

# Perspectives on Humility

JULY 2020 ISSUE



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# Letter from the Editor

Welcome back to our latest edition of A Daily Reprieve.

Page 59 of the book '12 Steps and 12 Traditions' reads: "Only by discussing ourselves, holding back nothing, only by being willing to take advice and to accept direction could we set foot on the road to straight thinking, solid honesty and genuine humility."

With it being the seventh month and in spirit of the seventh step - *We humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings* - we received various perspectives on the topic of humility, and the one thing that stood out through it all - is that it is one of the cornerstones of recovery.

We know that our shortcomings never get fully eradicated, but we can get *removed* or get some distance from them - which is to live a life of service and free from selfish actions. This allows us to experience humility in all its various forms, keeping the fellowship alive.

There are a few articles, some poetry and other wonderful content in this edition of the Daily Reprieve. Each one is beautifully written from a personal experience or challenge, a painful relationship that yielded growth or a divine connection to a power greater than ourselves. Each of us here at the newsletter team is very grateful to be of service and we trust that you will get the same inspiration from it as we did.

Until next time,

The AA Newsletter Committee



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Mostly they're humbled by someone doing something normal, something that they should do anyway. It has become empty, a platitude.

Personally, I imagine I might, if I think about it, which I am doing, be humbled by the work of the white helmets in Syria risking their lives for others, by those who work for Medicine sans Frontiers or in refugee camps, by someone standing up for another at a risk to themselves. People whose actions tower over mine and yet that is never their aim.

What do they mean by being "...truly humbled....." anyway? What is being humbled?

If you're going to be humble, it has to come from you, not be triggered in you by a realisation that someone else is living a much more worthwhile existence, (or just that they are strong in adversity). Can't they just say thank you, or well done, and get on with things?

People don't do selfless deeds so you can feel humbled or so you will say that you feel humbled, so shut up about it.

Of course this is the mind of an alcoholic - to rage against something pointless and inoffensive, to want to take control of the word, of the concept of humility.

It is important to us, we have considered it and read of it and we strive for it and let our higher power take ourselves away so that we may be truly humbled.

But I am not truly humbled, never should consider

myself so. It is like meditation - if you are truly meditating, you cannot recognise it as such.

Similarly, if I am being truly humble, I cannot say so, because then I am claiming something for myself, and am not being humble.

In some sort of conclusion then, I am humbled by the pure beauty of the concept of genuine humility.

When I see it in others, it makes me long for something more in myself and makes me see the workings of a higher power in the actions of others. And when I hear someone say "I am truly humbled.....", I really do have to let it go...

Anonymous.

Me coming out of lockdown,  
still sober, facing the prospect  
of interacting with people again



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I could get no sleep on the cold hard floor; there were no toilet facilities save for a little corner at the edge of the cell that gave privacy by means of a half-wall that covered one from the waist-down; there was no communication with the outside world save for one phone call. I spent most of that night in a state of disbelief, fear, helplessness. I silently made a pact with God (though I wasn't then a believer) that I would quit alcohol; I'd made many of such promises in the past, but the difference was, I meant it this time.

It's a pity that I needed to be shackled in handcuffs and then locked behind bars to finally become willing to come into AA. Until then, I don't think I ever saw myself as a common drunk willing to sacrifice my principles and morals (thus breaking the law) just to get drinks. Anyhow, I came into AA in Singapore, desperate and willing to do as I was told. I learnt not to question too

many things – this was something new to me. I had always equated being unquestioning with being servile and dense. But I gradually saw that being unquestioning (in some respects) cultivated faith, discipline and humility. Who am I to question and doubt the years of experience that built this program? After all, if I knew better, I probably wouldn't have ended up at my rock bottom.

After working the first couple of steps and staying sober for a while, I was made to look at my glaring character deficiencies, and it didn't come as a surprise that Pride made it to the top ranks.

Pride was responsible for the jealousy, selfishness, vanity, and exacerbated many family disputes. I was unable to back down once I'd committed to an opinion, unable to say "I was wrong" and apologise where needed. This is still something I struggle with, but I've learnt that oftentimes in conflicts we have to choose whether to "be right" or "be happy".

