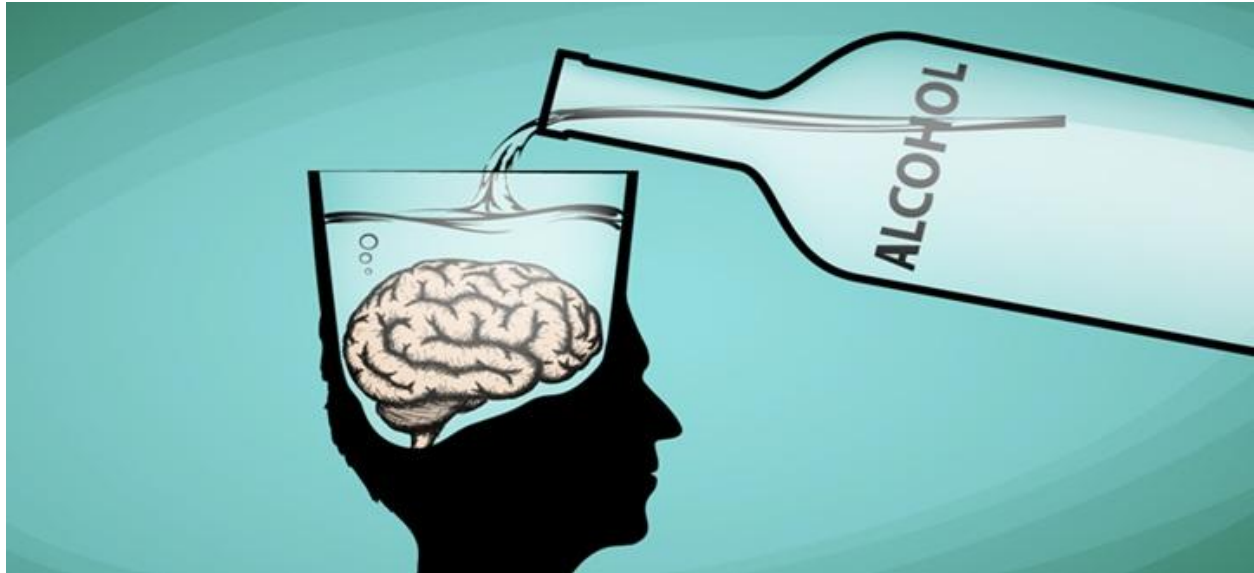


The Transformation of My Alcoholic Craving



My Sick and Twisted Alcoholic Mind

By Josh P.

“I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends”

The Beatles, With A Little Help From My Friends

I entered recovery over two years ago when I was semi-forced into a treatment facility: 10/10/23. The beginning of the end of my alcoholic insanity.

I remember one night the group activity was watercolor painting; sort of like toddlers in preschool. *Exactly*, like toddlers in preschool, actually. My new buddy sat to my right, and we were sharing a cup of water to clean our paintbrushes. Just having fun and jesting about how goofy it was that there we sat: two mid-twenty-year-old adult males, painting inside the lines of the template we’d chosen.

Little did I know I was but a toddler in an adult’s body. I actually went on to take up painting as a hobby from this experience. But that strays from the topic of this post:

I remarked to this new friend, whose drug of choice was not alcohol (as mine is) “if any amount of alcohol was in that water/paint cup right there, I’d chug it as fast as I could.”

We laughed. He said “Yeah, you’re an alcoholic.” We laughed some more. We have a peculiar sense of humor, many of us alcoholics or addicts, because many of us have a sick and twisted mind. That’s what I’ve got.

You see, my friend was exactly correct: I am an alcoholic. Not because I like to drink. Because I have the mental obsession that results from the phenomenon of the alcoholic craving and allergy. If you don’t know what that means, there’s literature on the topic.

What that means for me is that if I take any amount of alcohol into my system, my sick and twisted mind elevates having *more* of this poison above **all else**, and it is never satiated. There's never a point when my brain says "okay, I feel good. I've had enough for now. Maybe I'll have some more later." My sick and twisted mind, in response to alcohol—can only say:

“MORE. OF THAT. NOW. THEN DO IT AGAIN. AD INFINITUM.” If I take even a single drink—a single sip—this allergic reaction that is the phenomenon of craving that results in mental obsession blasts off.

To Thine Own Self Be True: Accepting and Coming to Understand My Sick and Twisted Mind

The treatment facility safely detoxed me and alleviated my physical craving and dependence on alcohol. Here's my non-medical opinion (I'm not a physician): don't *ever* try to quit drinking on your own, especially if you are experiencing **any** symptoms of withdrawal. It could very likely kill you.

Attending a plethora of recovery meetings of many different programs, I was told that the mental obsession and craving would eventually subside, if I could *just* stick it out long enough; if I could *endure*. **That is absolutely true.** For me, it took several months for my mental obsession to *finally* subside.

The way I see it (as a non-professional on the subject matter, and speaking only from my own lived experience), the tough reality is that the alcoholic must not grow impatient and must fortify their own will, strength, resolve, and endurance if they are to stick it out long enough to finally be alleviated of such obsession—because no one else can do that for them. It must be mustered from within—but some good friends can help one muster that will and strength. *The Beatles* were right: we all can get by with a little help from our friends.

I say *finally* because I relapsed four times, each time at some point between the three-month and four-month mark. The obsession wasn't going away. I grew impatient—believed it wouldn't subside. How long would this period of abstinence have to be, that I would have to suffer through, so my mental obsession would subside?

