Florida Back to Basics Letters

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 On April 2nd, 2012, I will be 90 days sober, and I truly believe that the "Back to Basic" is a key to my recovery. Here’s why.

 When a newcomer walks into an AA room for the first time, I think he or she is lost and does not understand a single thing about what is to be done. The newcomer reads all those signs with “The Steps,” “The Traditions,” etc, etc. I think it is a fair statement to say that we are afraid by just "imagining" what all these things mean.

 What would be required of us? "Go to 90 meetings in 90 days.” “Get a sponsor, work the steps.” Listening to fellow members say they have relapsed made me wonder if the program works at all.

 In my case I was also terrified about getting a sponsor, someone to "unload" my dark side unto. That is not an easy task. I do not know much about AA statistics but I guess that people who start working the program as soon as they walk in for the first time have a greater possibility of recovery than those who do not.

 This is what “Back to Basic” did for me. It was explained to me that the sponsor was temporary and that we would cover the 12 steps in 4 weeks. To me it was a great way to get "my feet wet." It turned out that I not only worked the steps during those 4 session (and other weekly sessions of one-on-one counseling), but I am now working the steps "again" with my sponsor in a more in-depth approach.

 To me AA is all about "carrying the message to those suffering from alcoholism" and the message was brought to me by the “Back to Basic” sessions.

 Glenn S.

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 I first came to AA in late 2009 and attended meetings -- albeit sporadically -- over a 2-1/2 to 3 month period. The thought of approaching a stranger to become my "temporary sponsor" was somewhat unnerving. Towards the end of that time I did speak to a potential sponsor in hopes of beginning the 12 step process. As it turned out the sponsor was overloaded with elderly parent issues and several other sponsees at the time so I calculated that it would not work out and did not pursue it further with her. I was hesitant to approach another potential sponsor. I sat on the sidelines in meetings and a few meetings later found myself losing interest and slowly returned to alcohol abuse. My only exposure to the 12 steps was just what had been read at the beginning of each meeting.

 In August 2011 I returned to AA and was fortunate on my 3rd visit to attend a women's meeting at Sabal Palm. After the meeting a woman approached me and spoke enthusiastically about the Back to Basics program that would introduce me and others to the 12 steps in a series of four meetings. She offered to be my sponsor through the process. This sounded great to me. Not only would I come to know the steps more thoroughly -- and rapidly -- but I would have a sponsor as well. I accepted.

 Initially the Back to Basics group meetings were held in an AA's home. I attended two such series (September and October) and then returned for the December and January series at the South Miami Lutheran Church location.

 What a great and life changing experience this has been. I've learned and then put into action the 12 steps as guided by my sponsor and the meeting leaders. It was most helpful for me to have the Big Book passages relating to the 12 steps presented in a manner which made so much sense. The material is presented in a way that helps a person "connect the dots." The input from seasoned as well as new AA members was also a plus. I was motivated to do the work and am thankful for the opportunity. I hope to serve as a sponsor one day and think this method of working the steps is very practical.

 Thanks to all leaders, my sponsor, and fellow participants over these past several months.

Wishing you all blessings,

 Lynne Y.

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 My sobriety date is December 4th, 2011. I participated in the Back to Basics workshop during the month of January, 2012 and I feel it was a critical part to my sobriety. I have absolutely no desire to drink (today) and pray and meditate on a daily basis, regularly making contact with my higher power. What was most helpful for me about the workshop was that it laid out what the steps were and how I was going to complete them.

 I was intimidated by the steps when I joined AA, in particular because I didn't know what to expect, even after I had read the Big Book. I had also heard members tell stories about how they completed the steps with their sponsors, and each one was different. This raised my fear level and led me to feel that there was a greater importance as to **who** I chose as my sponsor to work the steps with as opposed to **when** I chose my sponsor to work the steps with.

 I had some serious trust issues when I came to AA, and choosing a sponsor was difficult for me. This workshop helped relieve that anxiety and made a lot of sense. I don't claim to know a lot about AA after only 4 months, but I feel the most important aspect for me has been working the steps (not to discount working with other AA’s, which I currently do). I can't always make a meeting or call my sponsor at tough times during the day, but I can find a quiet place to relax, clear my mind, and contact God. The results in my life have been truly amazing.

Mike R.

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 I have found that participating in the Back to Basics workshops has been very helpful to me. It has helped me to do service by allowing me to help others. I believe that the simple approach has helped me to be more effective in sponsoring. I look at this as an addition to working the steps, not as a substitute. Newcomers are able to go through the steps quickly, and then do them again with a sponsor. Going through the steps again with my sponsor was also a great help.

 Thank you very much.

 Jackie C.

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 Back to Basics has given me a better way to take my sponsees through the steps. My way had been a mish-mash of several sponsors and a disjointed, incoherent, cumbersome approach that made me afraid to work the steps with others. Now, after doing the steps in four weeks with guidance, I am better able to help my sponsees build a solid, spiritual foundation on which to build their programs. It also took away the whining and the tendency to turn sponsorship into therapy.  After the four-week process, I now read the *Big Book* with my sponsees and plan to follow that with the reading of the *12 & 12.*

"Back to Basics" is the program for recovery based on the 12 steps of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. It adds nothing and takes away nothing from the program except to provide a concise, consolidated approach.

George U. -- (28 years)

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 I have participated in the Back to Basics (B2B) sessions for the past month. I had completed the Twelve Steps for the first time in the months prior to B2B, having started with AA last year. I wanted to do the B2B program to strengthen my grasp and understanding of the Steps. I am pleased that B2B has very much enabled me to do so.

For me, perhaps the most important feature of B2B has been its solidification of what the Steps mean, and of their ongoing importance in my life. I had enjoyed and gained immensely from my completion of the Steps initially; they had completely changed my life.

 But having undergone such immense changes, thanks to the Steps, I wanted to ensure that they remained an ongoing part of my life. Refocusing on the Steps through B2B has indeed solidified what I had gained from the Steps the first time around. I can honestly say that I look forward to yet another B2B experience in my future.

Frank N.

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Hello-

 I’m taking the day off to dive further into recovery. I’m looking deeper into the history of AA and the Back To Basics program.

 It is my belief and experience that this program is profound, effective and vitally necessary for us lost and wounded souls looking to become sober. I have been around for 20 yrs and never saw the power of the program until discovering Back To Basics.

 AA has evolved in a million different directions over the last 70 yrs or so, but I sincerely believe that the original way is the most effective, expedient and least confusing way to finding a path to the Higher Power and to sobriety.

Chris E.

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 I am writing this note to thank you for introducing me to Back To Basics. I am thankful because after a year and a half sitting in AA meetings, I was getting nowhere with my Steps, not moving beyond the Third Step.

 That is when I learned about the Back To Basic 12-Step group. I still could not believe I was going to be able to do the 12 steps in four weeks, but decided to try it and did it.

 I am forever grateful for the introduction of this simple program because not only did I do my steps three times, but now I am also helping other alcoholics with the steps.

With Gratitude,

Jeff S.

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 I’ve been told that if I’m not working steps, I’m not working a program. Back To Basics helped me through the steps in the middle of a crisis after three (3) years of sobriety. I am grateful to the group for helping me to “Keep it Simple” when I could no longer do the steps on my own.

Derek S.