Now, I'd choose the latter anytime, at least in issues that aren't matters of life and death. Now I would rather preserve the relationship between myself and the other party, let him/her have the last word,

than argue to prove that I was right. Because most of the time, it just isn't worth it. Most of the time, it is just a matter of ego, and isn't worth losing sleep or a relationship over.

It's been almost two years since that harrowing night in the cell, and thankfully, after a year of walking in and out of courtrooms, that legal matter has been resolved. But that experience, coupled with age and health issues, has humbled me.

I'm not invincible – I'm subject to imprisonment, infirmity, depression, just like anyone else. And although being sober doesn't make me immune to all of that, it gives me a much better chance at dealing with whatever comes my way. It definitely gives me a much better chance at staying out of prison and medical institutions, so I need always remember that the freedom and peace of mind I enjoy today are really contingent on me staying sober for today, and are gifts that I need to be grateful for.

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During my drinking career, (and in sobriety sometimes) it seems like everyone got what I wanted; they seemed to live this amazing life, have their shit together and it felt like they got the instruction manual and I didn't. Nor could I ever get it - because I felt I didn't really deserve it. So with all of that, I assumed that I was just humble.

But then at other times, I would see myself as completely superior to others. I had to prove how I was better and I would shamelessly flaunt what I thought I 'had' - which was just a false sense of security, that usually came with taking my first or second drink. Therefore, for most of my life - I was either above, or below. I was leading or I was led...I could never just be on the same level as others.

This all changed when I came into Alcoholics Anonymous because whenever I walk into a room of recovering alcoholics - I automatically leave my ego at the door. I also believe that my Higher Power does that for me

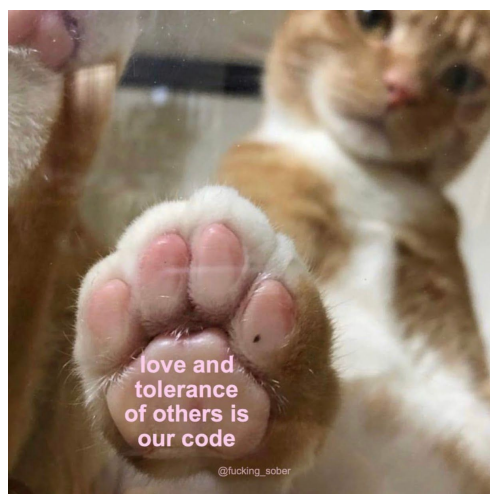
automatically; like someone at a cloakroom who is taking my coat of false identity and hanging it up so that I can just be myself. When I pronounce myself as alcoholic, I immediately get right sized to who I am, and not who I think I am. There is immense power in saying: "I am an alcoholic." because only then do I become teachable.

I also get a deeper sense of true self when I work through the 12 steps with my sponsor. Each of them is created to strip me of my ego, expose my defects of character, have them removed (but not deleted). Then filling that gap with some concept of a power greater than myself, experiencing true love and then giving that love to others.

My perspective on humility changes more and more, but I think the best description I have read so far - is that being humble means that I am the person that God intended me to be.

I love AA, I love myself and I love others and with that I will keep on coming back.

Adrian





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My arrogance fueled my denial and actually made me believe that I really was something better than I was. My arrogance kept me at the center of my universe, living in the lie that I was the one hurting and in denial that I was hurting others. While I knew I drank too much for years, the denial and arrogance was too high for me to seriously ever consider stopping. My arrogance told me that others didn't understand and that I was special and those in AA were different to me. My denial and arrogance always asked the same question: Why won't everyone just leave me alone? This is my life.

In sobriety it's so important that I am humble and displaying humility. It's important for me to remember that I am in many ways, just another alcoholic. I have an illness that many others like me have and that's good, because there is a common treatment for it. I am not the special person, who can't be treated, that I thought I was. Things are of course different for me but they do not make me better or worse than the next person. I've learned

through humility that we all suffer in our own unique ways and that we can be treated. I know that if I am humble today I can be a better man for myself by accepting the help I need and also by being there for others. I don't need to be something better than I am and I don't need to act like I am better than someone else. I don't want to be arrogant anymore and I work hard on a daily basis to keep my ego in check.

