

Great Expectations: Step III

When we turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God of our understanding, we're turning over our thoughts and the actions that follow from those thoughts. Barring unforeseen circumstances, we can relinquish our ordinary thoughts, follow the program's suggestions and expect nice things. We like nice things.

We read Big Book stories in which recovering alcoholics regain their careers and live comfortably. They regain relationships with spouses, children, parents and siblings. Or they meet that "Special Someone." In recovery, they feel loved, trusted, productive and respected. Don't you expect this sort of scenario, too? I did. I had great expectations!

Long before bottoming out, I'd had a nice career – good earnings, regular promotions; leadership positions in, and awards from, professional organizations; a seat on an obscure but prestigious board of trustees, etc. In recovery, I expected more of the same. That never happened.

During the first few years of recovery, my resume led to many interviews and several callbacks, but no career position. I squeaked along in a series of temporary office jobs, using my "B Set" of skills instead of my professional qualifications and track record.

I rented a three-room apartment – less than half the size of homes I'd previously owned. I drove my 14-year-old car to appointments and assignments. In my 5th year of sobriety, I landed a professional position. "Five years," I said to God. "It's about time!"

Within a year, top management changed and the new regime fired me, my boss and my boss' boss. I "re-upped" with several temp agencies and continued to live in my small apartment and shop at the cheapest grocery. I did it One Day At A Time, "knowing" that One Day, at some time, I'd get what I expected – a good job in my field, with good salary and benefits, resulting in a more affluent life style and better "social standing." I was wrong.

Family? One of my two sons – the one who has given me all the grandkids, includes me in his family's life. But the other son hasn't had anything to do with me for a decade or more. Snailmail, e-mail, gifts, cards, calls and notes all go unanswered.

Spouse or "Special Someone?" Nope. I've met some interesting guys, all of whom were obviously uninterested in me. The only male in my boudoir is a shaggy dog.

In my 7th year of sobriety, my dog died. My ex-husband died. It seemed like he'd gone on to have more ex-wives than I had had dates in the 20-some years since we divorced. In my 8th year, my mother died. She was in her Nineties. And I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. Along with terror, pain and despair.

Through it all, the lessons of my third sponsor kept popping into my addled brain. Step 3 means three things: (1) Turn over my thoughts: stick to my job only, (2) Turn over my actions: butt out and let "them" do their jobs – even if they might screw up, and (3) Turn over my thoughts and actions: trust God to do God's job -- bring about outcomes.

How many times have I clung to that lesson with all the fervor of a drowning person clutching a slimy log to stay afloat!?

In my 10th year of sobriety, I've realized that what I expected to lead to the kind of life I wanted didn't have anything to do with the life I've got. I wanted good job so I could buy a nice, new car. Although I never got a "real" good job, I've got a nice car; I bought it new a few years back.

I wanted a good salary to afford a nice house. I never earned anything like the salary I'd made before bottoming out. But I've bought a nice house, using funds left by my mother to buy her house – in a cute, safe city neighborhood.

I wanted a professional career and the sense of self-worth and social status that goes with it. I feel useful to my community in the volunteer work I do for recovering alcoholics and a neighborhood health center.

In other words, I've "got it all." I just didn't get it *the way that I expected* to get it. If not for my third sponsor, Deb, I would have placed more emphasis on my own expectations of cause and effect, and would have been drinking for years – if I lived long enough.

But I was willing to learn the program more deeply –day by day. I was willing to put effort into Step 3. I learned that my expectations limit god. Turning my will (thoughts) and my life (actions) over to the care of my god? Dang! That's "a killer." And a life-saver!

Now that I'm sober, retired, comfortable and of service to others, what do I expect? Simply more adventures on the road of recovery. More will be revealed...

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