

Nowadays, it seems the only unpardonable sin is intolerance. Disapproving of any other kind of wrongdoing is being "judgmental" - being intolerant.

Perhaps this is an outgrowth of the various self-realization and human potential movements that have softened our spine in the name of "feeling good" about ourselves.

I sense these silly notions seeping into the Fellowship. An ever-so-tolerant idea from the sixties - "You do your thing and I'll do mine" - translates into: "You work your program your way, and I'll work my program my way." The implicit assumption is: as long as you don't drink and go to meetings, you can do whatever you please.

Any opinion on working the program is justified, provided the person giving the opinion doesn't appear to be intolerant. So-called sponsors (loath to be intolerant) calm their eager-to-get-started sponsees with statements like: "Easy does it." Or "Do a Step a year." (I've actually heard this. If these newcomers follow this dangerous advice, they will wait nine years before the promises come about and twelve years before having a spiritual awakening.)

Our mistake is in supposing alcoholics are better than they are. We are selfish and self-centered, and unless we change, we will continue to act in selfish and self-centered ways.

Just not drinking and going to meetings will not change this. Cleaning house will. Making direct amends will. Doing Twelfth Step work will.

Whatever Happened to Plain Speaking?

Service will. And we must have the backbone to tell newcomers to take all these actions, and more. "If you won't take a coffee commitment, you won't get better." "If you don't work the Steps, you won't get better." "The Big Book spells out how to work this program. If you continue to work it your way, you won't get better."

Haven't any of us been tempted to blurt out these simple, plain-spoken truths? What stops us from saying things like this? Are we afraid of appearing intolerant?

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