

# Waves of Grace

## Everlasting Healing

“...depend on the world of God”

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I was sitting in a NAR-ANON meeting recently. It was late summer and we had a small group, mostly experienced parents or relatives of addicts at various levels of using, recovery, or both. There was one newcomer and she had come for the reason many attend their first meeting; because they didn't know what to do, because they were at the end of their rope.

As I sat and listened to her story I couldn't help but think of my story or anyone's story of how the disease of addiction brings us to our knees. How we must come to the realization that we no longer have control over ourselves and/or our loved one. How we must “let go, and let God” or whomever our higher power is for us.

But it was the idea that in the knowing – that moment of understanding that you have been there and know their pain yet cannot heal them – you realize that you now can be the carrier of the message of hope to them and others, and put into practice the steps you used to practice these principles in all your affairs. There is realization that even in your own addiction and recovery experience you have knowledge and love to give.

Recovery doesn't end addiction, not for the addict or their family and friends. But it does give you understanding from a road well-traveled and the opportunity to share experience, strength and hope with them. It's not that you graduate and get a degree. It's more akin to sharing a battle scar. It will always be there. It has been earned. But it also is a reminder that you don't need to re-live that battle.

Many are lucky and never experience the pain of addiction. But for those that do the battle is constant. Whether it is their first meeting or their 10<sup>th</sup> year, there is something in these rooms that meets a need. There is something very healing about these rooms. The 12 steps are a part of the process. The study of them is vital. But it is the raw experience felt by us in the room through the experience of a newcomer that keeps our beliefs alive.

The newcomer is also who we want to focus on in our journey. Not that we are minimizing the plight of the experienced user. If we can get the attention of and work with those whose struggle has just begun, perhaps we can help them discover the pain that their personal stories and experiences have supplanted in them. Through shared experience and hope (key elements found in the film **Grace**.) we can help them begin to mend their brokenness.

It is important to remember that God's Grace is what is at work here. We are not healers. It is only through His Grace that we have been given this opportunity; to share our story and perhaps open one more heart and free it from pain.

I think we all know in our hearts that we sometimes have to be pushed to our knees in order to get back up on our feet. It is part of the journey in each of our stories.

### Relapse and Recovery

**Please, please, please understand** that I am not in the position to instruct anyone on the subjects of relapse and recovery. Though I may have some experiences to share on either topic I certainly would never tell someone how to grow or change, nor would I tell them to find a process or planned program to keep them from relapse. I do not hold those keys. I cannot unlock that door for them or anyone.

What I can do is learn from my mistakes and share information I have learned so that it may help someone else in their recovery.

There is that golden statement that says, “Relapse is part of Recovery.” I believe it to be true. Those who have yet to surrender to their addictive behavior, whether they are the addict or a relation, regard relapse as a total failure. The addict has fallen back to their old ways. But what if that relapse comes with new knowledge and understanding.

One of my “relations”, a drug addict, has spent 5 years in prison and is due to be released in January of 2016. This is his 3<sup>rd</sup> (4<sup>th</sup>?) stint in the prison system and we don't know how he will do after his release. Relapse for the addict can be one stress point, past feeling of shame or trigger away.

However, in conversations with him over the years I have come to understand that even the addict gets tired of their relapses. Recovery, though challenging and constant, can last

days, weeks or even years. It is only with the help of their Higher Power that they can stay in recovery. We all know it is a constant battle. I have yet to meet an addict or their relation who chose to be in this group. Even the strongest in recovery are one step from relapse. Just understanding that is a big step.

### I Didn't Choose Addiction: Yet I Am a Part of It

NARANON and ALANON are recovery groups for the families of addicts and alcoholics. They are the groups nobody wants to belong to. Yet here we are, members nonetheless. It is the roller coaster ride we didn't pay to get on and yet it is where we find ourselves.

There are a myriad of feelings associated with family members of addicts. They can fall anywhere between sorrow, regret, shame and failure. There is always the roller coaster feeling associated with the highs and lows of dealing with the addict. There are days of hope and nights of fear and sleeplessness. The twister of emotions rides with you, at times spinning out of control. Other times it's rolling up and down with each moment.

You didn't choose this addictive person and they didn't pick you. Yet here we are. We are the ones whose life has changed because of the addict.

The core idea of the family burdened with an addict is to “detach with love” and to get back to being who we were. ALANON and NARANON are great programs to help families and individuals come to realize that their lives have become unmanageable and that they are powerless over the addict. And there is a Power greater than ourselves who can restore us to sanity.