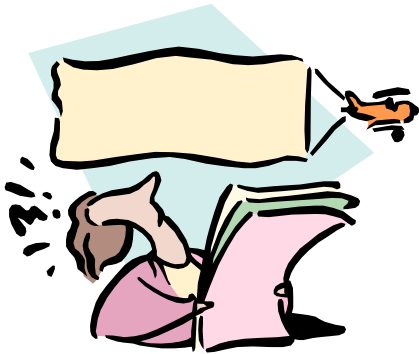




Recovery Slogans: Good Advice for Everyone

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Slogans are everywhere. Short, easy to remember, catchy phrases encapsulate and project a company's business image and specific niche in the market, or spread a targeted message about a political candidate's essence and purpose. Bumper stickers effectively and efficiently communicate a driver's opinions and beliefs on issues, and signal a unifying call to others who think and feel the same way.



The effectiveness of slogans in both reinforcing a message and self identifying a group of people in a common belief system has not been lost on communities of individuals recovering from a variety of addictions and compulsions. During meetings of self help support groups for people suffering from the effects of alcohol, drugs, compulsive overeating, gambling, sexual acting out, co-dependency and other conditions, one will often see and hear several quick reminders of those simple ideas and practices that have helped save so many lives over the years.

Interestingly enough, while reinforcing important principles and practices of living for members of 12 step "Anonymous" programs, recovery slogans also offer wonderful gold nuggets - 'pearls of wisdom', if you like - to any and all of us as we "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny" (page 164, Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition). This month's E-tips will focus on a few of the more well known, often repeated slogans of AA, Alanon, NA, OA, GA and other programs, in an effort to share some of the experience, strength and hope with a wider audience. Here is one such wise idea to consider daily.

"LIVE AND LET LIVE"

Recovering people learn early on that one essential life lesson involves keeping focused on one's own thoughts, feelings, needs and personal responsibilities, and allowing others to do the same. Meddling in others' affairs by expressing - indeed, even forming - opinions or judgments about how others choose to conduct themselves takes valuable time, energy and wisdom away from the first job we all have, namely managing our own lives appropriately and responsibly. Besides, many of us haven't done so well with our own lives that we actually have the credentials or experience to really know what is best for someone else.

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“KEEP COMING!”

An essential element of most self help support group meetings is sharing, a time set aside to give participants an opportunity to reflect and comment on insights gained from a speaker, or the reading that was the focus of that meeting. Frequently someone will simply talk about a challenging situation that occurred recently in his/her life, and from time to time share sadness or pain, or shed a tear, in the process. Inevitably, at the end of that person’s message, a chorus will respond with, among other things, the reassuring phrase, “Keep coming.” As simple and obvious as it may seem, there are a number of powerful underlying, healing messages behind the words, messages that we all need to hear at some time or other.



“We’re with you.”

“Yes, we understand.”

“As difficult as your situation may seem, you’re not alone.”

“You’ve come to the right place.”

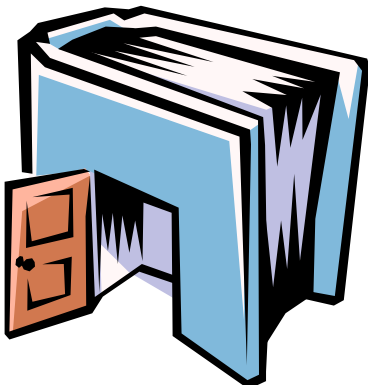
“It’s going to be all right.”

“You are welcome here.”

“You belong.”

The simple phrase, “Keep coming”, also serves as a loving reminder that, while you or I may be on the right track to finding answers to some of our biggest questions, it probably won’t happen overnight. Patience and perspective are crucial ingredients in the healing process. Even if we are simply learning a new life skill, or starting new job, or getting into

psychotherapy, being willing to fumble, fall, or make false starts at first - but keep at it - gives us the time and opportunity necessary to make any major life change.



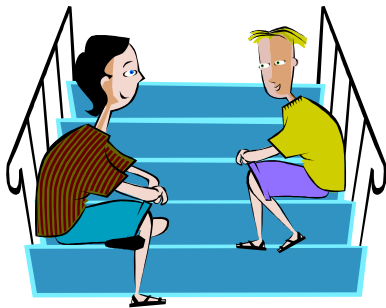
Maybe that’s why self help recovering people also constantly remind one another to take things... “ONE DAY AT A TIME”. Maybe it’s the only way anything worthwhile comes to us.

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“PRINCIPLES OVER PERSONALITIES”

This week a new U.S. president took the oath of office, as every one of his predecessors



before him has done. Each new leader has sworn the same promise to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution that outlines the timeless principles of this great experiment in democracy from its very beginning. The stark differences between the ways this president and his immediate predecessor understand and interpret the same oath - in defense of the same Constitution - are certainly well documented. Those differences represent a perfect illustration of the wisdom and foresight shown by the founders of AA in emphasizing enduring principles and truth within their program of recovery above and beyond any

one of their own personal preferences about how things ought to be done.

The truth is that all principles, wisdom and even good ideas should, and do, outlive the individual lives of those who conceive them. Understanding of truth is expanded upon, new ideas are developed and something even greater is always just around the corner. Any time we idealize *too much* those people who inspire us, or lead us, we set them up for discrediting and ourselves for disappointment. Even worse things happen when we elevate our own selves beyond realistic levels of importance for the good things we may think, say or do. We simply don’t deserve it. It seems that the very greatest of those among us - the Gandhi’s, Newton’s and others like them, realize that, and find ways to keep their feet, and our ideas about them, grounded. So it should be with us as well.

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