

Getting Back To The Real World

By Jean Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., WFS Founder

So many times when I am speaking about the time when I got sober and started living again, it sounds as if I did this overnight.

Of course, all of you know that our recovery does not happen that quickly. Recovery is almost a lifetime project. Getting sober is just a beginning.

However, there will be times in the beginning when you will know depression, anxiety, and a great sense of failure, even though this is an upbeat time of your life. Part of these feelings come from the alcohol wearing off. Part of the feelings come from our inability to deal with a reality of sobriety.

Sobriety is a period of positive change. Think of it as a time of reward. See it as a period of great forward movement, as a period of positive growth.

This is a period during which you must work toward self-acceptance. If the depression you feel immobilizes you, force yourself into motion, into doing things. Don't sit back and give up. Never permit self-pity in the form of "Why did this have to happen to me?" to get to you, or your sobriety will collapse.

Get on top of life and problems. Take one problem at a time. Know that there is always something you can do about every situation. Never, ever feel helpless and overwhelmed.

In the beginning of our sobriety we will continue to have shifting moods and unpredictable behavior but these two emotional conditions are the ones we will have to spend the most time on correcting, for they have too long been a part of our lives. In actual fact, those women who begin the work of changing their lives after getting sober, stay sober forever. Those women who do not begin to work on emotional growth through changes in personality almost never have a successful sobriety.

It is also a fact of sobriety that sometimes we experience a feeling of failure, which is very strange, considering the fact that we have succeeded in the largest sense of achievement. We have overcome. We are on top of our alcoholism for the first time. So why do we experience a sense of failure? Perhaps because we were so used to depending upon alcohol for everything; perhaps because we felt like failures when we were drinking but simply were not aware of it when soaked in alcohol.

But feeling like a failure is part and parcel of beginning sobriety. Fortunately this can be overcome and rather quickly. It's a matter of training one's mind to new thinking.

This is the period during which the Women for Sobriety "New Life" Program can be a great help, for it is a program of study and meditation. It is a program that shows you a new way of life and directs thinking into avenues for growth.

It is also a positive way of overcoming feelings of failure, depression, self-pity, and anxiety. It is a program that changes negativity into positivity.

It is not always easy to get back into the real world. Persons around us frequently do not understand us during this period and we are usually too quick to respond in anger. This sometimes makes us want to say, "What's the use. Might as well drink. Nobody knows how hard it is for me." The despair of self-pity rules us and we are right back to where we started.

Getting back into the real world means that we have decided to be good to ourselves. We have decided to end feeling terrible, emotionally and physically, and we are doing this for numero uno... doing it for us and no one else.

Getting back into the real world means life... new life. It means revitalization.

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