

PNC Presentation

Saturday, June 22 @ 10:30 AM ~ 8-12 minutes

I want to thank the committee for asking me to present on this topic.

I am so nervous right now. I was hoping I could skate by not presenting on a topic at this PNC by volunteering for the registration table, but I have a feeling that our lovely Oregon Area Delegate Miss Vera had something to do with this. Why? Because she told me at PRAASA that she was going to put my name in the ring the next time something came up. So, if this goes terribly bad, we can blame her....NOT ME OF COURSE. Now that's 12 steps in action right there. Ok let's get this party started.

My name is Penny and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is April 2, 1997. My topic is: Tomorrow's World – Courage to be Vigilant (dangers or difficulties)"
"How do we remain inclusive for our future?"

I'm sorry but when I saw this topic I thought this isn't just "A topic" this is many topics...how on earth do I create a presentation...where do I start...then I was reminded "call your service sponsor"...what a wonderful idea.

Let's start with Courage to be Vigilant

It always makes me smile when I really see God's work at hand especially in my life. I no sooner received this email when some things were being stirred up in my home group that some guy was speaking rudely in a meeting and 4-5 people got up and walked out....imagine that...sensitive alcoholics. Then it was told to me that my home group had a business meeting and it was decided that 2-people were going to write this man a letter and explain how his rude behavior was inappropriate. It was decided that this letter would be anonymous.

I immediately called my sponsor and she laughed at first and then reminded me that it is easy to love the loveable ones it's the ones that are hard to love is where we are charged to use the spiritual tools in this program that we have hopefully learned and apply them. She lovingly reminded me that All are welcome, and we don't kick anyone out and we surely don't send them a letter.

I remembered this topic that I was to present on and so I went and typed in the word vigilance and up popped page 92 in Step 10 that read..... *"Now that we are in AA and sober, and winning back the esteem of our friends and business associates, we find that we still need to exercise special vigilance. As an insurance against "big-shot-ism" we can often check ourselves by remembering that we are today sober only by the Grace of God and that any success we may be having is far more His success than ours. Finally, we begin to see that all people including ourselves are to some extent emotionally ill as well as frequently wrong, and then we approach true tolerance and see what real love for our fellows actually means. It will become more and more evident as we go forward and that it is pointless to become angry or get hurt by people who, like us, are suffering from the pains of growing up.* Once I read this I

had this knowing that I needed to go to my home group and share what I had just read....but then I started to get worried that people would look at me like a bleeding deacon and think that I was trying to push my own agenda and then once again remembering what I just read “I was exercising special vigilance and I had a knowing that all I can do is share from the heart and see what happens. As I attended this business meeting, I was careful to ask God to help guide my tongue and to please use me as an instrument to share whatever His Will was for this group and to keep me out of it. I was filled with warmth that everyone in the group felt that it was not appropriate to send any kind of letter. They all agreed that this individual was and had been going through some suffering of his own and that the men and possibly women needed to reach to him to see how he was doing and what, if anything we could help with. One of the individuals felt as if something needed to be said and it could not be let go and used examples of how he was going to talk to this man and used words of “we this and we that”....we lovingly explained that if you want your message to be heard to use “when you, I feel” We also shared the importance of using “I” statements when talking to someone. He was very open to this. I can only imagine how it would have felt to receive an anonymous letter from someone saying that my behavior was inappropriate and not even able to respond.

As I do more reflection on this I am reminded of a very important Tradition. Tradition 3! The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. The pamphlet 12 Traditions illustrated tells us why AA decided to forgo this privilege to be “inclusive...never exclusive.... The illustrated pamphlet tells us that as the Fellowship was nearing it’s 10-year mark, the office that served as headquarters asked the groups to list their rules and send them in....(I would’ve loved to see those rules). It states that if these rules would have been in force everywhere at once, it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined AA. I also went to the Grapevine and found the article titled “Inclusive, Never exclusive”. It also quoted the 3rd Tradition but what made me chuckle that I wanted to share that even Dr. Bob himself had expressed his concern about admitting women to AA. Thank goodness for the early members who tried it the other way and it didn’t work. And thank goodness a woman came to the meeting.

