

his service work was probably partly responsible for his good recovery. I also knew Raymond, the designated Share a Day treasurer that year. Raymond makes me laugh a lot, so Literature person seemed like a doable thing.

I knew I didn't want to sit there at the literature table all day long and miss the event, so I created an excel sheet with time slots and went about gathering volunteers to sell literature for 1-hour slots. To my horror, people weren't signing up. All my deepest fears came to the surface. The voices said — You don't really have DA friends, people don't like you enough to want to join in, you're not charismatic enough, YOU ARE ALONE. At the time I simply felt an abnormal amount of fear which the situation didn't warrant. It was only after discussing the fear with a DA friend that I could make out the voices saying those really scarring things about being a crappy person. My DA friend told me that this was not about me producing a great Share a Day. This was about me just showing up, asking for help, doing the best I could, asking for more help, and trusting that God would do the rest. I got it. In a while I filled most of my slots and the day went pretty well. At the end I was required to tally up and reconcile what was sold and what we had actually started with. The figures weren't coming out and I started to panic. The chair and treasurer took over at that point by reconciling it for me. I felt bad for a while that I hadn't been able to "do the whole thing", but later my HP stepped in and helped me to focus on the good job I had done and that wasn't it nice that the others could help me in that final stretch.

I am committed to help with Share a Day this year. We've had a couple of conference calls and in-person meetings. We should know the date by mid September (the schools have a new system in place this year where they can't schedule event dates until early September). The old fear has surfaced. So what else is new!?! Here's to a great 2010 Share a Day!!

* * *

A Whisper
by Cynthia B.

The phone rang as I was going through my files, a few folders on my lap and papers everywhere. It was the Editor asking me to contribute an article on Vision to *The Bottom Line*.

I like this topic, it is exciting and motivating, and has led me through many phases in my life and recovery. I have spent time writing, talking and outlining steps to achieve it. One important aspect of Vision is recognizing and piecing together the faint bits of information we receive.

Recently I visited the mountains of North Carolina with my family; walking out to take a look at the view, I saw a huge expanse of trees and mountains below. There was a whisper going through me to notice the largeness, the space and greatness. Later that night, I felt the expansion is to come into my life. Earlier that week I had returned from a trip to

Philadelphia, where I showed my performance project. Still in progress, I began this project three years ago, determined to make some discoveries. Along the way I have considered putting it aside on several occasions, and have been led back. For example within six months of its start, I was offered an MFA scholarship in California, with my piece to be the thesis project.

When I got home from North Carolina, I began thinking and talking about expansion, at the same time noticing some particularly familiar and uncomfortable thoughts. The thoughts seemed to stand out my mind, to sit boldly in place no matter how I turned my head. I don't feel it possible for others to like me, in particular groups of others, let alone accept and be inspired by my creations.

My most recent showing in Philadelphia, the workshop I taught the next day, and the fundraiser I held the week prior were all wonderful events. People enjoyed themselves and I received beautiful feedback. However, the numbers of people in attendance were smaller than I envisioned.

I began to tie together the limiting ideas of myself with the expansive view I experienced in the mountains. Yes, possibly I can be seen as likeable, and a valuable part of a community and/or communities, making an important contribution.

As these thoughts began turning around my mind, I remembered a recent performance which impressed me. The choreographer was expressing a truth from inside herself. She didn't have to manufacture it or convolute herself; it came from her. She had to identify it, make space around it and then shape it. She was being true to her energy.

My reorganized files have been put away, five bags of papers have been put in the trash. I am meditating on these discoveries, talking with friends, my action partner and at meetings, writing my Fourth Step, taking actions and turning over each day.

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The opinions expressed here are those of the individuals who gave them and do not represent DA as a whole.

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The Bottom Line

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► *The Bottom Line* is a collection of recovery stories written by D.A. members. It is available here (some issues can be viewed online, others can only be downloaded to your computer as a PDF).

If you do not have a literature person at your meeting and want to distribute *The Bottom Line*, please feel free to make copies of it and charge only for the cost of the copying.

You are encouraged to contribute your own story; please consult the submissions guidelines (pdf version). Also, we encourage you to bring the submissions guidelines to your meeting, in order to inform those who may not have internet access.

Submissions may be sent by e-mail to:

bottomlineeditor@yahoo.com, or by mail to: The Editor, *The Bottom Line*, c/o Debtors Anonymous of Greater New York, P.O. Box 452 Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

**A 9th Step Amend—
The Books Stolen from My College Library**
by Robert W.

In the June 2010 edition, this piece was inadvertently cut. Here is the whole story.

A few years ago I mentioned to a potential sponsor that I wanted to make an amend to my college library for having stolen books when I was a student. I was thinking about shipping the books I still had to the library, with a letter of apology.

He said, the words of the Step are "make a direct amend." He suggested I think about driving up to the college, meeting with someone, making the amend, and offering to pay for the lost use of the books.

