

## **Hooked On Recovery**

July 9, 2004

*12 Steps*

Hey, I've been on vacation for the last two weeks and I'm taking a little time now to craft another message. It occurs to me that this vacation, the time with my family and some friends, the ability to relax, to prioritize, to recharge, to catch a lot of fish, are all gifts of recovery. And gifts from working the 12 Steps in my life. I thank God that I have this time, it has become a time we all treasure and a time for all of us to grow closer.

As I reflect and think about what else to write about today, I am drawn to a recent experience. I, along with Michael Askew, a CCAR Peer Services Coordinator and a man in recovery, recently had the opportunity to give a course on "Understanding and Utilizing the 12 Steps" at NESAS (New England School of Addiction Studies) in Vermont. We used an outline designed by Jim Wuelfing of the New England Center ([necenter@aol.com](mailto:necenter@aol.com)) and we both have taken the course as well.

Yet again, during introductions, we were surprised as to how participants answered the question, "Why are you taking this course?" Repeatedly, we heard this reply or some variation of it, "Because I refer people to these programs and I thought I should know something about it". Michael and I were prepared for this response but there were three or four CCAR members in the class (all in recovery) and they were sufficiently surprised. We started the course giving some brief history and then for the remainder we ran a step meeting. We went through all 12 Steps. CCAR members shared their experience, strength and hope along with other people in recovery. Those who were new to the concept asked insightful questions. It was an outstanding, engaging dialogue and I was impressed with everyone's participation. The telling remarks came in the closing exercise. We wrapped up the 6-hour course by asking people to complete the phrase, "one thing I learned today was..." One woman in recovery answered "that if people are working in the addiction field and know nothing about the 12 Steps than maybe they shouldn't be in the field". Another said, "I put down the drug several years ago, but I now know I have a lot of work to do." Still another, "I've worked in mental health for years and years and I had no idea how powerful these Steps are..." and finally, "These Steps can apply to anyone".

For me, it helped me (once again) not to take my program of recovery for granted. Yes, these Steps are instilled in me, they have become a way of life. They are also a way of life not only for me, but for countless others in recovery. It also confirmed the idea that I, we, need to still carry the message, maybe now more than ever. The Steps are an incredibly powerful tool that can easily be shared. If you are interested in learning more about the 12 Steps, send me an email and we'll see about offering this workshop for you and all others interested.

*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 and just another surf fisherman. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Or visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to see previous articles.