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Season 02. Episode 07 – Part 1

## Q&A About AA.

This article which we'll call Q&A about AA, we will share some truths and bust some myths about Alcoholics Anonymous so that those who love an addict or an alcoholic are better equipped to make decisions that will help the family understand what AA promises, what it does and what it cannot and should not do.

First, we need to dispel some myths. The word anonymous is not about secrecy, it's about privacy, because back in the day, and even today, alcoholics have needed a safe place where they can share their stories without fearing that they will be outed and have it cause damage to their relationships, careers or standing in their communities. Fact is, there is still a stigma associated with having this disorder, sad to say.

What is off-putting to those not acquainted with AA is the concept of being powerless over alcohol and that you need to totally surrender your old ideas of having any personal willpower to control your drinking.

Another one gets to people. The myth that's there's a cure this is something that never ever goes away.

Another idea is that we should have a sponsor who acts as a tour guide and mentor to keep us on the path. Because, there's nothing like having someone who's had

experience at attaining and keeping sobriety to help you through the early going when alcoholics are just getting started on an unfamiliar path.

How about the idea that one drink is too many and a thousand is not enough?

Once you start, you cannot stop until you hit a wall or run out of money or get thrown in jail. It's the first drink that gets you going to where you cannot stop, so that's all you have to watch for.

You don't need to stop forever, just don't drink today, because it's always today. A radical idea made famous by Eckhart Tolle who wrote *The Power of Now...* a way of thinking that has saved the sanity of many a recovering person. That is what One Day at A Time is all about. Tomorrow is just an idea and has no reality of its own, and so if you pledge to not drink forever, you are creating an impossible barrier. You can always not drink today.

How about the critical importance of watching your thoughts and not carrying guilt unnecessarily... the concept of the 10<sup>th</sup> step says we should promptly admit when we are wrong as a way of keeping us on the good side of society.

I'm going to share my personal insights and conclusions from working the AA program for the last 26 plus years. I have over time absorbed enough of the teaching of AA – and I have to say here – it's all out there in the open, and available if you like at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) and by virtue of a bunch of AA literature as well as publications by other respected organizations like Hazelden/Betty Ford Institute – that I now try to live the AA way of life...sounds like brainwashing, right?

When I made that charge early in sobriety to my counsellor. “Why that sounds like brainwashing.” She replied: “Well, Bruno, your brain is dirty; it needs to be washed”.

My young friend Tony, now sober for four years, says this: “See, there are 12 steps and they are all about us becoming honest, rational and compassionate people. So, without going into a lot of detail on each step in the process, which we continue to work since this is a lifelong endeavour on the joyful road of self-discovery, this is what

I observe and believe:

I believe that there are many perfectly normal wonderful people who live their lives according the principles of honesty, integrity, unselfishness, compassion and accountability quite naturally and intuitively.

But addicts and alcoholics have to be taught those principles because either they never had them, or they lost and/or violated them during their wanton using and drinking days.”

So, you know of course what our #1 defining characteristic is...besides our abuse of substances. It's extreme self-centeredness, which then means that 10% of our problem is our drinking and 90% is our thinking.

My view is that drinking or abusing drugs explains much of our bad, selfish behaviour, but wait, it doesn't excuse it...we still have to hold ourselves accountable like grown-ups and make direct, proper amends.

Here's what I concluded a while ago, as a student of the process: that there is liberation in discipline and victory in surrender...no way would I have ever thought those kinds of thoughts before I threw in the towel and accepted help.

There is pain in resistance, a Buddhist thought, and that acceptance of reality as it is, as opposed to what you would like it to be, is absolutely critical to peace of mind.

A big part of resistance I had initially was to the concept of a higher power, but then when I grasped the idea that it was any power outside of my limited personal resources – like using the group as my higher power, or the principles as outlined by AA – then I realized I could stop having to fight this thing on my own.

Here is another radical idea: the fact that you can come and go and not even drop any money in the basket to cover the rent of a church basement or some other facility where meetings can be held? Isn't that an invitation to anarchy? And yet...

AA is a true democracy without a leader...2 million members worldwide and our basic text now published in 34 languages and more each year. OK, big question: would I have stayed sober and grown as a person without being part of AA? Not at all likely. I got the chance to live an inspired and joyful life.

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