

# Trudging Through Transitions

by Harry Haber

In the last four years, two important transitions have changed the course of my life and opened up a new world for me. It all started one December night when I went to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting to get in out of the cold and have

---

**I knew I was going to need direction on how to live a better life. Sharing my feelings and emotions with my sponsor and counselor helped me to break down the wall and take off the mask I was hiding behind.**

---

some hot coffee. Something happened—as these people, people just like me, shared their own stories, I started to identify and relate to them. For the first time in my life I felt hope.

At the same time I felt afraid. If I took the first step, where would my life go? How could I live without drugs and alcohol? What would become of me as a person? In the process of getting clean and sober, I found out that it would be difficult for me to try to do it alone. I started by asking a Higher Power every morning to help me to stay clean and sober *just for today*. I got a sponsor and a counselor because I knew I was going to need direction on how to live a better life. Sharing my feelings and emotions with my sponsor and counselor helped me to break down the wall and take off the mask I was hiding behind. This was the beginning of feeling good about myself and of trusting someone else.

There were certain changes I had to make if I was to stay clean and sober. First, I had to change the people I hung around with and the places where I hung out. I started associating with other people who were clean and sober, and



Photo courtesy of the author.

of course, I went to meetings. My attitude toward life and people started to change as well as my behaviors.

Feeling good about myself, the way I was living, and the person I was becoming, opened up doors to new opportunities. I have an interest in computers, so when I learned about a free Microsoft word processing class, I jumped at the opportunity. Later, I got into a self-paced program in Microsoft word processing where I could earn a certificate and did so. Completing both of these programs increased my self-esteem immensely, but when it was over, I wasn't sure what to do next. My counselor sug-

---

**There were certain changes I had to make if I was to stay clean and sober. First, I had to change the people I hung around with and the places where I hung out.**

---

gested going back to school. My first thought was, "Oh sure, I'm fifty-eight years old and someone suggests that I go back to school! No way, I am *too old*, and, what good would an education do me now?" Even when I began to consider it, I was held hostage by the fear of the unknown. Would I be able to adjust to going back to school after forty-two years? Would I be able to get good grades?

My counselor encouraged me by reminding me that I already got my certificate in word processing. That proved that I could do it. And yes, she was right. I did want to learn more about computers, such as taking them apart, putting them together, repairing them, and troubleshooting.

---

**I had to change my thought process from, "I'm too old," to, "I'm never too old." From my old way of thinking, "I can't do that" to a new way of thinking, "let me try it...."**

---

I would like to eventually get a job working on computers in some capacity. Why not go back to school and learn about computers?

Going back to school at Middlesex Community College was really scary.

As a matter of fact, I was ready to quit before the end of the first day. With encouragement from my classmates, I continued on. By seeking help from my classmates, instructors, tutors, and studying hard, going back to school has become a welcome and fulfilling challenge. Here I am after three semesters—I am not only doing well, but am also enjoying it.

Neither of these transitions would have been possible if I hadn't had the courage to ask for a lot of help from a lot of people. I also had to work hard. I have a willingness to go to any length to have a healthy life and maintain a constant vigilance that keeps me on track. I am feeling better about myself and my life.

Has the road to recovery from alcohol and

drugs been easy? No, not at all. I am trying to live a life today that goes against everything and every way I lived before. I had to, and still have to, make a lot of changes, especially in my thinking, my attitude, and my behaviors. Has the road to an education been easy? Definitely not. I had to change my thought process from, "I'm too old," to, "I'm never too old."

From my old way of thinking, "I can't do that" to a new way of thinking, "let me try it, do it to the best of my ability, and see what happens."

---

**I learned that I can't do it alone. It is better to have someone walk through the fears *with me*.**

---

It is hard to express how these two transitions have changed me, the way I live, and how I feel about myself today. I no longer have low self-esteem. I am a better person to the people around me. I have changed my attitude and my behavior toward life and others. My dreams today aren't just dreams anymore, they can come true. Going back to school is one dream that I am finally fulfilling. I have friends in my life today that genuinely want nothing but the best for me. Most importantly, I no longer have to resort to stealing, cheating, lying, and being dishonest.

I learned that I can't do it alone. It is better to have someone walk through the fears *with me*. Sometimes we just don't know the directions so we need to ask for them. Sometimes two heads are better than one.

---

*Harry Haber is a student at Middlesex Community College in Lowell, MA. He has five more courses to complete to get a certificate in Microcomputer Applications. He has been clean and sober for four years.*