, for my Prudent Reserve. Today, I, who had never thought savings were possible, have that reserve—no matter how little. Without debting.

But recently, I've found I have some confusion in the “visions” area. I understand the reason for my “vision”, I think: I need to focus on goals for my spending; that acknowledging my wants and needs is an important part of showing responsibility for myself and my money.

The problems arise because I seem to have too many options, which my

Recovery, One Day at a Time *continued*

sponsor tells me is ok—that I can consider this as not a time to act. That I can wait for the information to sort itself out, or, figure out what I don't want. More power. (A sponsor who's been there).

In the meantime, I can perform service, being group secretary or Intergroup chair, which I've done in the past. Or, I can simply show up and remind newcomers that they too can be happy, joyous, and free—one day at a time, and that the Tools really do work.

A loving D.A. member

D.A. Fellowship Day Workshop

Sunday, October 2, San Diego D.A. Intergroup is sponsoring a workshop to address unity in Debtors Anonymous. A panel will discuss their ESH concerning D.A.'s 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. Just as the 12 Steps are guides for personal recovery and the 12 Traditions are guides for group unity, the 12 Concepts are guides for World Service.

The San Diego county I.S.R. and group G.S.R.s will give their reports from this year's 19th annual World Service Conference, which was held at Mt. Laurel, New Jersey.

I hope that you will be able to join us to learn more about D.A., and if you need a quick Pressure Relief Meeting (PRM), this is a great time for it! Round Robin PRMs will be offered!

Make note on your calendar.

Sunday, October 2, 2005

1:30-4:15 P.M.

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church
16275 Pomerado Road, Poway

This is a fundraiser for the I.S.R. to attend the World Service Conference in 2006.

The requested donation is \$7.00, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Contact Barb at (858) 451-3995 for further details.

The following meetings need extra ESH with your attendance and support:

Sunday Afternoon, 4:30-5:30 P.M.

Open Sharing Meeting

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church
16275 Pomerado Road, Poway
Contact: Barb, (858) 451-3995

Sunday Evening, 5:00-6:15 P.M.

Temecula Valley Visions Meeting

Inland Valley Medical Center
36485 Inland Valley Road, Temecula
Contact: Winnie, (951) 242-1065

Tuesday Evening, 6:30-7:30 P.M.

Spenders in Recovery

Serenity Shop
4740 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard
Contact: Irene, (619) 528-9584

Saturday Morning, 8:30-9:30 A.M.

Fallbrook Visions Meeting

Hilltop Center
331 East Elder, Fallbrook
Contact: Colleen, (760) 731-6116



Abundance

A D.A. Sonnet – a Shakespeare Sonnet Revised

Shall I compare thee to a rented castle on a summer's day?
Thou art more luxurious and spacious
Rough winds may shake the darling Venetian blinds
And summer's rental lease hath all too short a date.
Sometimes too strong the kingdom's eye of abundance shines.
And often is his gold complexion of prosperity dimmed.
And every beautiful kingdom palace sometime erodes
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy external summer of prosperity shall not fade.
Nor shall bankruptcy brag thy wanderest in thy shade
And in eternal lines to time thou growest.
So long as men can breathe and eyes can see money doesn't grow on trees.
So long lives this and this gives prosperous lives to thee.

David

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Note: I'd also like to add how certain members of the D.A. fellowship were around when I needed help. The Pressure Relief Groups were a major lifesaver as well. I've come to understand that my life is a work in progress and that the meetings need to be consistent in order for me to stay solvent. I agree with what one D.A. member says, that money flows like water. The trouble is it evaporates too quickly.

Hi, I'm Irene, a compulsive spender in recovery and your Editor.

Thank you so much to our contributors to this, our very first issue of *ESH: The Newsletter of San Diego County Debtors Anonymous*. I look forward to approaching many other D.A. members in the future so we all can read their very important stories of Experience, Strength, and Hope.

If you have D.A. announcements that you would like published in the newsletter, please send them to our Webmaster at info@dasandiego.org.

Irene