



Newsletter August 2018

A Journey In Recovery – Letting Go

Campers were being evacuated by helicopter. Fortunately, no one was swept away by the flood, and the next morning everyone was safe and accounted for. The gracious folks of the Havasupai tribe had everyone hunker down in the village community center, providing food, water, and dry clothes. The trail to the falls, village, and campground were closed immediately. I'm almost entirely positive I spent that entire day online, monitoring the situation closely, looking for some insight into how much damage had actually been caused by the flood, and to get an idea of when the trailhead may be opened to the public once again. And while I was certainly happy to hear that no one was hurt in the onslaught of Mother Nature's fierce weather, my thoughts quickly returned to my own plans. I felt as if my hopes, my summer dream had been dashed against the rocks. Anxiety was the order of the day.

Suffice it to say, I was immensely disappointed. As the days slowly rolled on, as I continued to monitor the situation, and eventually, as it became clear that the trail would not be opening anytime soon, I had an intuitive thought slowly begin to creep across my conscious. This entire experience I was having was analogous to a recurring theme in my life in Recovery; that of control, and of letting things go. Powerlessness. Taking my will and my life into my own hands. How often over the years I've felt the caustic sting of being let down when something I've attempted to exert my will over just didn't play out the way I wished. One can quickly draw a parallel between my experience with the setback mentioned above, and a multitude of other encounters one may have across the broad spectrum of the human experience, but today I'd like to draw the line towards codependency. Of struggling with a family member or friend who actively suffers with the disease of addiction. How we, with all our strength of mind, with all our ingenuity, attempt to exert our will upon the lives of others. If only they'd do as we pleased, if only they'd listen, if only they could see themselves and their miserable lives as we did, wouldn't they be better off? Wouldn't they get well? Maybe if I do A,B, or C this time things will be different! Through a thousand forms of self-delusion we set ourselves up for disappointment. This type of behavior can be a disease in and of itself. By attempting to aggressively plan out the ways we can change someone else's life situation, we endlessly drain our vital energy into a hopeless crusade. We feel the bitter pangs of anxiety and depression in our own lives when someone else just can't get seem to get it together, no matter how desperately we try and help. Paradoxically, the things we may think would be of the utmost aid to our struggling friend or family member end up assisting them in staying sick.

So, where's our solution? What's the answer to this tumultuous emotional roller coaster of codependency and enmeshment? To the best of my knowledge it lies within the maintenance of a spiritual condition and a daily walk with God. Letting go. Despite my best efforts to plan out a trip for my friends and I, despite the amount of time I spent carefully

piecing together a schematic for the perfect trip, at the last minute it all fell apart, and I let it get to me. Sure, momentary disappointment is a natural response to such a situation, but my kneejerk emotional reaction to everything in my life for the week following was stress, depression, self-pity, and anxiety. Much like I'd felt in other occurrences throughout the past few years when something didn't go my way, or when a sponsee or friend fell off the wagon.

After a week-long pity party following the news, after complaining fairly regularly about my misfortune at the hands of mother nature to just about anyone who would listen, I believe God intervened when I was ready to hear something different. It was suggested from a friend that I might read the actors scenario in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous (pages 60-63). This excerpt from the book described my situation perfectly. It speaks frankly in regard to living by self-propulsion, of trying to arrange everything in your life, including others, in our own way, of how we think things should be. And that in doing so, we are incessantly disappointed when the show doesn't come off the way we wish. I don't always know how to let go and let God. I don't always react the way that I knew or wish that I would. What I do know as unassailable fact is that when I take action to strengthen my spiritual relationship with God and work my program, my awareness of my shortcomings, of my unwillingness to accept my powerlessness over situations like these, becomes that much more readily apparent, and I can move forward. I can ask Him to guide me and direct me, to show me how to loosen my grip and just let things flow in their natural way of being. I can be that much more helpful to others, supporting them in a healthy and meaningful way, by actually setting boundaries with them, instead of attempting to insert myself into their situation or enable them. I can utilize valuable tools like prayer and meditation, gain insight from others in similar situations who came before me, and take their advice to heart. The solutions available to us are innumerable. The first step is recognizing the h problem, acknowledging that your way isn't working, and reaching out for help. Whether its PALS, AA, therapy, church, etc., we don't have to be alone with our issues, and we can get better. These programs channel the spirit of God and can be a wellspring of healing for all.

Throughout this entire episode, I finally realized that God was simply reminding me of my powerlessness. Over life. Over the lives of others. Over my job. Over my family. Regardless of how much I may want certain people in my life to get better, regardless of how much I want things to work out the way I planned, It's just not my place to make it so. That's up to Him. My Director. He rescued me from a seemingly helpless state of complete and utter drug addiction and restored me to sanity, with just a little work on my part where he saw fit. If He can place me in this position of neutrality today, then I'm certain, that with the eyes to see, and the ears to hear, he can do the same for you in this very moment. Try a little willingness to put your utmost faith and trust in Him, and you'll be surprised in the most positive way of where He'll take you. Godspeed.

-Sean
In Recovery

You can read, comment and ask questions for Sean to address in his blog on the PAL website, Home page. Palgroup.org

