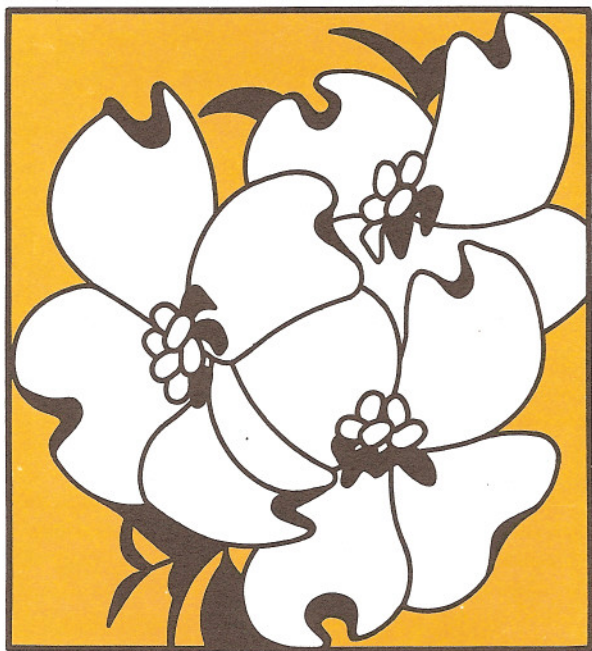


POCKET POWER

MIRACLES IN

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RECOVERY



Hazelden

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Editor's Note:

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USING OUR MIRACLES

Chemically dependent people, sometime during recovery, allude to the "incredible coincidences" behind finding the program or facility that worked a magical abstinence and subsequent fruitful way of life. Invariably, that faith in coincidence will provoke advice from someone with more time in the program: "You are mistaken. There are no coincidences in a program combatting dependencies and compulsions. What are often mistaken for magical events are really miracles for which God chooses to remain anonymous."

Recovering alcoholics and others weighted down by various dependencies such as gambling, overeating, excessive sexual drives, or smoking, come to recognize that the miracle of surrender to reality, which starts any recovery, is not the end of miraculous experiences. They happen all the time, not to a select group, but to all who hope for spiritual progress and have faith in the program's potential for them.

When we experience miracles, we must learn to accept them as part of recovery, but must not depend on them or even anticipate them. They come to everyone in a Higher Power's time, not at mankind's bidding.

Remembering the Miracles

There is a real danger in the addict's attitude toward miracles. That is the failure to recognize and *understand* the living purposes and lessons in each miracle that overwhelms us. Every miracle that happens is replete with a clear message.

Recovering addicts in hospital units and fellowships such as Alcoholics Anonymous believe in miracles and accept them as part of arresting incurable addictions. That recovery has been possible for the million-and-a-quarter A.A. members worldwide reminds us of the fact that "the age of miracles is still with us," as the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, states.

Yet, in this age of new miracles, an alarming number of those helped to sobriety in A.A. or in hospitals return to drinking. Some regain their sobriety shortly, some after more years of misery, some never. Why have they forgotten the miracles of their recovery? In practically every instance, they have failed to act. Recovering alcoholics cannot just see, enjoy, and forget miracles; they must apply the lesson of the miracles.

Asking for Miracles

The results of recovery's miracles are not all physical. In fact, use of any miracle is mainly emotional and spiritual. Savoring miracles

through utilizing their messages brings growth and progress in all phases of sober living.

Forgotten miracles cease to be tools for spiritual use when we lose sight of the fact that life-saving events occurred because we believed they would take place. Faith and trust were added to belief. In some way, each miracle is an answer to a prayer, and this knowledge brings recovery. When belief, faith, and trust are absent, a miracle will not appear.

Miracles take substance from blind belief and childlike faith. Without frills or complications, it is easily understood, always recognizable. Such belief is nurtured by patience; God's delay in answering prayer does not mean God's denial.

The miracle makers described in the Bible and other sacred writings succeeded best (perhaps only) when there was teamwork, the recipient believing a miracle maker could and would succeed.

