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Season 06. Episode 06

## Podcast Title: A dialogue with Adam and Tony on vital matters - Part 1

This is episode 6 (Part 1 of 2) of season 6.

This interview with Adam and Tony, two young men recovering from alcohol and drug abuse, reveals what it was like, what happened and what it's like now.

The occasion for this interview, actually a dialogue between the two, was Adam's two-year anniversary, or "birthday", and it consisted of the narrative of Adam's journey from the depths of despair to a new life of promise. Tony and he shared their experience, strength and hope to help those who love their still -suffering addict or alcoholic, whether the addict is in treatment or is otherwise attempting to live a clean and sober life. The point is that there is plenty of suffering to go around, but that most of it is unnecessary. Tony, with over four

years of sobriety under his belt, is ideally suited to help guide Adam on the recollections of his journey.

Adam: " I never did like the way I felt from the time I was a kid. I resented my father for never giving me the attention I thought I deserved. I carried this unjustified resentment for many many years, and it poisoned my outlook on life and it almost destroyed my relationship with my father.

I say unjustified because my father worked hard supporting his family of three children along with my mom and never ever abused anyone. We lived a nice middle-class life. He did the best he could. And yet, in my infantile eyes, he wasn't paying enough attention to little old me.

I was always looking to change the way I felt because I didn't like reality. So, I turned to the stupid things kids do to get high, like sniffing glue.

It was a long and twisting road from there to the life of relative contentment that I experience today. Along with living a responsible life. I am still learning".

Tony: "It's great when you are simply happier every day and not depressed or anxious, or full of rage. You become clear-headed, enjoying the gift of recovery".

Adam: " I was chained to drugs. Today, I appreciate the little things which become big things. I am no longer apart from. I am now part of a community that teaches me how to live a full and joyful life. I have overcome the guilt and shame that haunted my every waking hour.

We shift from who we were to who we are today.

The big change I see now is in rebuilding the relationship with my family, relationships which I left in tatters. I am still recovering the trust I had destroyed through the many years of abusing drugs and

drinking to excess. I missed a nephew's christening because I was too busy partying with my so-called buddies.

Although I still experience anger, I no longer act on those feelings. I am the one responsible for my feelings, not other people. In other words, I cannot blame another person for making me angry. That said, I am also not responsible for what others think, feel or do. My job is to keep my side of the street clean.

It really wasn't until I surrendered to my own powerlessness over my addiction that I started to come out of the darkness. It was in the total acceptance of the principles of the 12 steps of Alcoholics and, in my case, Narcotics Anonymous. Also known as AA and NA.

That's just me, and I know there are other ways of getting and staying clean and sober, which AA also recognizes. I was able, through the act of surrendering my old way of thinking and accepting a whole new way of thinking and being, to begin the process of recovering my sanity.

The healing includes enjoying the embrace of my sister who now lets me play with her kids, when it wasn't too long ago that she felt her kids were unsafe with me around".

Tony: " It goes back to the whole process. We do not notice that we are changing, but those close to us do. We have to remember that we were oblivious to our own behaviour. And yet here we are in the process of recovery, beginning to understand the effect we had on other people lives."

Adam: " I am still learning that it's Ok to ask for help. I am trying to keep it simple. Just as you say, Tony, the ball is in my court now. Staying in the day, just for today helped get me sober and keeps me sober because I know I can do that today. I do not have to obsess about the future or beat myself up for what happened in the past. I have made my amends and providing I don't go back to my old

behaviour; I can be at peace much of the time. Serenity is a beautiful thing. It's Ok to live this way, as I am now rebuilding my family ties and the trust that goes with it.

What's cool is that now my ambition has returned. I feel as if my creativity and appetite for living life has been re-kindled. I feel liberated from the slavery of my addictions.

I need do not fear the future as I once did because then I could only see the dark side of it, while the guilt and shame pervaded my days and nights. I had a conscience, but I violated it anyway. I was in the involuntary grip of this disease and didn't know it at the time".

Tony: "But we are all taught that being in the iron grip of addictive disease does not excuse our behaviour either, right"?

Adam: " I wish. Or I did for a while. We are still obliged to literally make a list of all, I mean all, the people we have harmed, and make direct amends to all of them, not just the easy 'I am sorry'. If it means paying them back the money we stole or extorted, so be it. It's big boy time".

Tony: "That was one the hardest part of the 12 steps for me. Accountability was a new concept for me at first. Now it has become a cornerstone of my life because it is defined by rigorous honesty.

Adam, thank you sharing this part of your story. Your personal honesty is most refreshing and since it reveals truths about your struggle, your story I'm sure will help those who care about their loved ones who might still be out there, as we say.

Next time we talk, you can go back a little and shine the light on the key moments of insight, what you learned about yourself and what you learned about healing from the effects of our common disorder".

Adam: " There were certain moments when the lights did come on suddenly and brightly, and I hope I never forget them, so, yes, I'll be

happy to share these moments with you, and with the people who care about their loved ones who are still suffering."

We learned about the conversation with Adam and Tony that:

1. In early sobriety, we ourselves don't notice that we are changing for the better, but the people close to us do. It takes consistent, sober and good behaviour to have people begin to trust us again.
2. It's not unusual for active addicts to create and sustain unjustified resentments, because unrecovered addicts are extremely self-centred and tend to blame others for their woes.
3. Holding oneself accountable and making amends are among the greatest challenges that recovering addicts and alcoholics encounter on their journey. As Adam says: "It's big boy time. Time to grow up".
4. Conversely, the burden is greatly eased when "We live one day at a time." Being fully present in the Now has been taught by gurus for centuries as the essence of the spiritual life, the reason we meditate to begin with.