Twenty years of drinking let my ego run riot too much so it's hard to simply pull it back in. The key for me is the will to be at peace and content with whom I am. I've learned through humility that contentment is actually what happiness is for me. It doesn't have to be something special every day that brings me joy and laughter. If I can be humble and know that the simple things in life can bring me contentment, I can be a better person.

Humility is one of the cornerstones of sobriety for me. Humility reminds me to be humble in my progression in recovery, that I am not in a sprint and that perfection is not a requirement. Humility also reminds me of how important it is to keep things simple and to take things One Day at A Time.

Brian

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I decided to track down a few quotes based on humility. Of course, many of them dealt with man and God but one that jumped out at me was the following by Carl Sagan:

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For me this is truly inspiring and I am sure has been

used in many a context. However, I find it relevant to me and my Higher Power. For I don't believe in a God as perceived by organised religions – even though I was brought up a staunch Protestant. But I do believe in the higher power of the creation of the universe scientifically.

The fact that, of all the billions of stars there are, we may be the only intelligent life is incredibly humbling and also makes me feel incredibly lucky that with some sort of higher power my parents wouldn't have existed and I wouldn't have existed to take my place as a mere fraction of a second in terms of the time of the universe. And in that fraction of a second I have learned, have hopefully inspired others but most of all have loved.

For me that is the most humbling experience. To love and be loved in return

is an astoundingly beautiful thing. What are the odds in this vast universe, on this tiny dot filled with billions of people that I can find love? It still astonishes me.

And so I continue to live my life being amazed and humbled by the beauty and intricacy of nature. From the incredible delicate hummingbird to the origins of the T-Rex

I could probably go on and on and on about humility but thought I would end with another quote which I think is very relevant in these racially motivated times.

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– Sidney Sheldon,  
[Windmills of the Gods](#)

Tim





“I can stop drinking anytime I want, I just don’t want to...”



@fucking\_sober

please girl

°° :... [ö ö

When I first joined the fellowship some years back, one of the things I immediately noticed was the rich body of coded language that we shared.

Two strangers could meet in a crowd, connect immediately, and have a perfectly secret conversation consisting of phrases we can lift out of any sentence in the hundreds of pages of our collection of literature.

I have even passed unknown people on the street speaking our coded language and knew instantly they were some of ours. (Did someone just use the expression, "half measures"?) What tribe can make such a claim? This was quite an adventure: Better than being a Freemason or an ancient Knight Templar!

So too did I also have to learn new vocabularies or, to be exact, new meanings for words that I thought I knew the meaning of. I learned that sobriety is not a physical

state but a mental and a spiritual one. I learned that fear is not a result of danger but the absence of love. I learned that spirituality is a state of nature, a result of action and not a metaphysical abstraction.

Lastly, I learned that humility is not synonymous with humiliation and not an attribute of meek and unassertive people. It is the state that comes about through the destruction of the ego which is the construct that creates an illusion of separation from our creator and its creation. Humility is the opposite of ego.

Ego is destroyed through self-forgetting and selfless actions. When we do this, the state of humility strengthens and we learn, finally, that the meaning of faith is not belief but that which sustains us until we have experience.

Love,  
Jeff

**E**

. . . . .

- ... trusting others
- ... asking for help
- ... sitting quietly
- ... appreciating others
- ... remembering my bottoms
- ... listening
- ... putting the program first before anything today

Alex



... I'm so humble it's not even funny... talk about humble, actually I am very happy to and will tell you how super humble I am, whether you ask me or not..

... From the moment I spring up and gaze into my platinum clad 10 ft mirror, I exude humility. I'm well known for it; football in recent years has had the 'Special One' and now the fellowship has the 'Humble One'. It's remarkable actually that AA managed to survive 'til I got here. Of course, with my undoubtedly brilliant input, it flourishes...

... Before you start browsing the Internet to seek out my

books, cds, blogs, downloads and latest courses, presentations and webinars, how can this be?

