

JANUARY 2013

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Michigan City

Daily Reprieve



Happy 2013!

There are simply no words to express how happy I am to celebrate this New Year. I love new beginning events anyway...birthdays, holidays, the New Year, full moons, new moons. But emerging from a year or more of some serious ass-kickings puts an entirely new meaning to "Happy New Year" for me this year.

I also love the sappy Christmas stories and movies. One of my favorite Christmas stories is "Scrooged" where the selfish, greedy old man had to see and experience the consequences of his greed and self-centeredness before transformation could occur. Luckily for Ebenezer Scroog the journey through his hell was in dreams and over in a single night! Once I had a counselor tell me that until I could access the level of pain of my past I would never be entirely free... how frighteningly right she was! I would have given my right arm if the "access" she referred to had only taken a single sleepless night.

My favorite part of the story was when Ebenezer awakened Christmas Day with his eyes and heart wide open. He not only got the point/s of his trek through hell he ACTED. He didn't bask in his amazing new insights he opened his window and kicked into service not even dressed.

Every day, every hour, every minute can be a new beginning if we choose. We are taught to do this each day and throughout the day as often as needed. We can reboot regardless of where are in our step work then the steps guide us into immediate action...

I'm exceptionally grateful for this ceremonial new beginning of the New Year. For me 2012 seemed to be an endless nightmare of the physical manifestation of my deepest, darkest fears, attachments, and character defects. It was as if all of that darkness materialized into tentacles of a giant octopus slapping me up this side and then that side, making sure I had gotten the point. I found myself feeling envious of Ebenezer's single bad night while watching the movie for the 100th time this season.

2012 was much like my 1st year of sobriety yet with shocking distinctions. How was sober living so difficult this far into sobriety? I struggled not to drink differently than I did in my 1st year. This time my thinking temptress was

empowered with years of more coherent thinking and new justifications that sounded smarter and more logical...the rationale to drink was frighteningly tempting. I had years of going to meetings, not drinking, an active spiritual and step practice, daily conversations with my sponsor...all of the things we're supposed to do to stay sober. So WHY did life become so dark and frightening and why was it so difficult not to drink after years of all this hard work?

I used to think that the steps would lead me to a place where life and living would finally begin. But another thing I learned this year was that life truly IS the journey even when it's dark and scary. I know we hear this often and it sounds good, but this thick-willed alcoholic has to find out things herself even if it's the harder, longer way.

What does it mean, "life is a journey?" To me it means I seek to participate fully in EACH moment without judgment. Now it means I begin my day with gratitude for another day of conscious living. For real. I connect into the greatest power source imaginable...my renewed and deepened relationship with my understanding of God...and I ask for God's will for me for that day. Sure I did all of these things

before my spiral downward. But now everything is deeper and richer than before. Sometimes it feels as if I am seeing life for the first time. Again.

When I sit down to do my work I concentrate on the task in front of me keeping my thinking on the action instead of jetting forward into the outcomes I'm working so hard to achieve. Another thing 2012 taught me is to give it up...scripted outcomes, timelines, worry, control (ha! Good luck on that one) but to put the weight of my thinking into the action which is always in the moment. The moment is where my power source is. The moment is my elevator to acceptance.

For me life IS the dark, bright, happy, sad, terrifying, the agony of a broken heart, the explosion of a loving heart, fun, boring, easy, hard, ALL of it. ALL the time. This is life to me. It's a mapless journey on a sometimes bumpy and curvy road. But if I look around me day or night I'll see the point...the beauty in the darkness and the brilliance in the light. The nugget of joy through the weight of the pain, the

January Birthdays

Harry G	1/5/1985
Dan R	1/9/1996
Helen G	1/22/2008
Joe R	1/1/2010
Mike G	1/24/2010
Robin M	1/2/2010
Sandy K	1/4/2009
Scott B	1/1/1992

To publish announcements of AA Birthdays, send name and number of years to: District 21, P.O. Box 58, Michigan City IN 46360 or email info@michigancityaa.org

love that surrounds us always and the cleansing of tears that flow freely...all of this IS life.