Somehow, I finally stuck it out through the four-month mark: my wall. Then I reached 5 months. Then 6. Then 7. Then 8. 9. 10. Now 11, February 5th **will** be 12. (I have several theories about how I finally stuck it through, which I don't wish to litigate here, but not one of those theories includes God.)

For me, I don't actually know that the craving or obsession subsided—I think it transformed. First attending recovery meetings, I absolutely loved it. I was an isolated alcoholic. I drank alone in front of a screen.

Meeting *so many like-minded and simply cool* people, nearly *all* the time? Every single day I met new people, took their phone numbers. Started texting with them. Started calling them. I started showing up to meetings 30 minutes early and always being in the last group of fellows to depart; just to socialize. I started caring about how their lives were going, and they cared about mine. I finally felt like I belonged. *I finally knew fellowship.*

When I was relapsing, almost every time was after I left a recovery meeting. Sometimes, I procured the poison on my very way home.

When I left the meetings, I still felt *something* was missing... like I didn't get *something* I wanted... or that I didn't get *enough* of it... I felt this *longing for something*... my sick and twisted mind—when I was relapsing—just defaulted to assuming I was longing for, craving, and obsessing about alcohol. So, I went out and got some. Then drank it.

Today, with over 11 months of continuous abstinence from alcohol, I still often feel this same way when I leave meetings. That something's missing. That I didn't get *enough* of *something*. A longing for *more*...

A Little Help From My Friends

It took me 9 months of clarity to identify what it was I was truly still craving. *More fellowship. More human connection.* If I leave a meeting feeling that sense of longing, it means I didn't shake enough people's hands. It means I didn't look enough fellows in their eyes and exchange words with them. I didn't get enough engaging conversation with my fellows in the meeting-after-the-meeting, or the meeting-before-the-meeting. It means I didn't get to hear about the lives of my fellows as much as I wanted.

More... more... more...

Now, I have identified and named this strange feeling of longing I get when I leave a meeting: I'm longing for more fellowship. Craving more fellowship.

The craving is the exact same, almost, just for an entirely different thing. If I go a day without texting several fellows; or calling a few fellows; or without seeing some real fellow's eyeballs, shaking some real fellow's hands, or touching their shoulder as I ask them how they're doing—

*Damn. I didn't get my fix. More. I want **MORE**.*

Fellowship. Not alcohol. I actually do remember the last time I craved some alcohol. It's not pertinent to this story, the exact details. But it was several months ago, it lasted for less than an instant, it left even quicker than it came, and it's the only recollection I have of even considering having a drink in these past 9 months. Not a single honest desire to have a drink.

But now that I have identified and can call this peculiar craving—this perplexing feeling of longing, by its true name: a craving for *more* fellowship; *more* human connection; that I can develop healthy ways to cope with this unsatiated craving.

In recovery, there's a near endless supply of fellowship—even outside the meetings—if you take down the numbers of your fellows while you're at the meeting, then actually text or call them.

I now know if I feel this way leaving a meeting, I just need to tap into this near-endless, 24 hours a day, eight days a week, supply of fellowship. How exactly I do this I'm still working out. But it's not a hard task to figure out. Sometimes when I get in my car before I leave the parking lot of the meeting, I text anywhere from 3-7 fellows who I think will text back. When I get home, if it's not too late (because I attend meetings in the evenings) I

see if anyone picks up the phone. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. That's when I get back to texting like a madman.

But make no mistake—***I am a madman***. I have a sick and twisted mind.

I'm simply coming to understand how my sick and twisted mind works.

If you know how something works, you can fix it.

P.S. I have not maintained anything like perfect adherence to these principles.

Josh P. (27M) had his final sip of alcohol on February 4, 2025, after four early-recovery relapses, always at the three to four month mark. His treatment experience exposed him to A.A., Secular A.A., N.A., SMART Recovery (where he later trained as a facilitator), and Recovery Dharma. A logical thinker who once believed traditional A.A. was the only “safe and empirically proven” path for an alcoholic, Josh threw himself into traditional A.A.: he got a sponsor, prayed despite being agnostic, worked the Steps and heeded all his sponsors requests. But the dogmatic culture in his local meetings—and the pressure to conform spiritually—left him alienated and spiritually blocked.

*After his fourth relapse, Josh realized **something** must change: and stepped away from A.A. for seven months, relying on meditation, journaling, SMART tools, and honest reflection. When he returned, it was through a newly founded in-person secular A.A. meeting, where the last piece of his recovery finally clicked. He realized that to recover, all he needed to do was to thine own self be true; echoing Bill W.'s famous reminder that “the roads to recovery are many.” This allowed him to finally form a true connection with his higher power: fellowship & human connection, as well as good orderly direction.*

Today, Josh is pursuing a career in public service and co-founding a software development company; as well as finding himself naturally growing spiritually. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, writing, reading, politics, service, and sponsors/mentors people of all beliefs, backgrounds and ages. Above all, he enjoys living his life in the fourth dimension. He currently serves as G.S.R. of his Homegroup, as a County Intergroup Liaison of his Area assembly, and facilitates a SMART Recovery meeting. Josh identifies as:

A Grateful Alcoholic

Grateful to be a Recovered Alcoholic

An Eclectic Student of Holistic Recovery

His writing can be found at: <https://substack.com/@joshuajeeb>

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