We benefit from our miracles only when we understand our miracles have not been outright gifts. They have been earned in some way, usually through a form of prayer. The suffering alcoholic may merely have cried out, "God help me" in agony or simply held a sincere desire for sobriety. Or prayer may have been a formal, on-the-knees request for help. But when it comes,

the miracle is more than a blessing; it is an act of teamwork within the realm of belief. To neglect making use of such a product of wish-granting and lesson-teaching would be wasteful. We will learn from our miracles if we remember there are no demands implied in “ask and you shall receive.”

It becomes plain that miracles are to be used for spiritual progress when one accepts a miracle as an outcome to sincere prayer. Without the recognition that prayer is behind miracles, we cannot fully understand that our *purpose in living* is in the revelations of miracles in recovery. This is more evident when, in prayer, one employs some self-examination and much meditation.

The faith within the experienced miracles should make it plain that miracles are meant to be an influence, not merely a temporary reactor. Faith is the foundation of freedom from fear. It adds security to a miracle.

Acting on Miracles

As in every other phase of a recovery program, action is the key word in using miracles. A miracle is an emotional experience and wholly positive and constructive. Even the meditative part of its magic is meant to be free of

debates with oneself. Both learning and understanding, necessary elements in using the lessons of miracles, are active.

One effect of experiencing a miracle is the development of a sense of belonging in a new world — one of recovery, of love and friendship, and of caring. From this comes the desire to share, for the joys of miracles are not the sole property of the recipient. One who experiences a miracle is meant to pass its messages along. Miracles keep the dreams of sobriety constant, making recovery an ongoing adventure.

The revelations emerging from recovery miracles aren't accompanied by brilliant lights and choral music, but are the results of a growing awareness of truths. The resultant messages are practical rather than fantasy. Miracles often challenge the recovering alcoholic to refurbish and enlarge upon the elements of living that brought about the miracles — such as faith itself. One grows to trust the usefulness of a faith that can inspire a miracle. In this way, faith becomes a motivator of progress. It can change lives. After all, it inspires miracles, which are basically great changes in living patterns. For example, those who learn from living through a miracle find an attitude of doing things because they *ought to* and *want to*, rather than *must do* and *have to do*.

The changes created by miracles make clear that merely having faith is not enough to produce sobriety. The recipient of a miracle cannot rest and relax. Without action, faith will fade. Unselfish, constructive action and self-sacrifice are needed to make faith effective.

A miracle creates the feeling of belonging in one who has felt its change in living. Those who have experienced the joy of a miracle need never again feel alone. To that message, a miracle adds: "Learn to care and share with others. Have faith and trust in them and you will find these assets for yourself."

Trusting in Miracles

Fear and despair disappear when a miracle takes place. Those who feel the power of a recovery miracle know anything good can and will happen, because they have seen it and accepted the change. A miracle builds both resistance to compulsions and vigilance against complacency. Furthermore, if permitted to do so, a miracle will teach that both resistance and vigilance can be natural and comfortable.

The lessons of miracles go beyond the "anything-can-happen" attitude into one that, without the taint of ego, tells the recovering addict that *what should happen* will happen. All

sober alcoholics know certain great changes have taken place because they are meant to have come true. All this is possible if the elements which produce miracles — love, gratitude, humility, honesty, faith, belief, and trust — are used to prepare a victim of addiction for really hearing at the proper time.

The belief in miracles, which made possible the sudden inspiring ability to cope with maintaining a newly discovered sobriety, must not be neglected or taken for granted. Goals, once considered impossibilities by the sick mind of the addict, have materialized — and have been seen and felt. We must never forget that reality or lose the willingness to believe such miracles can take place.

With the reality of miraculous personal experiences must come vigilant awareness of reality. Our character defects never fade away completely. To think so would be an invitation to complacency and carelessness — and the approach of a slip.

The willingness to continue believing is a prime blessing of any miracle. Without an open mind and complete acceptance that a miracle is not fantasy but fact, our recovery would be much more difficult.