Today, on this first day of a brand new year I walked in my beloved woods. I felt light and noticed I was free of the weight of despair that had become so familiar. Fear was someplace else, plans were on someone else's desk, and gasping for relief was noticeably absent.

Instead, was a smile from that marvelous newly discovered landing spot behind my heart where total acceptance lives. It's a rich and calm place...only good emanates from there. I smiled at the gold the aging sun painted on the trees and woods, I thanked the Universe for having lived through such a dangerous journey and for the beautiful new day. I laughed with God over what can be done with this fresh, blank canvass that is my life today? I laughed over the possibilities of God working through me next week at one of my most important work weeks of the year. Let me be a channel of God's will for me, for others next week. What kinds of adventures are mine to live now? For the first time in my life, I'm not alone even when I'm alone. I laugh and cry and my God laughs and cries with me. For the second, first time in my life...I know this is true for me.

At that moment a dark cloud covered my golden world.

Just as we should never forget our last drunk...I prayed not to forget 2012 and I got back to saying thank you for the journey to the most perfect place on the planet...that moment! May each day in 2012 be a Golden Happy New Year full of new beginnings...

Surrender versus compliance in therapy with special reference to alcoholism part 2

Harry M. Tiebout, M.D.

One thing must be made absolutely clear: There is a world of difference between 'thinking of compliance in conscious terms and in unconscious terms. The following discussion is focused wholly on unconscious reactions and cannot be translated into conscious reactions until the possible effect of the former upon the latter is appreciated. An illustration at this point may be helpful. An alcoholic, at the termination of a long and painful spree, decides that he has had enough. This decision is announced loudly and vehemently to all who will listen. His sincerity cannot be questioned. He means every word of it. Yet he knows, and so do those who hear him, that he will be singing another tune before many weeks have elapsed. For the moment he seems to have accepted his alcoholism but it is only with a skin-deep assurance. He will certainly revert to drinking. What we see here is compliance in action. During the time when his memory of the suffering entailed by a spree is acute and painful he agrees to anything and everything. But deep inside, in his unconscious, the best he can do is to comply -- which means that, when the reality of his drinking problem becomes undeniable, he no longer argues with incontrovertible facts. The fight, so to speak, has been knocked out of him. As time passes and the memory of his suffering weakens, the need for compliance lessens. As the need diminishes, the half of compliance which never really accepted begins to stir once more and soon resumes its way. The need for accepting the illness of alcoholism is ignored because, after all, deep inside he really did not mean it, he had only complied. Of course consciously the victim of all this is completely in the dark. What he gets is messages from below which slowly bring about a change in conscious attitudes. For a while drink was anathema but now he begins to toy with the thought of one drink, and so on, until finally, as the noncooperative element in compliance takes over, he has his first drink. The other half of compliance has won out; the alcoholic is the unwitting victim of his unconscious inclinations.

It is the nature of the word to have this two-faced quality of agreeing and then renegeing. It is only by realizing the widespread ramification of the compliance tendency that its far-flung importance can be appreciated.

One of the first things to recognize is the fact that the presence of compliance blocks the capacity for true acceptance. Since compliance is a form of acceptance, every time the individual is faced with the need to accept something he falls back on compliance, which serves for

the moment -- the individual consciously believing that he has accepted. But since he has no real capacity to accept, he is soon swinging in the other direction, his seeming acceptance a thing of the past. In other words, the best an inwardly complying person can do toward acceptance is to comply. During treatment the patient regularly is surprised to learn that his previous tendency to agree in order to be agreeable was merely a lot of compliance without any genuine capacity to accept.

