



Serene Scene

Transitional Sober Living Magazine

LONG BEACH®

SERENE CENTER

www.serenecenter.com

October, 2010 Issue

WHERE DID MY IMPORTANCE GO?

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II

BODY

PSYCHOTHERAPY

WHAT THE BODY KNOWS,
THE MIND FORGETS
Sherry Gaba, LCSW

REALIZING THAT YOU HAVE A DRUG PROBLEM

Courtesy of Serene Scene's
Medical Editor, Richard Gracer, M.D.

ACCEPTANCE AND RECOVERY, PART 3

Michael G.

POINT OF RETURN MONTHLY STORY

A Story from One Alcoholic to Another

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Captain Larry Smith,
Author of The Daily Life Plan Journal

12 STEP TREK

Step #1: We Admitted We Were Powerless...

12 Step Worksheet Series

Courtesy of Serene Center Long Beach

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTRAL SPOTLIGHT:

DRUG ADDICTION, ALCOHOLISM,
AND MALNUTRITION

Daryl Samson, MEd

WHERE DID MY IMPORTANCE GO?

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II



Andrew Martin
M.B.A., CADC II



Anyone that has experienced early recovery from alcoholism and/or drug addiction knows that many changes take place during the first twelve months of sobriety and working a recovery program. From a clinical perspective, the changes taking place involve four key areas of the disease:

Physiological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.The synapses in the nucleus accumbens are repairing to create homeostasis. 2.The hedonic threshold is adjusting to allow for appropriate perception of fun. 3.New neuropathways are forming to create more appropriate thought processes.
Psychological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Coping skills to manage stress are developing. 2.Interpretations of thinking (cognitions) are becoming more accurate. 3.Anxiety and superstition are better understood and tolerated.
Sociological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Understanding of societal norms and societal rules is developed. 2.Familial and intimate relationships are understood and behaviors are modified. 3.Boundaries and rules are developed to protect the individual.
Spiritual	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Isolation is replaced with a sense of fellowship and belonging. 2.Superiority and ego are understood and self-importance is mediated. 3.Understanding of the individual's place in this life experience.

WHERE DID MY IMPORTANCE GO?

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II

The topic of this article refers to the gradual recognition that self-importance is significantly changed once one begins the journey into recovery.

The ego of an individual with an active addiction is exaggerated. The exaggeration comes from a learned behavior that is directly associated to the addicted individual's psychological need to suppress chronic and unmanageable stress combined with physiological cravings for addictive substances. In a relatively short period of time, the addict quickly realizes that he/she must act independently of others in order to secure survival in their lifestyle. The addict realizes that he/she is the most important person in their world, and that he/she is the only person that matters to the people around them. The addict expects all those around them to indulge their every need or the addict will cut them off. This distorted way of thinking causes a cycle of narcissistic behaviors reinforced by the drug and alcohol use.



In recovery, the individual learns that it is an absolute necessity to rely on other people for assistance in arresting the disease of addiction. At first, asking for and accepting appropriate help is nearly impossible for the individual in early recovery. Over time, the individual begins to realize that he/she is not the only person they can rely upon, and a sense of humility begins to appear. With a newly found humble approach to surviving in a lifestyle of recovery, the recovering person is able to shift their understanding to allow for the possibility that they are not the important people they once thought they were. This form of humility is critical to their recovery effort. However, this type of humility does not come easily.

As mentioned earlier, the addict who is active in their addiction has created a habitual thought process that they are the most important person in their own lives and in everyone else's lives as well. With recovery comes the realization that they must change their thinking. When the individual begins to understand that they are not the most important person in everyone else's lives, they must deal with the loss of that status. People in early recovery must go through a grieving process, not only for the drugs and alcohol that they have lost, but also for the image of themselves as an important person. Suddenly the recovering person feels as if they are of no consequence, have no purpose, and are lost as a human being.

There is one very important distinction for the person in early recovery to make: he/she must realize that they remain important, and that their importance has shifted from the external to the internal. The recovering person must create an understanding that they remain the most important person around: to themselves. Without themselves, the recovering person will not be able to maintain sobriety, do the work necessary to cope with life's stresses, build relationships with others that will support them in recovery, understand that there is much more to their universe than they have ever perceived, and make the necessary prudent choices to live a fulfilling lifestyle of long-term recovery.

The importance that a recovering person has is infinite when it comes to self-care, self-efficacy and self-awareness. Without the self, the recovering person would not be able to achieve long-term recovery. Furthermore, in taking care of himself/herself, the recovering person is more likely



WHERE DID MY IMPORTANCE GO?

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC li

to have others in their lives that choose to bond with and love them. Because personal behaviors begin with the individual, there can be no more important person to the recovering person than himself/herself.

Physiological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once abstinent for mood altering addictive substances, the recovering person chooses to use or not use. • Maintaining a healthy lifestyle of nutrition and fitness helps the brain to create more neuropathways faster. • Practicing mindfulness techniques helps to develop new neuropathways that bypass old neuro-clusters created by trauma.
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open, honest and willing to participate in therapy jump starts wellness. • Surrounding one's self with support groups and supportive individuals helps to check thinking processes for distortions. • Creating discipline to tolerate anxiety helps to alleviate the need for the anxiety.
Sociological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in society and following the rules and norms creates a bond with the community. • Interacting with the family system in new healthier ways reduces stress of relationships. • Remaining flexible within a defined set of personal boundaries alleviates crisis thinking.
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with people on a humanistic level creates powerful spiritual bonds. • Being mindful of one's self and humble of one's position with others brings humility. • Understanding that there are higher powers than one's self creates purpose.

There is another realization that comes from an understanding that one's sense of importance to the external world is greatly diminished: a concept of a higher power is created. Because the recovering person has admitted that they are not the most important thing in other people's lives, they must come to terms with how they fit into their life as a whole. Questions arise such as, what is my purpose, how can I contribute to life, and is there a place for me in this world? These questions are most effectively answered with a realization that there is a higher power than the individual in recovery. Once the development of a higher power concept is in place, then the recovering person can be a part of something bigger. He/she can be comfortable having a role to play within the grand scheme of things. No longer does the recovering person need to feel as if they are responsible for everything, and they are able to turn things over to the care of their higher power.

Self-importance never goes away, it merely changes with the phase of life one is in. If it is possible to be all-important and insignificant at the same time; that may be how many in recovery rightly feel about themselves. **SS**