

Play Dead

Playing Dead

Like many alcoholics, one of our founding member's initial choice of which Alcoholics Anonymous meetings to attend was made upon a recommendation from a friend. At these meetings he discovered that, even though hopeless alcoholics seeking help were streaming in through the front door, just as many were pouring out the back door. The group simply did not offer a program of action to help them find a solution to "**Alcoholism.**" The Twelve Steps were treating addictions and resentments, but weren't addressing the core problem defined in the Big Book, "**the abnormal state of mind and body.**"

The experience of weak recovery and weak member retention (helped by the fact that the meeting building had a fire) led this member to seek alternatives. He subsequently met a gentleman from another group who had actually gone blind two weeks after getting sober. And this humble man, Hap M., passed along a very powerful message: "**play dead.**" This term has become a vital part of How It Works group members' program of recovery from alcoholism, and we have to play dead if we want to recover from this abnormal mind and body.

So what do we mean when we say **play dead**?

It starts with a simple question: how would the world get along if you weren't in it? If we are truly honest about the wreckage of our alcoholic past, the answer is, "*Not bad ... in fact, now that I'm thinking about it, most*

everyone would be better off! From this realization, we have to start approaching life and its problems by adding to instead of taking from. We have to ask ourselves, “*How can I be an asset here instead of a liability?*” By ***playing dead***, we learn not to take anything personally when helping others. After all, you wouldn’t take anything personally if you were dead, would you? And we bring this attitude into our homes, work and social life.

Once we recognize that our abnormal mind will have us usually see the negative in everything, we play dead to see the positive around us. We accept that our Higher Power is a large part of our lives. And then we can point ourselves in the direction the Big Book tells us to go: “***How can I best serve Thee — Thy Will (not mine) be done***” (p. 85).

Hap didn’t just preach this message; he lived it. Because he was blind, Hap relied on his other senses to interpret information given to him, primarily through listening. Since he was not in a position to be influenced visually, Hap was largely dependent on what people were actually telling him as opposed to making assumptions by what he saw. Therefore, he was essentially ***playing dead*** to what others could see. There was no judgement or prejudice. We can follow his example by listening and reminding ourselves that we will see a clearer reality with our eyes closed. Our learning is a lifelong journey and, of course, this includes learning to ***play dead***.

Addictions and resentments can go away temporarily, but the abnormal state of mind and body is permanent. So we need a permanent answer to meet that disease. ***Playing dead*** helps us respond with the principles of

patience, tolerance, consideration, respect, kindness and love. This is done one day at a time, and includes attending meetings and studying the Big Book. By committing to ***playing dead***, you will find a Power that will not only help you overcome alcoholism, but will induce the Spiritual Awakening promised in Step 12. The personality change brought about by ***playing dead*** will be immediately apparent to those around you. And you will be uniquely helpful to your family, your friends and other alcoholics in need of the solution you have!