

Hooked On Recovery

November 12, 2004

Raking Leaves

Today it's snowing! Well snowing, raining, sleeting, freezing... yes, winter has showed up in Connecticut. Yesterday, I was raking leaves with my kids.

My yard isn't too big, maybe a quarter acre or so. And we don't have a single tree on it, but my neighbor has two of the oldest, biggest oak trees you've ever seen. This year they blanketed my back yard with a layer of leaves about seven feet thick. I was pretty sure we had a trampoline out there somewhere, and one of those Little Tikes slides and I thought I remembered a tugboat sandbox over near the garden. I was standing at the window with the morning cup of coffee, contemplating this monumentous mass of foliage, and Matty (he's two) walked over and asked, "Whatcha doin' Dad?"

"Looking at all those leaves...."

Matty looked out, looked at me, looked back out and said with proper drama, "Oh..... my..... GOD!"

We had a lot of leaves to rake! What's worse is that this was the week that the town scheduled to pick up the leaves off our street. And we could hear the truck the next street over! Oh no.....

I saddled up the troops, Joshua (10) got a big rake, Samantha (8) borrowed a neighbor's rake and Matty had his little rake – the kind you use to rake behind bushes. I had a big rake too and we laid out a huge tarp and began raking leaves onto it. Soon, the neighbor girls (11 and 9) came over and I did my best Tom Sawyer and soon they were piling leaves on too. Within an hour the yard was raked, the leaves were in the street and the kids had uncovered the trampoline and were bouncing away. I raked the front – it's small and not many leaves out there. Then I ran the lawn mower for hopefully the last time this year. The yard looked good! What a difference.

There's something about raking leaves that triggers a nerve in me – like painting a house, mowing the lawn, watching a Zamboni clean the ice. It has something to do with completing the picture. Ever been to a hockey game and the Zamboni misses a sliver of ice? What is that uncontrollable urge to wipe that sliver? It happens when I rake the yard or even mow the yard. I like to have it "completed". I like to have the clean slate. I like to have a clean yard, it feels good.

Recovery is the same way. By working the process, our yards become clean. And we have to work at keeping our yards looking good. When leaves fall, we need to break out the rake and clean it again. As I write this, I can see the kids bouncing, laughing, enjoying life. A whole bunch of kids... and they're not all Valentines. The neighborhood kids like our yard now too. See what a clean yard can do. Like the yard, recovery becomes a place for life, love and laughter.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, father of four (expecting number five) and

just another surf fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Or visit the website at www.ccar.us to read previous articles.