

525,600 SOBER MINUTES LATER

I WOKE UP DRENCHED WITH MY OWN SWEAT, SHIVERING and disoriented. The drug dealer was passed out on the floor, and I was in his bed. Judging from the glob of stuff caught in my throat, the eight lost hours, and the troubled look in the resident dog's eyes, I must have overdosed. The solution came quickly: more drugs, more denial, more insanity. Dressed for a late-spring day (instead of for the blizzard outside), I left the dealer's house and wandered the streets in foot-deep snow, seeking yet another stranger's den to scurry into in an attempt to avoid the impending crash and despair.

This was one of the last times I "went out." That I now have a little more than a year of continuous sobriety is a testament to many things: meetings, the support of the Crystal Meth Anonymous fellowship, my sponsor's guidance, Step work, therapy, recovery books and other program literature, meditation, and daily practice at being honest, open-minded, and willing. Though I can easily list the actions I've taken to stay clean, I still don't know exactly why it is that I'm sober today—why I had that moment when I realized that I was the one causing all of the harm and that I didn't have to keep living my life as a victim.

Was it luck, fate, grace? It could have been any of those, I suppose, but I no longer need to convince myself that I understand everything. Instead, I'm learning to focus on the deep sense of gratitude I feel toward my sobriety. Learning to not get so caught up in semantics and old notions has helped my recovery. I am grateful for Step Two regarding this, because it challenged me to let down my defenses and let go of baggage associated with words like *God* and *faith*. In doing so, I've begun releasing myself from the intense shame that prevented me from fostering an understanding of my Higher Power, which reveals itself more every day.

There aren't any hard and fast answers to this stuff for me. I only know what works and what doesn't. Being willful and wallowing in self-pity doesn't work. What does work for me is to trust that no matter what happens, I will be taken care of—as long as I don't pick up. At just more than a year sober, I am hardly cured. I can't even say that I've "gotten it." On the contrary, I know that my serenity and sanity depend on remaining

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humble and honest, as well as continuing to work on my program of daily action. I have issues and hardships like everyone else, but I don't have to get high because of them. —*Mike R.*