

DUG DEEP ENOUGH

Aloha. I am Gretchen and I have been sober since 12/4/1988. My story is not that dramatic or filled with rehabs or detoxes, other institutions, or even DWIs, though I drove drunk all the time. My life was mostly filled with feeling terrible about myself and being uncomfortable in my own skin. I am a recovering self abuser and alcohol was my weapon of choice. Beating up on myself by getting bombed, smashed, obliterated, hammered was my way of handling every uncomfortable situation that I endured. Being shut down and numbed out was the norm.

When puberty set in I had to be drunk to go to dances or be around the opposite sex. I could relax then, and thought I was more attractive and more fun when alcohol gave me that release from fear and a false sense of courage. Blackouts were common even then. I never had a conversation with my parents growing up and did not have support to go to college. I grew up in a small town and wanted to see the world so I joined the military. About 2 years into it I found myself with my first pregnancy and unmarried, I spent the whole time pretending I wasn't pregnant and continued to drink and not let anyone in my world to help. I gave up my baby as a result of the denial. I continued to make decisions in a shut down manner progressively drinking and unconcerned about consequences. Pregnancies were my trauma. Another full term pregnancy that resulted in adoption and two abortions later contributed to my increased drinking. I never felt that I could be a mother. My own mother had 8 kids and didn't want any of us because she had no support. I couldn't take care of myself, much less another person. So I thought.

Geographic relocations with places and people continued. I did not know how to develop relationships and spent a lot of my life running away until 1988 when exhausted, and sick and tired of being sick and tired a therapist helped me see that my relationships, particularly with men, were not successful because of my alcoholism. My last drunk was the day after Thanksgiving at my parents house. I was so hung over when I drove an hour and a half to their house, I could have gotten a DWI then. I struggled to get there and could not get up off the couch to have a conversation with anyone. I saw my parents looks of dismay and disdain at my being so hungover. The next day my sister came with her one year old daughter and she was such a cherubic looking wonder. I felt that she was God and Love and Light in the package of her, telling me that I had to stay sober to be part of her life. I had wanted so desperately to be near her and was feeling like I needed to stop drinking, but I also had forgotten that the night before thanksgiving I had given a boyfriend that I no longer want to be with, directions to my parents house, and he showed up. The only way I could deal with him was to drink and that I did, again. I felt so ashamed the next day and wanted to run again, but decided that I was done. I had a ceremony at a drinking buddy's house on December 4. I had a glass of beer in a frosty mug, one glass of white wine, and one glass of red wine and those were my last drinks, hopefully. I said I would try AA even though I hated it at first. In my foggy mind I thought that if I made it a year without alcohol, I would get into a good relationship and I would be able to drink safely because the right man was what I really needed to make me feel better. Without alcohol I was angry at everyone and everything. I got involved in a therapy group that was for people in early recovery and they became my higher power. I was told to relate

to stories, not compare. I started to connect with my fellows and was in awe and horror of the stories I heard. I could relate and I saw how much worse things could get for me if I kept drinking.

31 years later I have continued to go to a lot of meetings, do service and work the steps myself and with others. I have not had to test the waters and drink even though alcohol is cunning and powerful. I have seen others go out because of complacency or not going to meetings anymore, thinking they are cured. I have found a higher power that I have grown to trust and it has led me to a good life that I don't want to lose. I am living in Hawaii for which I have gratitude beyond words. My son whom I gave up for adoption 46 years ago just came to visit with his wife and 2 children and stayed with me. We had a great time. We connected when I was 3 years sober. My parents died while I was sober, and my relationship with my boyfriend of 12 years ended, my dog died, my daughter that I surrendered for adoption didn't want to connect with me, but I have learned in AA that no matter what I don't drink "even if your ass falls off" . I am a senior in sobriety now and I know that my bottom could have gotten a lot deeper, but for this grateful alcoholic I did not have to keep digging.