

Rick's Slip Report

Saturday, April 21, 2018 4:11 PM

On August 5, 2015, I found myself in a flurry of triggers that resulted in my returning to old practices and behaviors...in spite of my 3 months of sobriety. The triggers were that my wife was away in Charleston for a few days with the grandkids. I was working on my Step 4 where I was remembering and journaling in detail all my previous acting out experiences. I had time, lack of supervision, no accountability, opportunity, and plenty of memory triggers. Even though I knew about phone calls, check-ins, and bookending, I felt pretty confident and did not use any of my safeguards.

I found myself reliving a lot of old feelings. The familiar yearning for a release came back with a vengeance. I tried the understandable, but stupid, attempt to negotiate with lust by feeding it a little lust by watching some porn. That made it worse. I knew I was on a slippery slope, but I didn't take any healthy actions. I continued bingeing on porn and then masturbated multiple times that night. I felt so bad and devastated the next day, I did it again. I figured I had already broken my sobriety, I may as well enjoy it. I didn't. I was disappointed in myself. I was terrified to have to tell my sponsor. I REALLY didn't want to tell him over the phone. So I tried to simply not talk about it on our daily phone calls. I knew I would be meeting with him on Saturday morning. I knew I would tell him. Regardless. That wasn't an option. But I was already getting a stomach ache. And I was NOT looking forward to having to give a new sobriety date during introductions at the next meeting.

On Saturday morning, I almost didn't have to say anything. I sat down across from him and he knew right away. I don't remember my exact words, but I remember crying like a baby. I felt like my entire recovery was shipwrecked. Everything had been thrown away. I would have to start back at square 1. His words, however, were comforting and reassuring. He also had slips along the road of recovery. We get back on the road and keep going.

Over the months, I realized that a lot of things I thought and felt were unwarranted and just plain not true.

1. This slip (my choice to act out) was exactly the same as all my previous times.

No. While the activities were the same, there was something drastically different in how I felt about it during and immediately after. It felt strangely cardboard, not thrilling at all, and afterwards I felt horrible. I had never experienced such sorrow, remorse, and regret before. This was DEFINITELY different. I think that was the result of my work in recovery.

2. All my previous recovery work was invalidated now.

No. My resources in the SA fellowship, books, phone calls, and step work up to that point were all still there. I had begun to understand some things about my past and how I got into the addiction. None of that changed. I just had to keep going, in spite of the skinned knee.

3. I had to start my sobriety over at square 1.

While my last sobriety date did start over, my RECOVERY didn't. I had to think of it differently so that I didn't feel like a loser. Of the last 90 days, I had been sober for 89 of them. That's 98.88%. I had NEVER achieved that in my life up to that point. Those 89 days did not go away. I could build on that. I could celebrate that and began another, longer string of sober days.

4. I was all alone and would likely fall again.

No. I was beginning to build relationships in the fellowship. But it was MY responsibility to reach out before I got past my decision points. If I use the tools and resources and relationships made available to me in the fellowship, I do not have to fall again. If I ignore them, it is more likely that I will.

5. There was nothing I could do to prevent this chain of events.

Very much No. I knew the effect my Step 4 was having on me in stirring up old memories. I

should have checked that in and bookended my step work time. I knew I would be alone overnight and that might be a trigger of opportunity even though I didn't feel it at the time. I should have made an action plan to spend my time in healthy ways with others.

In retrospect, I am grateful for this major crash in my road towards sobriety. I now see that I had been gaining more confidence and pride than I should have. I was careless and not as humble as I needed to be to stay safely in between the ditches on each side of the road to recovery. I have also noted that it has given me much deeper understanding and compassion for those that fall frequently and don't have much sobriety. I now feel what they feel and can try to help them think in a healthy and correct way about their slip and continue with their recovery.

My sobriety date is August 7, 2015. Notice anything about that date?