I was taken aback. This was more of an amend than I had bargained for. Harder, less comfortable, and the idea of making financial reparations seemed overwhelming. I decided to put off this particular amend.

Later, I worked for a while with a small 9th step group, which included the person who had given me the suggestion about a direct amend for my stealing the books from my college

► **HELP WANTED: Service for Share a Day.**

When: Sunday January 30, 2011 – 9:30am to 6:00pm

Where: High School for the Humanities, 351 West 18th Street between 8th & 9th Avenues

Cost: Early Bird Registration — mail checks or money orders for \$15.00 (after 1/14/2011 & on the day \$20) made out to:

DA NY INTERGROUP: Debtors Anonymous of Greater New York (New York Intergroup), P.O. Box 452 Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Suggested donation only, no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

► *The Bottom Line could use your expertise in the areas of layout, graphic art and proofreading.*

Credits — Editor: Yarrow; Layout: Elizabeth; Proofreader: Michael

Credits for June 2010 — Editor: Yarrow; Layout: Marybeth Proofreader/copy editor: Mark G.

library. The three of us met monthly, shared about the amends we wanted to make or were planning to make, and offered each other our thoughts and support. The process was slow and we each struggled with resistance. We talked and read about the spiritual meaning of making amends, about how making an amend might help us with our spiritual progress. When I began planning to visit my college for a weekend dance festival, and to be there on both Friday and Monday, it occurred to me that this might be an opportunity to make the amend about the library books.

A few years ago I had begun to set these books aside in a box, the ones I still had, those which had not been lost, destroyed, given away or (in one case) sold. I had two dozen books, very fine solid editions, including books of philosophy, psychology, art, and music. These were books I still valued for their intellectual achievement, whose authors I still respected. The box sat in various places in my apartment, waiting for me to deal with it. At one point I had marked it in large letters, "AMENDS." Whenever I cleaned, organized or rearranged my apartment the box of amends was there asking me to take care of this business.

The week before my visit to my old college I started making plans to act. I inventoried the books by title, added to the list

the 5 or so that were no longer with me, and estimated the cost of replacing them, which I think the college would have done, since they were special reserve books. The one I had stolen from the art library was a limited edition collection of etchings/drawings by a dozen or so renowned abstract artists, including Josef Albers and Pollock. I had sold this to a rare book dealer long ago for \$1,000. I imagine it was worth a lot more. I didn't feel comfortable writing a check for the whole amount I figured I owed, but was ready to make a commitment for a regular payment over time to fulfill the obligation.

I went to the college library web site and looked for a staff person to whom I might make the amend. It is a huge library of many thousands of volumes and many special collections. There are many people who manage collections or special projects. In the end, the most logical person to whom I might make the amend seemed to be the managing librarian of the whole institution. This person seemed to be a high-level executive, but I couldn't identify anyone else who would really be appropriate.

Now I began to reach out for feedback and support in the DA community. I don't have a sponsor right now, but I talked about this step in a meeting and got strong support and wisdom from a member with long, strong recovery. One of my former 9th step companions left a message saying she'd be unavailable for a few weeks and the other just didn't return my calls. I called others. All were supportive, but some suggested easier, softer ways. These included making the amend anonymously, writing an anonymous letter, asking where to drop off the books. One suggested an interpretation of "Made direct amends except when to do so would injure them or others," which might mean that "the others" included myself. I called a possible sponsor who discussed how to handle late fines on books like these. But these weren't books I hadn't returned, they were books I had stolen.

I found this in the Big Book: Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything. —A.A. Big Book p. 79

I had worked out a program of what I thought was a reasonable financial restitution. Several program people suggested I listen to the librarian's thoughts on what would be a reasonable financial restitution before offering my own.

Despite the good support, I felt uncomfortable about the process from a spiritual and program perspective. I felt that I hadn't really connected with anyone about the spiritual importance or challenge of this amend.

Nevertheless, I put in a call to the college librarian. We exchanged a few messages, then finally talked and I explained I wanted to see him about some books I had in my possession from that earlier time. He started asking questions that got more and more sticky and I finally begged to see him in person to discuss this rather than over the phone. We made an appointment.

I packed a suitcase full of the books and put it in the trunk of the car when I set off for the dance festival. Two days before my appointment one of my former 9th-step partners called me back. We talked of the idea of direct amend and I felt supported and on the right track.

On Monday after the festival had ended, I drove to the library with the suitcase of books. The librarian welcomed me into his office. I explained that I was taking stock of things I had done in my life and there were some things I had done that I was not proud of. I said that one of them was that I had stolen books from the library. I outlined the number and types of books and described the limited edition of etchings. I said I was sorry and that I wanted to make some financial restitution.

He listened, then spoke to me with kindness. He said he understood the motives that brought me here. He established human connections between us — we were both from a certain region of the country, he'd been a graduate student at the same time I'd been an undergrad, the times had been unsettled. He said there was no need to make any financial restitution but suggested two groups to whom I might make a contribution if I desired. One was a fund in the library, the other a college entity that does spiritual and community service. He repeated that there was no need for me to make any financial contribution or restitution, that I was free to do whatever I wanted to do in whatever amount but there was nothing expected.

