

Acceptance holds so much power

Acceptance is such an easy word to say, don't you think? Yes, I accept I've done wrong. Yes, I accept I'm an alky. Yes, I accept I turned my life upside down. Blah, blah, blah. It has the same ring as the word 'sorry'. When you're in the madness, apologising for everything and profusely claiming you won't do it again. Just empty words. These are two words, that I have firmly learnt the meaning of, now I'm in strong recovery. Umm, a post about, the word 'sorry' could be an interesting one. Anyhow, I've digressed (already).

I follow the 12 steps of the AA programme and step one is, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable". A step screaming out acceptance at the top of its lungs. It is such an essential part of recovery. Our addictions over ran our lives and impacted not only our lives, but others around us too. At the beginning of sobriety, trying to learn the new 'sober or clean' you, is so terrifying, daunting and overwhelming. Not only that, we have to learn not to live in the guilt of the past nor ignore it. Mistakes are part of life. Our addiction was a mistake, but like any mistake we have the chance to make or find a solution. We have to practise using acceptance in our day to day life and mindset, but also to be gentle in the process.

I have been in and out of AA for 8 years. How many times did I have to decide I was rock bottom yet again, dropping back into meetings to show people I was 'trying' and begging for help. The feeling that churns inside your stomach, because all you want is to be sober - with every inch of your body and soul, you know what you need to do, but you just can't do it. The last two years, I stuck at AA, every time I relapsed I would drag my body back through that door, with my head hanging low (through shame and a probable hang over) and a very large dose of self-pity. A serial relapser - now looking through fresh eyes, I wasn't a serial relapser, I was a serial trier, and boy, that took real guts. A lot happened in those two years, but I didn't give up. I didn't give up because I learnt the art of acceptance. Looking back and picking through my behaviour I hadn't truly accepted I couldn't pick up a drink again. I mean, I could, but I would be back to square one!!! I could give the best advice to others, quote from the big book, be at the end of the phone, but without being a role model I was nothing more than a fake. I hadn't accepted that it was time to recreate myself. I don't like the phrase 'I've got the old me back'. Why would I want the old me back? I want to create a new, fabulous version of me. I was forcing acceptance during the start of my recovery and that made the process so much more difficult.

Shame, is such a powerful fire starter in the grim cycle of addiction. It stops you wanting to look back at your active addiction days, stops you wanting to come to terms with problems and I believe it puts a barrier up for wanting help. You can see the past as a chapter of lessons. Very valuable ones. Believe it or not, when we endure or have endured the most difficult situations, not only do we come out the other side stronger but it gives you so much growth. Growth, which will only get stronger and stronger the more we practise and use it. Acknowledging your addiction and past, alongside the consequences turn into life experiences (I feel grown up saying that) and you can share these with others, as first hand knowhow. You become this person that has an increased resilience who can handle setbacks (it doesn't mean you are immune to emotion). Instead of finding undefeatable obstacles, you'll be able to skip across stepping stones. Your emotional wellbeing will help reduce those negative feelings and promote a new self-image of yourself, one that you personally love which doesn't rely on other people.

At this point, I want to stress that acceptance is NOT giving up! It's not backing down and it's definitely not just skimming over life. Acceptance is bloody hard!!! You have grown so much, that you can finally have a conscience awareness of the things you cannot change nor control. Acceptance lifts that weight of shame, guilt, hurt, failure, emotion, \*\*\*\*\* – add what you want here!!

It becomes a solvable problem, in which you can tackle without being ashamed and you can take the bull by the horns, grapple with it and win. It involves grace to manage your addiction and achieve clarity needed for a successful road ahead. All that cooped up energy

you use to let consume your life. I'm not saying once you've 'accepted acceptance', it will be all sunshine and roses. Life is still hard, you will have days full of enthusiasm and success and others full of tears, wanting to bang your head against the wall and feeling so lethargic you want to hibernate. Your mental clarity will improve, now the curtain of self judgement has started to lift, letting you think so much more clearly. The struggle of life is the process of healing, no matter how uncomfortable it can get. Remember, accept the things you cannot change. Once you commit to a life of recovery that's you having the courage to change. Finally having the wisdom to know the difference, between knowing your limits, staying realistic and not overwhelming yourself. Once you've accepted yourself, it's easier to cultivate empathy and understanding towards others, strengthening relationships and connections. One thing I learnt, whilst in early recovery, a relationship had to be off the cards. It has taken the last year to realise that. I'm not saying divorce your partners, just don't focus on a relationship which isn't there yet. Recovery at the beginning has to be selfish and I needed to focus just on me. Every relationship I got into, I drank eventually because I wasn't ready. I'm now ready to allow my life to lead down a path that perhaps I'll meet someone because I have accepted myself, but also this is out of my control and I must live life on life's terms (I'm 5ft3, ginger, 31 and looking, apply below – only joking)

Acceptance is healing and goes beyond recovery. It's transformative and really will change your life and the best part is embrace your acceptance in your own unique way. Since accepting myself and addiction, I have so much more motivation, one of those is to promote recovery. Hence, why I feel so blessed to be working with the Kelsey Family. I have finally fostered energy needed to pursue my recovery goals with passion and determination. I've allowed room for healing, growth and a much brighter future, ultimately making life and recovery more enriching and meaningful.

Be gentle with yourself, take life one day at a time and remember you're never alone on this journey.

Love

Ginger xoxo