

From the Book FAITH IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Pathological Selfishness: The Anti Higher Power

Pathological selfishness, like alcohol itself, promises freedom and delivers enslavement. In our past lives as drinking alcoholics, it acted as our Higher Power. In sobriety, it is the insidious foe embedded in our personality.

Pathological selfishness acts like a Higher Power, but is not one. Pathological selfishness leads us, but its power evaporates the second we choose not to obey it. A real Higher Power does not depend on us giving it power.

The program and fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous always has the power, with direction and care, to lead alcoholics to sobriety. God has that power and much more. Neither ceases to be powerful as a result of anything we do. Even when high, an alcoholic can transcend self and do something loving or generous. We are, even when actively drinking, able to turn off pathological selfishness. It likes to play God, but is not God. It is powerful only when we follow its lead.

Pathological selfishness likes *us* to play God, and influences us in that direction. This is the *self as general manager of the universe* aspect of what the Big Book calls self—the director forever arranging things, playing God in one's own life and with the lives of others.

We take direction from our real Higher Power. We see that playing God does not work, and stop trying to run the show. Our true selves live by the guidance we find in Alcoholics Anonymous as we practice its principles in all of our affairs. Pathological selfishness evaporates when our personalities are motivated by sober beliefs.

All of pathological selfishness is rooted in the overindulgence and distortion of our natural instincts.

Even the God playing part is a distortion of our freedom to choose among various good paths. Pathological selfishness distorts this by leading us to make choices based on excessive self-interest without any guidance from moral principles. Our natural instinct to direct others when it will be helpful is distorted when we manipulate others to serve our own pathologically selfish purposes.

Pathological selfishness promises freedom, but leads to a type of enslavement. On one hand, it is freedom to do whatever we want without the constraint of moral principles. Believing we need only please ourselves, we become craven slaves of our desires in the moment, the circumstances in which we find ourselves, and what we can get out of the people in our present orbit. Without guiding principles, every natural instinct is distorted and overindulged. In the grip of pathological selfishness, we are its blind followers, slaves of our self-will.

We become free by finding and following the direction of our moral compass. We discover our true selves by taking the 12 Steps and discovering our moral principles through our relationship with our Higher Power. Only with the moral principles we have found for ourselves can we make free decisions based on what we have, in light of our true self, chosen. Guided by our Higher Power, we are free to choose from various good paths, and the principles that guide our personalities keep our relationships with others correct and good.

Sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous is freedom from alcohol and freedom from the bondage of pathological selfishness.

A Bill Friend