

## The Twelve Step Hero's Journey

We started out in our common ordinary life and world. Unfortunately the denial, dysfunction, and neglect we grew up with became the norm, or what we believed to be normal. The worst part is most of us don't even know how sick we are and were, so keep hooking up with equally unhealthy people and situations in an unconscious attempt to correct and heal our past wreckage. Worse yet we pick people just like our abusers, so are doomed to failure time and time again, unless we wake from our patterns, and start anew with authentically healthy and loving persons and situations. As a result the train wreck just keeps piling up, and we hit one failed relationship, and one bottom after another for years, decades, or a lifetime. In a way the worse it gets the better, so that we may become so sick and tired of our life and situations that we at last muster the courage and conviction to embark on our hero's journey.

The call may come from many sources and directions, and denying the call can take many forms as well as we resist leaving our comfort zones and stepping out into the unknown. We have learned it is much easier to bandage up our wounds and soldier on rather than face the mental and physical pain of cleaning and treating them. Our reluctance is upheld by society telling us to just take a pill, a drink, a smoke, a vacation, or whatever fits the bill. Maybe a new relationship, clothes, job, home, or car will fill the emptiness, and the void in our heart and soul. Our feelings of insecurity and inadequacy often tell us we aren't even worthy of the effort. Yet the call keeps coming. Perhaps a friend, family member, mentor or other has been asking us to try something new.

This is where we realize that alone we are powerless, and our lives have become unmanageable. Next we come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity, and then make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God and embark on our hero's journey. For most of us this is the decision to attend our first meeting, conference, or retreat, Others may acquire the reading material or seek a sponsor. Here we meet our fellow travelers who have been on their knees just like us.

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.”

We often prepare ourselves by seeking out the readings, or talking with our therapist, mentor, family, or friends. The temptation to withdraw, isolate, and deny becomes stronger as the day of our step of faith approaches. Next we come to the threshold, and quite literally, as we approach the door to our first meeting, conference, or retreat. If we are fortunate, "guardians" (old-timers) are there to welcome us and guide us through our first days and weeks. Again, should good fortune shine on us we may find good meetings and friends to share the journey and healing.

A supernatural world of wonder and mystery opens up to us as we open to it. We hear others sharing their deepest truths, and often in gut wrenching stories of extreme neglect and abuse. In their stories we hear ours, and often in stunning detail, depth, and emotion straight from the heart. We can scarcely believe what we are hearing, as if someone was looking over our shoulder and taking notes since we were born. Make no mistake, this is the belly of the whale, and just the right place to make our metamorphosis. Some melt into the

experience and give in to the healing right off never looking back. Some attend sporadically, the recovery and journey punctuated by steps forward and back. Many others can't handle the shock, never to return.

Now we must truly walk the road of trials as we make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, and admit to our Higher Power, ourselves, and others the exact nature of our wrongs. These steps prove so difficult it is where many drop out and retreat back into denial, dis-ease, dysfunction, and addiction. We pay a heavy price here, for it is no less than a death, an ego death, and it fights back with everything it's got. Yet the death of this small and selfish self leads to the realization of the Higher Self, the One Self, and the *True Self*.

Our eyes are now opened, and the tears begin to flow. We learn to break the don't talk, don't trust, don't feel, and don't look, don't listen, don't heal rules we have lived by for most, if not all of our lives. Understanding leads to compassion and acceptance. Atonement leads to transformation and integration. What we thought would never, and could never change, changes. Not in the world, but in our hearts and minds, and that changes our everything, from the inside out. Others see the difference in us, as we are calmer, more peaceful, and happier.

The hero's journey now takes us to the Goddess, as we begin to see and feel the powerful, unbounded, and unconditional love of mother earth, nature, and the kind, caring, and creative feminine in each of us. Historically she is the nurturer, so tends to the home, garden, and the needs of the family. The father figure is often thought of as going out to do business in the fields of commerce and politics, as well as the farm fields and battlefields. The image is strong, and quiet like the sun, or a mighty mountain. Together they give us the magic elixir of life and mastery over it.

Now the battles, the crown, and prize have been won. The price was high and the scars are many, yet oneness with our Higher Power (and powers), our inner selves, our fellows, and all life and creation is infinitely satisfying and rewarding. We are tempted to linger in this other world and revel in the depths of beauty, love, and peace we find there, but there is work to be done, and we must not turn from the cries of the world calling out to us. The journey back to the common and everyday natural world can be just as long and difficult as we struggle to keep the best of us alive and functioning in an the often sick and weary world inside and outside of us. Friends, mentors, and guides may be needed to pull us back and help us along.

With newfound wisdom, strength, and vigor we may create a new world order built on our mastery of the two worlds we now know. The steps would also have us make amends to all those we had harmed, continue to take personal inventory, and when wrong promptly admit it. We also seek through prayer and meditation to increase our conscious contact with God as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

And finally, having had a spiritual awakening (and rebirth) as a result of these steps, we carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs. It sounds like a fairy tale ending, perfectly suited to the story. But it is real life, and every one of us that has the courage and conviction to breakthrough to the mystery and wonder waiting below the surface of the conscious and visible can find true life and love on the far side of our own heroes journey.