He asked that I bring the books into his office. I brought in the suitcase and stacked the contents on a table. He said, "Now you can let that part of your life behind."

This amend could have developed in many different ways, depending on the personality of the librarian and the prevailing attitudes of the institution. The experience could have been harsh and I was prepared for that. But this is how it went down.

The librarian asked if I had seen a certain new section of the library when I was still a student. I hadn't, and he said I really should see this. On his way to a meeting, he led me to the stairway to the new area and we shook hands.

I entered the new section, a below-ground study area with light, space and comfort, and this was when the mental and spiritual movements began to occur.

First, this man incorporated the kind, respectful, generous attitude that I had experienced from every staff, administrative, and faculty member when I was attending the college, independent of my own rebellious critical attitudes at the time.

Second, he not only accepted my amend, but welcomed me back into this community of scholarship and growth by inviting me to experience the latest expansion of the library.

I walked through the study area thinking of the great gift this university gave to those whom it welcomed into its community, which had once, and now once again, included me. I stood next to the shelves of books thinking of the spiritual dimension of the library, the history and accomplishment of human endeavor embodied here and in other libraries. I thought of the sacredness of libraries as repositories of the human spirit, including my own small personal library.

I stood in an aisle which included books about slavery and the civil war and thought of my mother, who read deeply in this subject, and of the spiritual legacy of scholars and thinkers who passed on thoughts and insights from one generation to the next through the collections of libraries.

I visited the reserve book room with its collections in German, Latin, Portuguese and et cetera and breathed in the gifts of the library to make human understanding available to its clients.

I walked through the corridors of this library which was designed with the concept of a cathedral of learning. The leaded windows with contained yellow glass panels depicting moments of classical stories.

Back on the street, walking next to the anachronistic medieval architecture, I felt again welcomed back into this community of scholarship and growth, which still lives, and I now belonging, no longer separated from it, no longer in rebellion, alienated. I had always admired, respected this community of the intellect and spirit. It was my admiration that had motivated me to steal those books — I just didn't understand that a different connection was invited.

I was grateful for the gift my father had given in sending me here, and for the gift the institution had given in accepting me into this community.

Making this amend gave to me much more than I imagined in spiritual gifts and I am grateful and willing to accept them.

To continue this amend I plan to send a monthly contribution to the college service organization until my own understanding of my obligation has been fulfilled. This feels now like a repayment for a small percentage of the gifts I received from this college and this community.

Finding the Right Size and Allowing Abundance
by Cathy T.

I guess grandiosity has always been one of my character defects, and through the steps, I have been able to see how it operates in my life. I have always had a hard time working in a corporate type job within an organization. My personal ambitions get mixed up with my job descriptions. A natural born leader, I easily rise to the top in an organization. Unfortunately, my low sense of self has this chip on my shoulder demanding to make its mark, and shoots me in the foot. Although it is good to have ambition, it is another thing entirely to be unconsciously run by it. Talk about vagueness! This is how it works...I get a job as manager of a department, but think I am the director. I mean, I really wouldn't think I was the director, but I would think that if I was running the department, then I should be director! And then I start acting as director and end up not doing my job and causing a problem and getting asked to leave. And then I would say to myself, "Well, that job wasn't the right one for me anyway."

In reality, maybe I wasn't right for the job, on the inside. How can you do your job when you are run by a part of yourself that never feels satisfied with anything? When you are constantly trying to prove yourself because you don't feel like enough? The stress of that is like running on a hamster wheel and it inevitably ends up in resentment and underearning. Not having enough is, on the inside, not feeling like I am enough. And this is ruled by my having high expectations that are not where I am at the moment, they are based in where I want to go in the future!! The answer lies in the steps and humility. Being willing to show up every day and be of service is an opportunity to actually get down on my knees, pray and ask HP humbly to move into my life and allow me to act from grace, rather than from fear of lack. It's being willing to meditate everyday and do step work. As I continue to do my seventh step and humbly ask God to remove my character defects, I am also inviting myself to be humble and to find a way to be a worker among workers. As I go into steps eight, and nine, I will find a way to come out of isolation and engage in meaningful ways with others. Changing my outlook and remaining humble is also a gift of HP...and I can keep praying for that. And more will be revealed!

* * *

All My Deepest Fears
by Chris S.

It's Share a Day planning time and my little knees are starting to knock. I love the idea of being part of a Share a Day and raking in all the kudos and DA benefits from doing that — but the actual work really frightens me. There might even be some terror. It was quite a few years ago that I volunteered to be the Literature coordinator for the annual Share a Day event. My good friend Alan was the chair that year and that's one of the reasons I volunteered. He'd been such a supportive PRG man for me and it was pretty clear that all