I woke up then. The shrill of the alarm tipped me out of bed- a myriad of issues taxiing on a runway through the night waiting to take off:

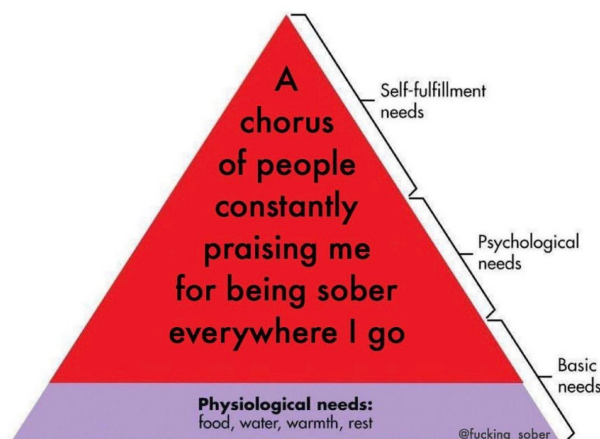
- car insurance is due
- that bloke that bumped into me in the supermarket deserved a slap
- the Chelsea midfield isn't functioning as it should
- I've not heard from work, definitely getting the sack-homeless again
- that new bird in the baker's is proper fit, I must buy another pastry.. again
- why am I crying?

- what's that pain in my shoulder, can't be good
- where were you when I needed you
- sick of these lockdown idiots and Michael McIntyre isn't even funny
- why go fishing and chuck them back in?
- I'll never wear a wig
- how did James Corden ever get on telly?
- sod this...

Best sit in the chair, light a candle, put on some nice music... God I offer myself to thee to build with me..

Martin, Derby

## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS (updated)



# | ö · E

"Perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me.

"It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and pray to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble."

~ Andrew Murray

For this alcoholic - humility is a daily battle. I came into this program 4 years ago with my very limited understanding of humility and ego - only to be confronted with love by my sponsor (and my sponsor in another program) with the knowledge that I had no humility at all. Zero. Nothing.

I was ruled/dictated by my ego and my initial reaction with my understanding at that time, was that humility was weakness. To be humble meant having to say sorry, and I was not a fan of the word sorry.

As a female that obeys (most) laws and generally chooses to follow the rules (unless they don't suit me) I couldn't see why this would be an area for me to focus on. I heard phrases like: You can be happy or you can be right. I honestly thought I chose happiness... time and time again working with my sponsor I came to realize that I always chose right. In my family of origin, I now understand that right trumped happiness every single time. That sorry was weakness and that love was to be withheld for mistakes; trivial or large.

As a people-pleaser and attention seeker, the phrase; to be a person amongst people, a worker amongst workers became my daily mantra for year two of recovery. For someone that constantly strived to be better than, the best, the first, the acknowledged - how hard it was for me to keep my hand down, keep that yes inside and stand back. As I practiced these actions it became even more obvious to me how less important I was... the things that I thought only I could do, or could help others by doing were easily accomplished by others and even more astounding; they didn't appear to be resentful

about doing them. I loved to put my hand up, not allow others to help and then complain about how hard I was working and how nobody supported me. Seeing my defects and behaviors in this light really showed me how much I needed to focus on humility. The light shone brighter on this aspect of my recovery as I put it front and centre.

The more I realise I need to seek humility - the more obvious it becomes how much my ego (disguised as working hard, volunteering, fixing things/people, gossiping, trying to be more important than I am) rules my actions and reactions. Pride appears in 'discussions' with my spouse, conversations with my colleagues, phone calls to home and following instructions. The more I become aware of humility through listening to others' shares and daily readings, the more obvious it becomes how much I need to focus on cultivating a perpetual quietness of the heart using the tools so freely given to me by this program - my two favorite being the Serenity Prayer and the Step Three Prayer.

Jemma

# ° · ö W

Is it just a tawdry jest?  
Don't God and Satan play a game?  
Throwing cards and rolling dice—  
If this is so, our life is lame.

Is this a God so small and weak?  
A despot seeking unearned love?  
Is Satan gleeful in our pain?  
Is he laughing from above?

The bets are laid; the trap is set.  
Will Job still love with spirit soiled  
Servants, cattle, camels dead;  
Poor old Job is full of boils

Blameless, upright Job is dying;  
health and hearth are gone away  
All infected, mocked by neighbours;  
'where is justice?' Hear them say.

