

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Waiting for the magic wand

I remember one day, I was looking at my messed up life. It was at one of my low points. I wasn't using or drinking at that moment. Just really aware of how bad things were. I remember wondering if there wasn't some sort of magic cure or something. Not just for the drinking and stuff. But all of the broken parts of my life.

Wouldn't it be nice if someone were to have a magic wand or magic potion. We could start over with a clean slate! Everything fixed. A "do-over!"

What would that feel like?

Many of us would love to have the chance for a fresh start. In fact, just about everyone has some parts of his or her life where they have regrets. Things they did that they regret. Things they didn't do but wish they had done. Or things they wish they had done better. When we think about our lives, we all could certainly make a list.

And that's normal. In fact, it's why some people turn to faith. They gain reassurance that they can start again. And why some find support in 12-step groups. Admitting the mistakes. Facing them. And starting a new chapter, trying to do better.

Think about your own experiences. Did you ever try to make a fresh start? If so, how did it feel when you first got started?

The thing is, many people find themselves regressing - falling back - into their old patterns. It's not enough to have good intentions. The good intentions are critical, but they are only a part of the process. The old ways of thinking, unresolved issues, past habits, and being around our old risk factors are also a part of the picture. So the "magic wand" - getting the fresh start - can only get you so far.

If you started to make changes, where did things start to get tough? What sorts of things made it hard to make real changes?

If you can name those sorts of things you're already part of the way to doing it right this time! It's called learning from past experiences. And using that knowledge to get smarter and to get stronger.

What sorts of things went well? If you decided to make a change in the future, what did you learn that you could take with you to help?

If there's one area that puts you at greatest risk at this time, what would it be?