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The Problem in a Nutshell

Life Happens!

We Object - It's Not Supposed
to Be This Way!

Sober Suffering

“The fact is that many people reach a dead end or plateau in their personal recovery; and if they do not understand what is occurring they frequently feel that they are losing their recovery. (Stage II Relationships, 1987, p.11).”



Earnie Larsen

“Dealing with the mountain of living is what Stage II recovery is all about. It is about getting on with life by facing those patterns, habits, and attitudes that control your life and which, for perhaps the first time, you are clearheaded, sober, or emotionally sound enough to face (Stage II Relationships, 1987, p.11 & 12).”



Earnie Larsen

Step 12



*“Here we begin to practice all of the Twelve Steps of the program in our daily lives so that we and those about us can find **emotional sobriety.**”*

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, 1952 - 1981.

Defining Emotional Sobriety

Emotional Sobriety

“Emotional sobriety is a mental state in which we do not react to our changing emotions as though they were the governing facts of our lives.

Just as alcohol or drug sobriety emerges as we gain independence from our addictive urges, emotional sobriety emerges as we gain freedom from our own emotional storms. We recognize that our emotions are reactions to people and conditions around us, and we give them simply the amount of attention that is reasonable or fitting for the specific situation.

Emotional sobriety develops when we accept life on its terms rather than demanding that life (people and situations) conform to our own expectations. When we do this, we gain emotional freedom, a true independence of spirit in which our innermost or truest self is the determining force in our lives.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. - 2020

Emotional Sobriety

“Emotional Sobriety is an appropriate balance and coordination of all that we are.

It’s when we bring into harmony the disharmonious aspect of ourselves so that they can be joint contributors to our wholeness and when we balance our need for togetherness with our desire to hold on to our separateness.

It is when the best in us does the thinking and talking for all of us.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. - 2020



“A lack of faith in ourselves to cope with life on life’s terms, leads to emotional dependency.

At any moment in our recovery we can begin the process to break out of our emotional dependency and find emotional sobriety.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)



Virginia Satir, Ph.D.

*"Life is not what it's supposed to be. **It is what it is.** The way you **cope** with it, **is what makes the difference.**"*



“Manipulation is the most dangerous threat to our emotional sobriety and emotional nourishment.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)



“Emotional dependency and the demands generated by our unhealthy dependency creates a blaming mentality which hinders our ability to learn.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)



“The quest for greater awareness of ourselves and our world is a healthy approach to living and allows us to achieve emotional sobriety.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)



“The lack of inner intimacy and self-support is the source of our emotional dependency. As we make progress towards emotional sobriety and more nourishing attitudes, we surrender our expectations that anyone or anything should be different from who they are or what it is at that particular moment.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)



“When we are dissatisfied or unhappy in our relationship, we need to take a hard look at what we expect from it, and our way of being in it and giving to it. We need to become aware of our habitual ways of thinking and feeling which give rise to behavioral patterns.”

Allen Berger, Ph.D. (2020)

Part 2

Bill's Letter on Emotional
Sobriety Written in 1956

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (January - 1958)



I think many oldsters who have put our 'booze cure' to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spear head for the next major development in AA, the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance, urges quite appropriate to age seventeen, prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven and fifty seven.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Since AA began, I've taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover, finally, that all along we had the cart before the horse. Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy and good living. Well, that's not only the neurotics problem, it's the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all of our affairs.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many AA oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious, from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream, be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden Mr. Hyde becomes our main task.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

I've recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones, folks like you and me, commencing to get results.

Last autumn, depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I've had with depressions, it wasn't a bright prospect.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

I kept asking myself, 'Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release depression?' By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer ... 'it's better to comfort than to be comforted.' Here was the formula all right, but why didn't it work?

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Suddenly, I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence, almost absolute dependence, on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the absolute quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Reinforced by what grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed upon any act or circumstance whatsoever.

Then could I be free to love as Francis did. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing love appropriate to each relation of life.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Plainly, I could not avail myself to God's love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn't possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependencies meant demand, a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me. While those words 'absolute dependence' may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can't flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

..... If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependence and its consequent demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love: we may then be able to gain emotional sobriety.

Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier by Bill Wilson (1958)

Of course I haven't offered you a really new idea only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own "hexes" at depth. Nowadays, my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity, or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine."

Step Ten

Continued to take
personal inventory and
when we were *wrong*,
promptly admitted it.

Step Ten

“...It is a spiritual axiom that **every time** we are disturbed, **no matter what the cause**, there is something **wrong** with us.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,
Alcoholics Anonymous, 1952 - 1981.



Step Ten



“We can try to stop making unreasonable demands upon those we love.”

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,
Alcoholics Anonymous, 1952 - 1981.*

Step Ten



“A spot check inventory taken in the midst of such disturbance can be of very great help in quieting stormy emotions.”

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,
Alcoholics Anonymous, 1952 - 1981.*

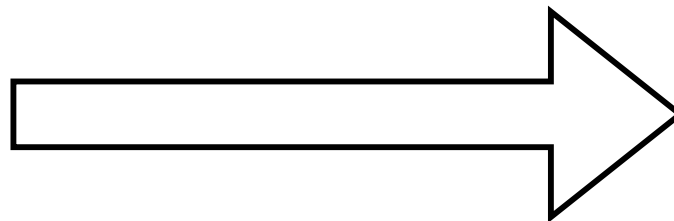
The Essence of Emotional Sobriety



Viktor Frankl, M.D.

*“There’s a **space** between the Stimulus and our Response. In that space **is our power to choose our response**. In our response lies our growth and our freedom - **try to live there.**”*

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*“When something goes wrong I try to make a picture in my mind of a circle with myself in the middle and then I ask myself **what part in my problem are my thoughts playing, my fears, ...my expectations, my interpretations....and my lack of faith to be able to grow .**”*



Virginia Satir, Ph.D.

Emotional sobriety creates

***emotional
freedom, a true
independence of
spirit.***

“

sobriety is only the bare beginning. It is only the first gift of the first awakening. If more gifts are to be received, our awakening has to go on. And if it does go on, we find that bit by bit by bit we can discard the old life – the one that didn't work – for a new life that can and does work under any conditions whatever. Regardless of worldly success or failure, regardless of pain or joy, regardless of sickness or health or even of death itself, a new life of endless possibilities can be lived if we are willing to continue our awakening.”



Bill Wilson (1957).

UNPACKING BILL WILSON'S 1956 LETTER ON
Emotional Sobriety



Allen Berger, Ph.D.

12 Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery



Avoiding Relapse through Self-Awareness
and Right Action

Allen Berger, Ph.D.

12 Smart Things to Do When the Booze and the Drugs Are Gone



Choosing Emotional Sobriety
through Self-Awareness
and Right Action

Allen Berger, Ph.D.

12

Hidden Rewards of Making Amends



Finding Forgiveness and Self-Respect
by Working Steps 8-10

Allen Berger, Ph.D.

12

More

Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery



Navigating Common Pitfalls
on your Sobriety Journey

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