



serenity

"Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly." ~Zen proverb

Session Six

Serenity - A word, a hope, a failure, a goal

So, how do we really define serenity in our lives? There's lots of posters, and keychains and prayers that have the word serenity written all over them. But what does serenity really mean to a woman in recovery? When I came to the tables, people carried on about how happy they were in recovery. The promise was that if I did everything that was suggested by AA people and literature, I would be "happy, joyous, and free". The Serenity Prayer, drilled into me at each meeting, promised a way to deal with everything in my life - I just needed to have serenity, acceptance, courage, and wisdom. I also needed enough "smarts" to know when to use one of those and a God to help me decide.

It wasn't happening! I was shaky, constantly crying, chain-smoking, and an atheist. I didn't believe in God or Higher Powers. I thought the people at the tables were old and preachy. I knew I was going to get punished for all the bad things I had done. I also knew I was a piece of s*** who just wanted to be anywhere else but in my life.

But...I was too stubborn to quit AA. I had to quit drinking and the people in AA were the only ones who said they would help me do that. Maybe, just maybe, I could remake myself into a sober, strong, capable, emotionally stable woman. That would give me serenity! I wouldn't be anxious, uncertain, overreacting, or nutty. I would be cool, calm, in control of my emotions and so spiritually fit that I could wear an angel's wings. *That's serenity! That's "happy, joyous and free". That's what I wanted out of sobriety. ASAP, if you please!*

Writing Prompts

1. What does serenity mean to you?
 2. Describe what you think a woman with serenity would be like.
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So, what happened?

I lived through the first 6 years of recovery. They turned out to be the worst years of my life. I quit drinking after my first meeting. Except for that 1/2 beer I split with a friend after the meeting to celebrate my entry into AA! Other than that, I stayed with AA faithfully. I had nowhere else to go. The only people in my life that encouraged me to stay sober were sitting around the AA tables.

It was more than hard. Everywhere I looked, I was in conflict with someone. My mind was jumbled. Crying was uncontrollable. My old friends were nagging me to quit AA. My family was mad that party time was over. My brother thought I had joined a cult. And I was damaged. Weak. Unstable. Anxious. Fearful.

But...Was I happy and joyous? Nah, What a joke! But was I free? You betcha! Freedom from blackouts and hangovers was wonderful. And I even earned myself a little bit of serenity during that challenging time.



serenity

Serenity comes when we trade expectations
for acceptance.

Session Six

What does Serenity mean to me?

Serenity means feeling peaceful in my head and heart. It comes from believing that no matter how bad it looks right now, the world and my life are headed in a good direction. Serenity comes from accepting that there are many things I will never understand or like. But everyone and everything has its place in our world. It's not my job to question or judge it. Serenity and love coexist. I have serenity when I sit in a meeting and feel the fellowship and friendship in the room. I feel the same when surrounded by my family. I have serenity when I accept people as imperfect beings who make many mistakes. I am serene when I accept my failures and remember I am only human.

How Serenity came into my life

To me, serenity is not the absence of conflict. Serenity is knowing that I am trying to do the right thing, spiritually speaking, no matter what is going on around me. Even in the bad old days of early sobriety, I found peace blooming in my heart because I was trying to get better. Instead of endless thoughts about what was wrong in my life, I had new thoughts about how to make my life right. Positive thoughts led me to a little bit of serenity.

An old-timer told me that I didn't have to spin in circles trying to figure out what God was. Every time I used AA principles to guide my behavior, I was working the third step and turning my life over to something bigger than me. **My serenity jumped up when I realized that I didn't need to wrestle with the God question anymore.** I just needed to use AA to live a healthy, sober life.

As I stopped being destructive to myself and others, I regained my integrity. I could look at myself in the mirror and know that, as imperfect as I was, I was better than who I had been. **Self-respect instead of self-loathing brought me peace of mind and serenity.**

As my life cleaned up and as I worked the steps, I stopped being ashamed of myself. As my deep-rooted shame went away through the 4th - 7th steps, I lightened up. I actually laughed once in a while. **Serenity is what I found when I stopped living in the garbage of my life and tossed it out instead.**

I found my purpose in life. Not everyone gets to sober or clean up. I am one of the lucky ones. I am obligated to pass recovery on. Having a purpose in life eliminates uncertainty and aimlessness. **Serenity comes from doing good in the world. What goes around, comes around. That includes love.**

Writing Prompts

1. Pick someone you don't like and ask yourself if you would release your expectations of them for serenity instead. Why or why not?

2. What do you send out in the world? Are you cranky? Stuck in your own mind? Stuck in the past? Which step could move you out of this mindset? Are you living in your garbage?