If there is a common denominator among alcoholics it is that we each, in some way, benefit

from a personal miracle. This is what makes easy the sharing of problems and solutions. Denial makes it necessary for us to be shaken up and immersed violently into reality in order to get the idea of recovery — and miracles do this exceptionally well. After experiencing such rude awakenings, we have little trouble believing in the nearness of a Higher Power.

Growth From Miracles

An accepted miracle always brings gratitude and humility. Praying becomes more serene and tolerant, less angry and painful. We pray with a more relaxed form of courage, with fewer anxieties and less stress. Self-deception dwindles and we have a clearer vision of how to become what we want to become.

Each miracle savored will bring us closer to freedom from self-pity. Miracles expose the futility of feeling sorry for oneself and the miracle receiver learns to wipe out the tendency to wallow in self-pity. Understanding the lessons of a miracle, however, requires the ability to forgive ourselves and others. There also must be love, for without love a person cannot know how to trust.

The reality of a miracle demonstrates that, while the joy of finding a way out of suffering

and into the peace of sobriety is great, all pain cannot cease during change and growth. We learn from the miracle of “conversion” that pain is not ours alone. All humanity feels hurt; each person makes spiritual progress by developing trial-and-error solutions to pain. If we ignore the lessons of miracles, we face the real tragedy of never knowing the source or solution to each painful experience.

All compulsive people are excessive by nature, but our miracles show us this obsessiveness can be made useful by shifting it from overdoing harmful emotions to going to great lengths with beneficial ones. The simplest ways are learned early — listening, attending meetings, seeking new friendships, serving others. A miracle is always a positive change, never a negative one. Recovering men and women benefit most when they take time in making all changes, even the good ones.

From the realities of miracles, we can learn the vast difference between counseling others and sharing with them. The latter, with close rapport, works in areas where the advice-giving style fails.

In mutual exchange there is freedom from self-service. In a society of those who have felt miracles there are no big shots. All newcomers, flushed with their personal drinking horror

stories, quickly find their own experiences topped by those of other recovering people.

Despite the joy that overflows with every recovery miracle, each is unique and each person is happy to be allowed to march to a personal drumbeat. Miracles do not make robots of people. In fact, miracles do not happen to robots. As such, a miracle supports the idea that growth is not a measure of obeying orders but of heeding suggestions.

In the aftermath of any miracle is found the revelation that there is a great difference between serenity and complacency. Every dramatic change brings a realization that problems are solved by striving to master living problems rather than escaping from life's realities.

The honesty inherent in miracles makes it clear we cannot turn away from people, places, or things just because they bear potentials of danger to sobriety. We, who have already been extremely hurt by a chemical such as alcohol, will not fear minor pain. Miracles show us the pleasures of coping, even if there is a modicum of pain. We, who have experienced miracles, know the foolishness of accepting the status quo. We recognize the realities of living in a modern society, backed by the support of a multitude of fellow recovering people.

A miracle is a challenge to aggressively accept

the obstacles to sober living. To face the hazards of living without chemical crutches is to grow spiritually and approach true serenity. Because a miracle is not static, but often fervent action, we know the truth of the phrase, "You gotta grow or you gotta go." We know if there is no emotional growth in our recovery even serenity can become stagnated.

Although miracles do come repeatedly and bring new purposes for living with every experience, they must not become a necessity of life. Even the luckiest of recovering alcoholics avoid depending on a miracle to bail them out of grave situations. Miracles cannot be anticipated, but seldom fail to come to those who work the Steps patiently and diligently.

A miracle is probably the greatest evidence we will ever have that belief, faith, and trust are the most helpful gifts the mind and heart are given.

The greatest lesson brought by any miracle is that its joy must not be hoarded but passed along. When we experience a miracle of recovery we learn, above all else, that the blessings of miracles must be shared. A miracle worth cherishing is never the gift to a single person, but to countless many. With recovery miracles, it is impossible to give without receiving or receive without giving.

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