This unconscious split in the compliance mechanism has deep psychosomatic reverberations. One patient, who had uncovered a wide streak of compliance, had a dream in which he placed the two components of compliance side by side, disclosing their utter incompatibility. What he saw was that his wish to be cooperative and well liked while yet maintaining his ego intact meant certain conflict, with other people whose very existence was a threat to his own ego. He was torn by the dilemma of being nice and pleasant or being a man and holding his own. His next dream contained a busy ferry-boat plying back and forth across a river. As the patient watched, it went faster and faster and faster, the patient following its motion closely. Soon it seemed as if he were following the flight of a tennis ball while sitting at the net, his head turning more and more rapidly until finally he became giddy and woke up feeling dizzy. When the patient, and physician, saw the connection between this dream and the dilemma of his preceding dream, he laughed and remarked, "You know, I have been doctoring for many years and have heard all about this psychosomatic business, but I never thought I would learn about it from myself."

Compliance creates other problems for the individual. Since it says "yes" on the surface and "no" inside, it contributes to the sense of guilt. The person who says yes and feels the opposite has an inward realization that he is a two-faced liar; this stirs up his conscience and evokes a feeling of guilt. Compliance also adds mightily to the problems of inferiority. The guilt reaction increases the sense of inferiority but the compliance response engrafts it even more. The unconscious situation can be outlined thus: Compliance is a form of agreeing, of never standing up for one-self. When that response is automatic, routine and unvarying, the individual gets a feeling that he cannot stand up for himself; this inevitably augments his inferiority problems.

Compliance and Alcoholism

It is now possible to link compliance with the problem of alcoholism and also to the theory of surrender. The link between alcoholism and compliance has already been shown in the alcoholic's repeated vows that he would never

take another drink, vows which go by the board because of the inner inability to do more than comply. The presence of a strong vein of unconscious compliance in the alcoholic can be demonstrated in other ways. Alcoholics are a notably pleasant and agreeable group with a marked tendency to say yes when approached directly. They claim they want to be well liked -- hence their willingness to promise anything. Yet -- and here the other side of the compliance reaction is manifest -- they balk at the showdown and are ever likely to renege on their original promises. As another illustration, they are keen to go to a show, buy tickets in advance, and then on the night of the performance wish they had never had the idea. Characteristically, one man always calls up at the last moment for a date, knowing that if he had made the engagement in advance his present wish would later appear as a "must" which he had to live up to. He, like so many of his kind, has to do things on the spur of the moment. Otherwise, the contrary half gets into action and the project is opposed and quashed. A favorite remark, "Let's have some fun," must mean immediately: the desire evaporates if there is any planning to be done. Often alcoholics go downtown merely looking for fun with not a thought of a drink on their minds -- in fact, quite "compliant" to the need for sobriety. When they find the fun, however, the chances are that they will be in trouble before, the night is over. Undoubtedly the initial restlessness which stimulated the need for some fun had its origin in the early rumblings of the noncompliance elements. Much of the apparent dual personality of alcoholics becomes understandable if their behavior is seen in the light of conflicting trends.

The next point, the relationship between compliance and surrender, has already been intimated in the remark that compliance blocks the capacity to surrender. The inability to surrender may seem a small loss until the matter is studied more thoughtfully.

After an act of surrender, the individual reports a sense of unity, of ended struggles, of no longer divided inner counsel. He knows the meaning of inner wholeness and, what is more, he knows from immediate experience the feeling of being wholehearted about anything. He recognizes for the first time how insincere his previous protestations actually were. If he is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, he travels around to meetings proclaiming the need for honesty -- usually, at the start of his pilgrimage, with a certain amount of surprise and wonder in his voice. Quite frankly, before he was able to embrace the program, he had no idea he was a liar, dishonest in his thoughts; but now that A.A. is making sense -- that is, he is accepting A.A. wholeheartedly and without reservations -- he sees that previously he had never truly accepted anything. The

A.A. speaker does not follow through to state that, formerly, all he had been doing was complying; but if asked, he nods his head in vigorous assent, saying, "That's exactly what I was doing." A more articulate individual, after a little thought, added: "You know, when I think back on it, that was all I knew how to do. I supposed that was the way it was with everybody. I could not conceive of really giving up. The best I could do was comply, which meant I never really wanted to quit drinking, I can see it all now but I certainly couldn't then."

