

Do You Want to Get Well?

Susan Peabody

I believe that to get well we have to face our fear. In 1982, when a friend suggested I go to a 12-Step program, I blurted out, “I can’t, I’m afraid they might cure me.” Little did I realize what I was saying about myself.

It was years before I was able to face the fear I expressed to my friend that day, but the time finally came. I was discussing my hesitancy about going to a 12-Step program with my therapist, when he suddenly asked me, “What holds you back from getting well? What do you think the block is?” Without thinking, I simply admitted that recovery was unfamiliar. It was a mystery that lay beyond a closed door and I had no peep hole. That mystery felt like a beast ready to devour me if I opened the door. “What if getting better is worse than being sick?” I said to him. “It can happen. Besides, I think I have bonded to my vision of myself as a victim. I prefer self-pity to self-esteem” My therapist looked at me in surprise, but before he could say anything I left. I really didn’t want to talk about this because it made me feel ashamed.

Later, when I was alone, I began to think about what I had revealed to my therapist about my fear of getting well and my victim mentality. Moments later, for no explainable reason, I got down on my knees and prayed for the willingness, courage, and guidance to change. I said out loud, “God help me! I want to get well!” Then I went to an 12-StepA.A. meeting.

My first meeting was amazing. I sat in the back of the room, trying not to be seen, crying my eyes out. The speaker was talking about himself and yet he seemed to be talking about me. Most of all, I felt as if I had come home, without understanding why.

Home, as it turned out, was the right word for what I was feeling. The 12-Step program I belong to has become my second home, and it is not just a physical place. Metaphorically, it is that place in my heart where my soul resided before the trauma of my childhood and the years of ensuing addiction. It is where I am free and unencumbered by my fears and illusions. Literally, it is the meetings I attend almost every day. Most of all, recovery is what was behind that door I was so afraid of where my Higher Power teaches me everything I need to know about getting better and reaching my full potential as a human being.

Today I am a teacher and writer and, most of all, I am healthy. I am happy and I am well. All I had to do was change how I was thinking and behaving. I had to embrace new ideas and reach out for help. I had to admit I had a problem and face my fears. Slowly my fear became hope and my hope became the energy I needed to get out of my rut and live life to the fullest.

What have I learned from all this? God is not going to heal us without our permission. We must say yes to recovery. We must get past our reservations about being “happy, joyous and free” (as strange as that sounds). We must come home.

