

SURRENDER, FAITH, AND TRUST

SOBRIETY IS A ROAD FULL OF SURPRISES. OBSTACLES present themselves, and the instinct to flee or bury my head in the sand can be strong. In sobriety, I've experienced a few life challenges, such as a painful breakup, the loss of friends, and a recurring debilitating illness. My addiction credits these as proof this program does not work. Sometimes I still hold on to the delusion that life is supposed to be easy and staying sober means problems should vanish.

Initially the most important thing I needed to do was eliminate using crystal meth as an option. Once I'd accepted that drugs just no longer worked for me, I started to notice how much worse things got for people who relapsed. It was difficult when I lost a budding sober friendship or witnessed the self-destruction of a person with whom I counted days. One of the first things I heard in sobriety was that this disease leads to "jails, institutions, and death." I thought this was just a scare tactic. Sadly, however, the warning predicted the fate of several friends: John, Brian, Shari, and Rob. I have also experienced some sober friends going to jail because of the unmanageability of their active days.

With using no longer an option, I had to learn how to have healthy relationships and set boundaries. When I came to the rooms, I was reluctant to let people get close because of my self-centered fear of getting hurt. But counting days with my new friends in early sobriety became my lifeline.

I was able to let go of my fear after working the Fourth and Fifth Steps. Somewhere on my new path, I started to accept that life is not always fair. "The courage to change the things I can" became a mantra of empowerment. Faith became a stronger force in my life. I learned to let go of fear and accept any losses one day at a time. This daily practice is no insurance against pain. But now I think of challenges and losses as reminders of what would happen if I were to give up.

Over time, I began to trust people. I started to believe in myself. Feelings of uselessness and self-pity turned into "how can I help someone today" and "what can I do in this life to be of service?" I've been lucky enough to return to school, so I can realize a lifelong ambition that I was

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too afraid to pursue for many years. I know that as long as I stay sober things can change for the better.

Through living and practicing the Steps, my attitude has slowly changed: I stopped looking for reasons to use and came to trust that obstacles in sobriety eventually become points of reference that build confidence and trust. It is a slow, ongoing process that has changed my outlook on life. For me, sobriety is the key to freedom. —*Marcelo A.*