Obviously this speaker is reporting the loss of his compliant tendencies, occurring, let it be noted, when he gave up, surrendered, and thus was able wholeheartedly to follow the A.A. program. Let it further be noted that this new honesty arises automatically, spontaneously; the individual does not have the slightest inkling that this development is in prospect. It represents a deep unconscious shift in attitude and one certainly for the better.

It is now possible to see the usurping, dog-in-the-manger role of compliance. As long as compliance is functioning, there is halfway but never total surrender. But the halfway surrender and acceptance, serving as it does to quell the fighting temporarily, deceives both the individual and the onlooker, neither of whom is able to detect the unconscious compliance in the reaction of apparent yielding. It is only when a real surrender occurs that compliance is knocked out of the picture, freeing the individual for a series of wholehearted responses -- including, in the alcoholic, his acceptance of his illness and of his need to do something constructive about it.

Enough has been said, it would seem, to show the significance and the importance of understanding the relationship between compliance and the ability to surrender and accept. They are in complete opposition. As long as the former controls reactions, there can be no wholehearted acceptance, only the halfhearted kind which is admittedly not sufficient. Results of real value can only come about when the compliant reactions have been successfully dissipated.

No Easy Road to Understanding

Some will ask how this can be brought about. The answer, insofar as I have been able to formulate it, is long, involved and rather hazy. Experience shows that through psychotherapy the dominance of compliance over the unconscious can slowly be superseded, and that through the A.A. experience compliance can be temporarily and sometimes permanently blotted out. There does not appear to be any easy road to real understanding of this problem.

The preceding materials can now be summed up. It was pointed out that in an earlier article on the phenomenon of surrender, the tie of surrender to acceptance had not been sufficiently stressed. It was also pointed out that the concept of acceptance is freely talked about but rarely if ever made an object of study. Some observations regarding the nature of acceptance were reported and it was shown to contain two possible reactions which we called wholehearted acceptance and halfhearted. It was then demonstrated how halfheartedness and compliance were closely allied. The nature of compliance was next discussed and, lastly, the antipathetic relationship between compliance on the one hand and surrender and acceptance on the other.

This is a long and rather circuitous route to the point of this paper, namely, that surrender is essential to wholehearted acceptance and that unconscious compliance, which is a halfway surrender, can be a vital block to genuine surrender. It was then pointed out that alcoholics frequently show marked unconscious compliant trends which not only help to explain some puzzling aspects of their behavior but also account for their frequent inability to respond meaningfully to treatment. Since the presence of these trends has been more clearly recognized, the response of many patients to therapy has been considerably more satisfactory. These considerations have been presented in the hope that others also may find that a recognition of the processes of surrender, acceptance and compliance can be a source of help in tackling the alcoholic psychotherapeutically.

December 2012 GSR Indiana District 21 Area 22 Minutes

Facilitator Steve H.

Note Taker Dan R.

Attendees Helen G., Steve H., Laurie., Dan., Jennie H.

Meeting Opened at 7:00 pm with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

Minutes from November 8, 2012 were read. The minutes were approved.

Laurie gave the financial report for November 2012. Report was approved. .

Dan is still trying to get phone bill sent directly to District 21. It was suggested that a 900 block be set up on the mobile phone. Dan will do. Dan will pay current phone bill.

December newsletter is printed and up on the website.

Helen will place an ad in the Michigan City News Dispatch, 2 days/wk for 6 weeks, \$90.00

Jennie has had the phone for the last 2 weeks. She has gotten calls, then called people on the 12 step phone list to return those calls and has had a good response from those volunteering. She is currently trying to get the phone to circulate to people outside the Dunes House. She got about 8 calls while she had the phone.

Steve is going to contact George P. to get new meeting lists printed. Dan will get new business cards printed.

Next meeting is January 10, 2012 at the MC Christian Church. Meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm with the Lord's Prayer.