Job at last speaks, raging loudly;  
I'm a good man; can't you see?  
Curse my life and curse my birthright;  
why this curse in front of me?

Curse my mom's milk and the sunshine;  
A coffin is my one true treasure  
Dig a grave and carve a tomb.  
Be gone my sadness without measure!

Where is joy? Oh, where is my peace?  
Where's my guard and my high tower  
All is gone — this veil of tears;  
does fickle God have no real power?

My worst fears met; my endless strife;  
of stable wealth there is but none  
Was it my fear, my lack of faith;  
A wrongful praying to the One?

My fault I fear; I just knelt wrongly?  
I earned his anger! Am I not just?  
Sacrifice pure; Worship proper;  
why am I now in the dust ?

Sat'an prosecutor sayeth:  
Yahweh's foolish; Job is fickle!  
Yahweh's power, judgment gone?  
Is he none but Sa'tan's tool?

Sa'tan won before he started?  
Yahweh lost before he fought?  
Job's a flower ripe for plucking?  
He loves me or loves me not?

Then the answer comes from on high;  
"Silence! Finger over lip!  
I make waves crash, stars aligning,  
winds rise up and oceans rip."

Behold my endless gaze, my true love;  
Pay no heed to noisy Sa'tan  
Accept! Be Humble! Wisdom cometh;  
alone together, we're unshaken.

Paul

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There is a poem that I have plagiarised that sums up my journey with humility, "They seek him here. They seek him there. They seek him everywhere. Is he in our minds? Or is he in civility? That damned, elusive, humility."

And, in the rooms of AA I have heard many definitions for humility. The one that really resonates with me is, "humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less."

I am just a garden variety alcoholic. I am selfish and self-centred to the extreme. And yet, I have found that through practicing the 12 step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, through the actions that take me out of myself, I have moments where I am less self-absorbed. And in those moments, I can experience some levels of humility. Am I on the humility beam all the time? Totally not. However, as was explained to me, the AA program is a 24 hour program, and all I need

to do is try and work it to the best of my abilities today. I can take stock of how I am behaving through the inventory process in steps 10 and 11 and look for ways to correct myself.

So, how can I tell if I am experiencing any levels of humility? I am told that there are some attributes of healthy humility I can look for:

- Acknowledge that I don't have it all together.
- Know the difference between self-confidence and pride.
- Seek to add value to others.
- Take responsibility for my actions.
- Be filled with gratitude for what I have
- Humility is slow to judge others, but quick to correct itself.

Just for today, I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do – just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show them.

Simon



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My ego gets hurt from time to time and I've found myself being annoyed/irritated at her for telling me things which I Think I already know, or that I don't want to hear. At times like those, I remind myself that she also has 18 years of sobriety. She might not have all the right answers - and of course I'm allowed to have my views and opinions - but on the topic of my sobriety and cultivating my spiritual life,

I have a LOT to learn from her. I am 4.5 years sober now and this is the longest relationship I've had with another person. I have wanted to break up with her when my ego was bruised and she didn't agree with me. But I've told and told myself that this is a lesson in humility.

There is so much for me to learn from her. And through our communication and love for each other, I've learned how to express myself to her, and her to me.

Running away to someone new would have been easy at that point, but staying has helped me to grow and learn. At times when I've told her how certain comments made me feel, instead of her getting upset, she actually was grateful for the feedback and shared it helped HER! What a surprise!

Cultivating humility is an everyday process, and human relationships are one of my biggest spiritual teachers.

Holly

ideas. We who had won so handsomely in a walk turned into all-time losers. We saw that we had to reconsider or die. We found many in A.A. who once thought as we did. They helped us to get down to our right size. By their example they showed us that humility and intellect could be compatible, provided we placed humility first. When we began to do that, we received the gift of faith, a faith which works. This faith is for you, too.”





All said  
All done  
All I felt  
Simply none

Just couldn't  
Just didn't  
Will within  
Weak and wouldn't

Somebody  
Something  
Give me  
An antibody

These rooms  
Found them  
Laughing  
With their dooms

Not alone  
All kind  
Women and men  
We never end