So, with that being said this is great opportunity to move right into: **So How do we remain inclusive for our future**

I have so many things running through my head about this and my heart. BUT Tradition 1 tells me that our individual sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us. I continue to learn that unless I put aside my individual desires and ambitions, I can harm my group. I’m truly not in the business of harming people today on purpose.

The first thing I believe is important is what was so freely given to me when I asked a certain woman to be my sponsor....my first time of ever asking for help and actually listening. She taught me so much but more important she took me through the steps with just her the first time. After that, she got me into working the steps with a group of women every year for the first 12 years of my recovery. Now I work them every other year with a group of women. She taught me that it wasn’t all about me....of course when she made that comment to me “of

course it is all about you Penny” I said, “thank you, finally”....while it’s funny for me to laugh at now, I do realize it was because I still had a lot more to learn and she had her hands full. My sponsor taught me how to have a conversation with my husband without yelling....I never thought that was possible. She taught me how to be a mother. She taught me about being selfless. Not judging. Hearing and listening to all sides of every story. Because we all have stories. She taught me that it’s important that what you reflect in the rooms of AA (because we can all sound great in the meetings) are you reflecting them to your friends and family? She taught me about service work. Most importantly she taught me it was ok to have a God of my own understanding but that I needed to turn to him so that I could be of use to myself and to others. Trust God, Clean House, & Help Others.

Have you heard of the book called “Our Great Responsibility”? This book is *a selection of Bill W’s General Service Conference Talks from 1951-1970*. This book not only represents the first time these talks have been made available in print form to the general reader, but it is also the first original book from AA in over 30 years. This amazing book captures a clear picture of Bill’s vision for the future of AA and pose questions that are still quite relevant today.

I wanted to quote some things from this book. Bill quoted in Dr. Bob’s Farewell. *“The simplicity of our program. Let’s not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are interesting to the scientific mind but have very little to do with our actual AA work. Our Twelve Steps, the words love and service. We understand what love is and we understand what service is. So, let’s bear those two things in mind. Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let’s use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.*

“And one more thing: None of us would be here today if somebody hadn’t taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to have done numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So, let us never get the degree of smug complacency that we’re not willing to extend, or attempt to , that help which has been so beneficial to us, to our less fortunate.”

I am reminded of the saying that “We teach people how to treat us”... so if I am living the life of true love and kindness and tolerance of those that have been in the rooms or that are just coming in then I believe in what this quote says “Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.....

I am grateful to the women and men that have been such great examples for me.

Finally – What are the dangers or difficulties:

Where do I start? Do I tell you that when I came into the program in 1996 and relapsed after about 28 days and “pretended to do the program”.....I came back in 1997, and my sponsor sat me down and said to me “here’s everything I feel is important to stay in the middle and keep

from relapse one day- at-a-time” then she asked me to make a list of everything that I didn’t do compared to her list and once my list was done, she said “this is exactly what I am going to suggest that you do”.....she lovingly reminded me that if you want what I have you really need to do what I have done. And so, I did and here I am today.

Do I talk about what the BB tells us that “it is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels and that if we do this we are headed for trouble? Do I remind you that we are alcoholics and we are not cured from this disease? My sponsor always reminds me that I do not get to graduate from this program – EVER. This is for breadth of our lives.

I would just like to end with (another quote from the BB) because I love how some folks say we can only suggest – there cannot be any MUSTS.....and I say to them....“Every day is a day when we MUST carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. “How can I best serve Thee” “These are thoughts which must go with us constantly....

I love this program of Alcoholics Anonymous and I am so grateful for each day that I do get to carry the vision of God’s will into my life and others.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service

Penny H,
Oregon Area 58 Alt. Chair